



"The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions, and not our circumstances."

—Martha Washington

**08-Aug-14**

## **Why Is Life So Hard? (Part Three)**

The author of [Hebrews 12:5-11](#) teaches us not to despise the rigors, the difficulties, that come from [God](#), but to take them as evidence of God's work with us:

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His [holiness](#). Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The narrowing in that God does is a demonstration of His [love](#), just as we hedge our children because we care about the outcomes of their lives. It has been said that "God loves us the way we are, but He loves us far too much to leave us this way." The rigors—the pressures—that God puts us through are not to crush us, but to shape us over time so that we can share in His holiness. Such an outcome is not something we can bring about on our own. Simply put, our lives absolutely require divine pressure—godly tribulation—to transform them from carnal to spiritual.

[Romans 5:3-4](#), which we covered in Part Two, contains a progression that outlines what the God-given pressures will accomplish. Experiencing hardship without compromising will produce perseverance, or patient continuance (*hupomone*). As we become practiced in this constancy under pressure, in due course it becomes a part of our characters. It is part of the new man that we are putting on, but it is not possible without ample opportunity—which God is faithful to provide. We become tempered, and as strange as it may seem, that tempering process—that building of character in us—produces hope, as we will see. As our character is built, it leads to an earnest expectation of future good, which is the definition of hope.

However, the only way that the hardship will end up producing hope instead of bitterness or despair is if we are actively inviting God to be a part of the situation. If we keep Him at arm's length or seek Him just for our own relief or physical gain, the hardship will tend to produce hatred, contention, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, envy, and so on, because if the strength we are drawing on is fleshly, only [works of the flesh](#) will be produced. For the hardship to produce good fruit, God and His Spirit must be the dominant factor.

In approaching God, we should not seek Him simply to take away the pressure that is vital for our change, although He can and does deliver us at times. It is not wrong to ask for deliverance, but we have to sharpen our view of God to encompass far more than just His physical providence and deliverance. What is worth even more—what is true spiritual gain—is walking through the anguish and the [affliction](#) *with Him*. When and where He is involved, there is always good. We may not reckon [goodness](#) exactly as He does, but His presence in a situation will always be a blessing in some

way, simply because of His character and nature. Thus, the psalmist writes that in God's presence there is fullness of [joy](#), and in His right hand—which is the symbol of His outworking—there is eternal pleasure ([Psalm 16:11](#)).

As we experience His goodness through His involvement with us, we develop that expectation of future good because we catch enough glimpses of Him that we come to know that our lives could not be in better hands. We know that as long as God is involved, good things will happen.

That does not mean we are living on easy street. It means far more. It means beginning to experience life, with God, right now, even before our silver cord is loosed ([Ecclesiastes 12:6](#)), and we finally put on incorruption in the resurrection ([I Corinthians 15:53](#)). As it says next in [Romans 5:5](#), we know that such hope will not disappoint, because we are already experiencing the love of God. The more that we are in His presence, and the more that we know of Him through His involvement, the more our hearts will become aware of His love, which has been flooding out all along. It is a matter of awareness that can only be developed through surrendering to God in whatever pressure He applies, trusting that the Creator knows what He is doing with us and that He is doing it perfectly.

When it comes to evaluating our tribulations, remember Paul, [Barnabas](#), and the disheartened disciples ([Acts 14:21-22](#)). The apostles exhorted them to continue in the [faith](#), in the trust that we have in God's sovereignty and His indescribable nature. Do not be dismayed at the presence of tribulation, in whatever form. It does not have to mean that something is wrong. We may need to adjust our expectations, because such pressures are the means by which we are transformed from the image of the man of dust into the image of the heavenly Man.

In addition, do not be lead astray by the carnal ideas that godly people will have perfect lives or that the absence of visible trouble is evidence of God's favor. On the contrary, God will supply enough pressure to accomplish His magnificent work. He is faithful to perform it and precise in the affliction He uses.

If we seek Him in our anguish, and invite Him into the mortar and pestle of our lives, we will begin to experience Him, and we will grow in hope. The

hope comes from a growing understanding of this Creator God in whom "we live and move and have our being" ([Acts 17:28](#)). We *will* have tribulation ([John 16:33](#)). But if we go through it with God, it will yield priceless fruit that can be produced in no other way.

- David C. Grabbe

---

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

### **[Character Matters](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In God's Kingdom, only those who have God's approval, those who have developed iron-clad character, will be qualified to rule. Americans unfortunately have separated legality and competence from morality and character. There is a direct correlation between the character of the leader and the morality of the people (having a deadly ripple effect to the entire population). In selection of leaders, whether king or elder, God has emphasized that character has to be at the core. A leader has to practice what he preaches. We have been called to a process of character building, qualifying to rule in God's Kingdom.

---

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

### **[The Audacity to Hope](#)**

by Mike Ford

During the 2008 Presidential campaign, Americans have heard a great deal about hope. Yet, "hope" means different things to different people. Mike Ford explains that the political hope held out by politicians does not compare with the hope found in Scripture.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

---