

Sewell Story – October 2015

Why Are You Doing This To Me?



“I do think,” said Shasta, “that I must be the most unfortunate boy that ever lived in the whole world.”

If you haven't read *The Horse and His Boy* by C.S. Lewis yet, you probably should. Consider this a sign to go visit your bookcase, dust off your copy and take a breather from all these know-it-all internet articles. God often uses

children's stories and songs to speak to me. Truth is simple. Simple enough for a child to understand. Simple enough for me to understand. If God doesn't reveal the truths of the Bible to you through simple children's stories, well, maybe you should let Him. If it's simple enough you'll remember it, and hopefully it will sink in and change you. Back to our story.

Poor Shasta. Adopted by a hard-nosed fisherman in his infancy, brought up in the barren and vicious society of a place called Calormen, made to work from sun up till sundown all through his childhood, and finally compelled to flee the only home he has ever known to escape his adoptive father's plan to sell him into slavery to a cruel Calormene nobleman. After a series of thrilling (and not so thrilling) adventures, Shasta and his three companions, Aravis and the Talking Horses Bree and Hwin, successfully flee their homeland, cross the desert and arrive in the land of Archenland. But their dream of a life of freedom may be snuffed out if they fail to warn the king of Archenland of a plot they discovered against his kingdom and the neighboring kingdom of Narnia. Parched tongues, shaking muscles and dizzy with fatigue, the children and the horses fly through unknown woodlands striving to reach a king whose person and whereabouts are as unknown to them as their surroundings. Oh, I should mention that at this point in the story a Calormene army of two hundred horsemen is hot on their heels, smoke billowing behind the children and the enemy's horn in hearing range.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you many be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” [James 1:2-4](#)

Micah and I recently drove back to Tyler, TX to visit family and friends and attend our annual staff conference with YWAM. All 1,758 glorious miles. Bekah usually gets car sick on long drives and so why would this one be the exception? I lost count after the sixth episode. It wasn't all that bad, really. Bekah is a trooper. She has a "travel bucket" and remarkable aim. What I really didn't like was how our car kept getting progressively louder.

I know everybody has a something that will send them into a tizzy if it goes wrong. Taxes. Plumbing. The dentist. Christmas tree assembly. For me, it's car trouble. My heart will go into a frenzied thump-a-thump if my nose smells a suspicious amount of exhaust. I really just hate being in a car when it's failing. We had had some issues before we left but our mechanic worked his magic and it was all dandy until we finally reached Tyler. I mean, a car doesn't fake being loud. It doesn't fake having zero get up and go. It happened en route to dinner at a friend's house. Suddenly we could feel, even in those flat Texan roads, every incline because our car was not having it. I didn't realize Tyler had so many hills until we could barely get over them. Of course the speed limit was 50+ and we looked like idiots going 20 with our flashers on. We rode the momentum of the last hill and turned into our YWAM campus's parking lot (the same campus we've been involved with for the last 9 years). I still don't know how we managed to make it there. Somehow this car needed to get back in working order to get us to Dallas that very weekend, back to New Hampshire a week after, and even more pressingly, to dinner that night. Not to mention that our money trees needed tending. But where is Shasta?

Shasta and his friends reach safety in a hermit's house but only Shasta is fit to continue traveling. The hermit wisely advises Shasta,

"And now my son, waste no time on questions, but obey. This damsel is wounded. Your horses are spent. Rabadash is at this moment finding a ford over the Winding Arrow. If you run now, without a moment's rest, you will still be in time to warn King Lune."

Shasta's heart fainted at these words for he felt he had no strength left. And he writhed inside at what seemed the cruelty and unfairness of the demand.

When the hard times and challenges come (oh and they will) what matters most is our response. Three years ago I would have said something like this: "Go-o-d!" (Hear the whine?) "WHY are You doing this to me? WHY did You make my car break down at THIS particularly inconvenient moment? You're testing me, I get it, I need to trust You. I've got the lesson, I've learned it, really truly I get it, now PLEASE STOP IT." But instead I said, "Thank You."

"Consider it all joy..."

My response to difficult circumstances shouldn't be pointing my finger at God and accusing Him of making life harder for me. Sometimes He lets us walk through trials. Those trials should produce endurance, not a whiny attitude problem until that trial passes. I've been through enough hard times however to realize that oftentimes the "trials" that we face are really God's provision and protection. How rude of me to yell at Him for that.

When we got our car back the next day from the mechanic we found out something interesting. Beside the rear catalytic converter that needed replacing he noticed that our transmission fluid was jet black. Now, experts tell me it's supposed to be a translucent red. He said if we hadn't caught it our transmission would have gone out somewhere on the way home to New Hampshire. Good gravy! A break down somewhere between Texas and New Hampshire, maybe in some small town or perhaps on a long stretch of nothingness (also known as I-20 through Mississippi), friends not available to help us and on a weekend, no less! God didn't let that happen. I knew He was up to something as we were inching our way to the YWAM campus. I knew it wasn't a random thing but that He was actively involved.

Shasta *does* warn the king of Archenland in time. Unfortunately, as he is following the king's company he finds himself lost in a deep fog. He walks blindly in the fog with only a vague hope that he is headed in the right direction.

"I do think," said Shasta, "that I must be the most unfortunate boy that ever lived in the whole world."

He begins to notice that an invisible Something has been walking silently beside him, perhaps for some time, and in the darkness he can see nothing and only knows it is there because he can feel its breath on him.

"I can't see you at all," said Shasta, after staring very hard. Then (for an even more terrible idea had come into his head) he said, almost in a scream, "You're not—not something dead, are you? Oh please—please do go away. What harm have I ever done you? Oh, I am the unluckiest person in the whole world."

Once more he felt the warm breath of the Thing on his hand and face. "There," it said, "that is not the breath of a ghost. Tell me your sorrows."

Shasta was a little reassured by the breath: so he told how he had never known his real father or mother and had been brought up sternly by the fisherman. And then he told the story of his escape and how they were chased by lions and forced to swim for their lives; and of all their dangers in Tashbaan and about his night among the Tombs and how the beasts howled at him out of the desert. And he told about the heat and thirst of their journey and how they were almost at their goal when another lion chased them and wounded Aravis. And also, how very long it was since he had had anything to eat.

"I do not call you unfortunate," said the Large Voice.

"Don't you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions?" said Shasta.

“There was only one lion,” said the Voice.

“What on earth do you mean? I’ve just told you there were at least two the first night, and—“

“There was only one: but he was swift of foot.”

“How do you know?”

“I was the lion.” And as Shasta gaped with open mouth and said nothing, the Voice continued. “I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you.”

Before I knew what was wrong with the car or how it was all going to pan out I said, “Thank You.” Why? Was I happy about it? Did the prospect of another unaffordable repair send a thrill through us both? As I mentioned before, car trouble is the worst of the worst as far as minor tragedies go. But I’ve trained my mind and my tongue to automatically respond with praise and thanksgiving when the bumps (or mountains) appear on the road. I’ve trained myself to mean it, too. It only took 8+ years dealing with hardship after hardship (and I’m not talking about silly little car parts giving out) but I did it. “Thank You, God, for what You are going to accomplish *in me* through this. I choose to be in agreement with whatever it is You are doing, I will not fight against what You want to do in this.” When you practice thanking God for hard times you’ll notice an accompanying excitement and expectation begin to well up deep inside of you— what can You do with this doozy of a situation, God? What have You already done that I haven’t seen yet? I can’t wait to find out! Now, a story about car trouble seems pretty silly next to a saga like Shasta’s, and even sillier when put next to the story of Joseph, which really happened. What really matters is the response. It just so happens that this is one of the few stories in recent times where I finally got it right. It’s similar to my [He Sees Me Through](#) post but I figured I’d keep it light in this article.

It’s time to stop feeling like the most unfortunate boy/girl in the world. Let’s retrain our minds to look for and then to recognize God’s involvement in every challenge that comes our way. When we face those various trials, let’s start by considering it all joy. Let’s begin first and foremost by thanking Him for what He is going to do, in us and through us, and what He has already done.

All quotes are from “The Horse and His Boy” by C.S. Lewis