

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part XXIII: Making The Most Of God's Pruning Via Evil Oppressors"
(Hebrews 12:3-11)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Sometimes we Christians undergo a relentless barrage of mistreatment by very oppressive parties, and it doesn't make sense:

(1) While coming out of a church meeting in another church a few years ago, one of the young people in our body who then suffered from a debilitating physical ailment was suddenly interrupted.

Other well-meaning Christians wondered if they could pray for her welfare, and she innocently agreed! Then it happened!

Much to the surprise and embarrassment of the sufferer, the questioner brought out a vial of oil, anointed her head, and prayed for her healing to come from God! Others were surrounding this young woman with variegated incantations and loud guttural "groanings of the Spirit" as they call them, seeking for her healing!

Well, nothing improved! If anything, the young woman's condition only worsened, making the event even more painful to her!

(2) This is not the only time this party has been spiritually accosted over the party's condition. Others have suggested that a lack of faith, or a possible sinful psychological maladjustment for not being able to accept one's self are at the root cause of the suffering! Some of the charges have been implied by doctors as well as from "friends"!

WHY would God ALLOW such thoughtlessness to occur to a believer who was already suffering for UNCLARIFIED reasons?!

Why does God allow "regular" Christians often to undergo heaped up amounts of unfair treatment from others?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I have been hit with a barrage of painful, unjust trials from oppressive parties! I have asked God for relief, but none seems to be in sight! Am I missing something? What am I to DO about this?!"

- I. **The readers of the epistle to the Hebrews unjustly suffered trials from persecuting countrymen for their faith, Heb. 10:32-34.**
 - A. The readers suffered emotional and mental drain of public insults and the confiscation of their personal property, Hebrews 10:33-34 NIV.
 - B. This suffering arose from persecution for their Christian faith most presumably (from the context) from Hebrew countrymen, Heb. 10:32.
- II. **Lest these new believers be disillusioned by their trials, the author of Hebrews revealed that God USED such UNJUST oppressors to DISCIPLINE and thus REFINE His people to be more godly:**
 - A. The Old Testament reveals that God could discipline His people through allowing godless people to afflict them, 2 Sam. 24:10-12, 13b.
 - B. Picking up on this truth, the author of Hebrews noted God used the trials of their unjust *persecutors* as **advantageous discipline**:
 1. In shifting from looking at just the persecutions from unjust oppressors in themselves, the author of Hebrews noted that God allowed these persecutions from the godless as a **discipline** tool to mature his epistle's Christian readers, Hebrews 12:5.
 2. There are a number of **accomplishments** God **achieves** by way of **maturing** afflicted believers through such "unfair" trials as follows:
 - a. God shows that He cares enough for the believer to use such trials to **correct** him in areas of his life, for not allowing such correction would indicate a lack of concern and care for him from a perfectly holy God, Heb. 12:5-6.
 - b. God also demonstrates the believer is truly saved thereby, for were God not to use such trials to discipline him, God would signal such a person was not His true son, Heb. 12:7-8; 12:6.
 - c. God can use unjust persecutors to drive His people to obey Him and not go wayward **themselves** as are their oppressors, 12:9.
 - d. God uses unjust persecutors to teach a believer to loathe the sinfulness of his persecutors so that the believer might indeed be holy (separate) from that same evil just as God is holy, 12:10.
 - e. When a believer is mistreated by unjust persecutors, it eventually leads to a harvest of peaceable righteousness in the mistreated believer, Heb. 12:11. God thus hones off the sharp edges of a believer's not being peaceful and not being righteous to make him gentle, compliant and upright in all that he does and thinks!

- C. Accordingly, these persecuted readers of the Hebrews epistle could **respond profitably** to the persecutions of their tormentors as follows:
1. First, they could hold to their Christian convictions at all costs regardless of the pressures they faced in the process, Heb. 12:3-4.
 2. Second, they could recall God's marvelous purification work that was involved in His letting them **experience** these trials, Heb. 12:5. This recollection would work as motivation to encourage them to bear up under the trials they faced.
 3. Third, they could accept the persecution as being allowed by God out of His love for them as He wanted them to mature, 12:5b, 6.
 4. Fourth, they could rejoice in the evidence of their salvation's security that such painful corrections signaled to them, Heb. 12:6-7.
 5. Fifth, they could face the uncomfortable **rebukes** of sin within *themselves* that the trials **exposed**, and thus **change**, 12:5c, 9a.
 6. Sixth, they could focus on being ever more submissive to the leading of God as a son should be to his father, Hebrews 12:9b.
 7. Seventh, they could focus on what God might be doing to make them more separate from sin as God is separate, Hebrews 12:10b.
 8. Eighth, they could focus on how God was seeking them to do what was more upright and peaceable in their lives, Heb. 12:11.

Application: *When facing trials by oppression from ungodly people, (1) believe on Christ for salvation from sin and become a true child of God, John 3:16. (2) Then, as a believer, face the trial not with extreme false GUILT, but view God as having ALLOWED them to occur to HONE us to be more upright, separate from sin, gentle and gracious as is Christ Himself! (3) Once we LEARN what God is seeking to do in maturing us, we should make the adjustments God indicates we should make. These may include (a) confession of sin (1 John 1:9), (b) a greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit for power for living (Gal. 5:16-23) or (c) any other lesson more specific or personally-applicable lesson God seeks to have us incorporate to our lives! (4) Then we leave the injustice of the trial produced by oppressors with GOD to handle! When God is satisfied with what we have learned, He can deal with the oppressors in our behalf!*

Lesson: *Painful oppression the Christian experiences at the hands of godless persecutors are yet USED of an infinitely wise, loving God to HONE and MATURE the godly to be even MORE mature and godly!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Last Sunday morning during the Sunday School and Morning Worship Service, though I cannot put my finger on it, I sensed a great "pressure" while delivering the messages! All I was attempting to do was to obey God and minister His Word, but it turned out to be a difficult challenge that I couldn't easily explain or understand! **I was tempted to view the challenge as somehow being MY FAULT!**

What was interesting in **retrospect** was realizing that **all three messages** of the Sunday School Class, Morning Worship and Sunday Evening touched on the idea of how errant is the theory of evolution!

Origin of the Species that actually call to question the veracity of evolution itself, and the Sunday Evening Service saw us handling Genesis 14:10 which speaks of tar pits in the ancient Jordan Valley. Such pits have elsewhere been found to contain dinosaur fossils and, are often dated by evolutionists in the alleged Jurassic period. However, Genesis 14 treats them as being around as late as Abram's day (circa 2000 B.C.), meaning evolution is in error!

During and **following** the ministry of the Word last Sunday, I found out that two people in the congregation benefited from these lessons: (a) one lady called to say she had come to church under a discouraging cloud only to find she could get information on evolution to address an event she had just faced that week! (b) Another party was planning to use the sermon quotes from Darwin's book in writing a letter to the editor of the Waterbury paper. He was going to defend the creationist view against others who have written criticizing the Kansas State Board of Education's decision to allow for non-evolution theories on man's origins in the classrooms!

The *challenge* I faced in delivering Sunday's messages **did not come from my being out of God's will in what or how I was teaching, but from opposition in the spiritual conflict to the truth being taught. The LESSON for me is to HOLD the course and not "faint" in teaching God's truth in accord with Hebrews 12:3-4! We need to take advantage of TRIALS we face under God's permissive will to GROW as He WANTS us to do! We are not to reel back from them, but FACE them and GROW thereby!**