

When We Have Trials in Life, Will We Respond Productively?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, 07-11-09, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UCG

Today the famous science fiction writer, H.G. Wells is best known for his science fiction novels, such as “The Time Machine,” “War of the Worlds,” and “The Invisible Man.” When he was a boy 7 years old, his leg was accidentally broken. A man picked him up to playfully tease him, then H.G. Wells wiggled, and he fell and broke his leg on a tent stake. While he recovered, he read many books that his father got for him. This both developed his imagination and put him ahead of his class in school. His accident ironically helped him put in on the path to his future career as a writer and author. So trials and tests that seem to be very damaging can ironically help us, even during this life. But more importantly, they can prepare us for the next life by developing our character.

S.P.S. So today this is what I'm going to discuss: We should react to trials by focusing on the ultimate good they can cause in this life or the next life. We can do this in part by choosing to adapt to changed circumstances instead of just complaining about the problems we've got now are so unfair.

Romans 8:28

Of course, this is only true for Christians. After all, not all the terrible things that happen to people in the world benefit them in this life or the next: Hitler's Holocaust, Stalin's purges, etc.

However, it takes faith to have this perspective, that God allows events to happen in our lives that help to benefit us ultimately. The purpose of this life is to develop holy righteous character as we experience tests and trials while God helps us through the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:3-5

Let's return again to the life of H.G. Wells, and how ironically trials can help us even during this life. After he grew up, he got a job as a teacher and coach. One day while he played soccer, another player deliberately fouled him. The young man hit him hard under his ribs, lifted him, and the impact threw him. As a result, Wells walked off the field with a crushed left kidney. If this accident had not happened, he might have stayed a teacher the rest of his life. But as the result of illness and injury, he took another path, and became a famous writer and author during his lifetime.

Does our state's high unemployment rate have you worried? It's now over 14% and it likely will go higher. Have you lost your own job or are you afraid of losing it?

Not just a fear during bad times, since back in 1998-99, I went through this.

For example, after a merger, lost job as a medical biller with one company. Then I had a brief temporary assignment, and then that ended, followed by two miserable weeks of unemployment. But then I got a temporary job with Lafarge, the company I now work for. The end result was that I was paid about \$2/hour more because of that merger costing me the job I had at the time. So strangely trials and tests can help us in the here and now, not merely for the eternal life to come.

On the other hand, it's disastrous when people can't adapt to change, whether it's "fair" or not." Spencer Johnson, "Who Moved My Cheese," key point.

II Cor. 11:24-27

Were Paul's trials "fair"? Not because of his sins.

This quote is from a novel, but it still reflects a historical reality. Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind." "Throughout the South for fifty years there would be bitter-eyed women who looked backward, to dead times, to dead men, evoking memories that hurt and were futile, bearing poverty with bitter pride because they had those memories. But Scarlett was never to look back." Contrast with the character India Wilkes, whose would-be husband died during the Civil War. She basically was determined to not look for another.

Change is a fundamental feature of this life. Whether the change is "fair" or not, how well do we adjust to it emotionally? An entitlement mentality can keep us from becoming happy once again. That's because we chronically complain about life not being fair instead of trying to improve our situation by our own efforts.

So in conclusion: While we suffer from trials, we can have a better attitude about them by focusing the good that can result from them during this life or the next life. The trials and tests may be “unfair,” such as those H.G. Wells suffered. But we’ll be happier if we choose to adapt to circumstances and take responsible action to fix our problems. But more importantly, if we react to trials correctly during this life will, the holy righteous character we develop now will prepare us for the next life.