



"Trials are food for faith to feed on."  
—George Miller

13-Nov-09

## Comfort-Zone Christianity?

Over the past several days, I have been very uncomfortable. Since my adrenal fatigue set in during the summer of 2008, I have had a more-or-less persistent ache in the area of my right hip. This ache does not keep me from my normal activities; in fact, when I am active—playing softball or volleyball, walking, or doing chores around the house and yard—the dull pain rarely registers on my conscious mind. However, when I sit down, a position I often find myself in at work and at home, the ache returns.

Before the [Feast of Tabernacles](#), the pain had been minimal, and I had hoped that it was going away for good. Yet, since it has returned, my wife, Beth, and I have concluded that the stresses and activities of the Feast, contracting the swine flu at its end, catching up at work after I recovered, a weekend trip to visit the brethren in Trinidad, a busy Sunday of work in the yard, and several nights of interrupted sleep wore me down, bringing on this latest bout of discomfort.

Before we understood the cause of this ache, Beth and I had tried a number of different possible remedies to the problem. Could my hip be out of alignment? I went to see a chiropractor, but his adjustments did not decrease the ache. Was I confusing the pain of a hernia with this ache in my hip? I

made an appointment, later cancelled, to see a hernia specialist. Could the ergonomics of my chair and desk at the office be causing a repetitive-stress injury? Beth bought me an exercise ball on which to sit. She also increased certain dietary supplements to strengthen my bones and muscles. I consulted various people about exercises I could do to stretch the muscles and sinews around my hip.

Finally, in doing some research on the Internet regarding adrenal fatigue, I found that sufferers of that stress syndrome sometimes complain about aches in various muscle groups, and the hip area was among the most common. The naturopath with whom I consult agreed that my achy hip was most likely the result of my low adrenal function. Had I had any such ache before the adrenal fatigue set in? No. Had I injured my hip in any way? No. Thus, it is probable that, since the hip ache and adrenal fatigue began together, they are related problems.

I am fairly certain that this is the right diagnosis. When I get the sleep I need for my adrenal glands to generate the required amount of hormones for my body's needs, the ache goes away. Yet, when I am stressed and/or have trouble sleeping, the ache returns. Also, the pain is usually more intense in the evening than in the morning, after I have gone through most of the day's supply of hormones. We are still searching out new ways to alleviate the pain, trying various pain relievers, ointments, homeopathic remedies, massage, and the like, to little avail. The best solution to the problem of my achy hip continues to be a series of good nights' sleep.

It is not difficult to see a simple, spiritual lesson in this process. When a person experiences discomfort, he will immediately and diligently search for a way to alleviate his pain and anxiety and to reach a state of comfort once again. This is a very natural and necessary reaction, for if a person ignores his pain and fear, he stands a good chance of experiencing increased pain, ill health, apprehension, terror, or even death. The discomfort can be any number of troubles, from the rumbling of an empty stomach, the searing agony of burned flesh, or the aching of an abscessed tooth. [God](#) made us to react both consciously and subconsciously to these stimuli, and we respond by trying to find remedies to reduce or prevent the pain.

Beyond bodily discomforts and pains are those of emotional, relational, or spiritual natures. We normally work just as hard to solve these sorts of problems because no one enjoys living in the midst of hurts, [offenses](#), confusion, misunderstandings, or similar social ills. We will try to find the source of the problem, whether in ourselves or an offending member of the community, and work to straighten out the predicament, or if kinder methods fail, turn to more stringent measures to bring relief. Sometimes these sterner actions lead to separation from the community, either of the self or of the offending member, to allow [peace](#) to return to the group.

The Bible tells us frequently that members of God's church should expect problems to upset their comfort. Peter writes, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try [test] you, as though some strange thing happened to you" ([I Peter 4:12](#)). Paul concurs: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able" ([I Corinthians 10:13](#)). James takes trials as a given, saying, "My brethren, count it all [joy](#) when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your [faith](#) produces [patience](#)" ([James 1:2-3](#)). Jesus Himself tells His disciples, "In [the world](#) you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)).

While it is full of reward and fulfillment, the Christian life is rarely a smooth road. The quiet, peaceful respite is often the exception rather than the rule. God does not want us to find a cozy comfort zone because that is when we are most likely to slip into dangerous spiritual drowsiness and complacency, which are deadly to overcoming and growth. Instead, He allows various people and circumstances to stir the pot to test us, and in doing so, He urges us to seek out godly solutions to our difficulties, drawing us closer to Him and building godly character in us.

It is certainly true that "the truth shall make you free" ([John 8:32](#)), but it is equally true that, in the midst of this ungodly world, the truth makes us unsettled and different. At times, we are even made to face the encroachment of the world and its anti-God ideas into the church, "for," as Paul writes in [I Corinthians 11:19](#), "there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you." Such severe trials should

move us far out of our comfort zones, provoking a search for godly solutions—yet not necessarily with the aim to return us to comfort but to return us to agreement with God. The godly solution to any spiritual trial always confirms the revealed truth of God and strengthens the bonds between God and us and between His true worshippers.

Despite the discomforts of the Christian life, we can take heart in its outcome: ". . . though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the [revelation of Jesus Christ](#)" ([I Peter 1: 6-7](#)). If we endure to the end, we will find this ultimate solution.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Trials: Much Needed Experiences](#)**

by John O. Reid

God uses trials to test the contents of our hearts, but He never places a trial before us to entice us to do wrong. God uses trials we bring on ourselves to draw us closer to Him. God promises that trials brought on by the world (or the specific environment in which we live) He will deliver us from if we remain faithful. The most enigmatic trial is the one fashioned by God to produce a specific desired effect, as in the case of Job or the Apostle Paul. Trials prove or assay what we are, purging out spiritual impurities, teaching us patience, humility, compassion for others, perseverance, and endurance, giving us much needed experience. Because God wants us in His family, He will toughen us, giving us the experiences that will spiritually mature us, qualifying us to serve in His Kingdom.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

**Joy and Trial**

by Mike Ford

What does the Bible mean when it says we should count it all joy when you fall into various trials? What is this joy we must experience? How do we come by it? Using his personal experience with his wife's cancer, Mike Ford shows how joy and trial go together.

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