May 23, 2021

## **Suffering and Lament**

More than a third of the Psalms in the Bible are Psalms of lament. Most of them were written by David. Twice, the Bible calls David a man after God's own heart. This rubs most of us the wrong way. Concerning suffering, our intuitions tend to be out of line. If David were a man after God's heart, why were his circumstances so frequently dire? If David were a man after God's heart, why did he lament so much? We want to believe that godliness corresponds directly with happiness, ease, and peace. David's forty-three Psalms of lament tell us otherwise.

Hidden in these Psalms, however, is the key to understanding how suffering and godliness do relate. David prays, "Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy" (Psalm 61:1-3). David doesn't expect God to eradicate his problems, but he does look to God to be his refuge through them. Paul learned the same lesson when the Lord told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

Suffering is not an indication that you are doing something wrong (nor is it an indication you are doing something right). But suffering is an opportunity to look to the Rock that is higher than you. Suffering is an opportunity to draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. As I have heard it said, "God never wastes a hurt." I believe it was David's reliance upon God in the midst of his suffering that made him the man after God's own heart. As a father, I do not wish suffering upon any of my children. But each of their trials is an opportunity for me to pull them in close and strengthen them with my love.

Next time you suffer, know that your lament is an indication of your faith, and not the opposite. Seek to know God better in the midst of your suffering rather than merely as a means out of it.

Pastor Ryan Patenaude AFLC Board of Publications and Parish Education Kindred, North Dakota

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