

Hard Places

“Thou hast shewed thy people hard things.”¹ I have always been glad that the psalmist said to God that some things were hard. There is no mistake about it; there are hard things in life. Some beautiful pink flowers were given to me this summer, and as I took them I said, “What are they?” And the answer came, “They are rock flowers; they grow and bloom only on rocks where you can see no sod.” Then I thought of God’s flowers growing in hard places; and I feel, somehow, that He may have a peculiar tenderness for His “rock flowers.”—*Margaret Bottome*

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[Pain] is one of your Father’s ways of speaking to you; it is the evidence of His limitless love, by which He would draw you farther from evil and closer to Him, ...[and] help you lean more trustingly on the Lord.—*Walter A. Maier*

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One of my dearest and oldest friends, Jon, married a girl I grew up with. In the middle of the night two years later, Jon called me because he had just found emails that made it clear to him that his wife was cheating on him. Soon after, she left and never came back. Less than a year later, they were divorced.

Jon had every right, you could say, to let his life be defined by that day, by that year, by that woman, by that betrayal. But what he did instead was a marvelous thing to watch. He laid himself open and vulnerable to life and God and therapy and close friends, and began the breathtaking process of becoming more than what he had been in a thousand different ways. He is softer, in the best possible way, and when you talk to him, you know that he’s been down to the bottom and fought his way back up. He listens more closely and prays like he’s talking to a best friend. I knew him well for years before she left, and although I would never wish upon anyone the searing pain I saw written on his face during that season, what God did in his life through that event makes me believe in God’s goodness even more than I did before.

I know that it seemed like God was being cruel that year, that middle of the night when Jon called me. But he was not. What I know now is that his kindness burns through even the deepest betrayals and invites life from death every chance we let him. There are things that explode into our lives and we call them curses, and then one day, a year later or ten years later, we realize that they are actually something else. They are the very most precious kinds of blessings.—*Shauna Niequest*²

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“Trials equals good.” Understanding and believing this simple equation can make your life richer, more meaningful, and happier. It makes all the difference in the world whether you fear problems and challenges, expecting the worst to happen, or if you face obstacles bravely and full of faith, anticipating the good that the Lord will bring out of them and the strength of spirit you

will gain. Naturally we wonder why “bad” things happen to us. God always has a purpose [in what He allows to happen in our lives], although it is not always revealed immediately.

The Lord sometimes uses sickness, problems, and troubles to cause us to draw closer to Him and rely more on Him. Otherwise we would have a tendency to just rock along.

Sometimes things happen just to keep us humble; sometimes they happen to draw us closer to others; sometimes they happen to make us pray; sometimes they happen to teach us to be more careful and prayerful; sometimes they happen to test our faith. God allows troubles for all kinds of reasons, but ultimately they can all fulfill the same goal: to draw us closer to Him so that we can avail ourselves more of His power, and thus be filled with more of His love and joy.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”³ The Lord allows these things as tests to strengthen your faith and to get an even greater victory out of seeming defeat.

But always remember that whatever God allows, He allows it in love. “All things work together for good to those who love the Lord.”⁴ God is not going to let anything happen to you, His child who loves Him, except what can work together for your good. Even though you may have many afflictions or difficulties, as the verse says above, He will deliver you out of them all, no matter how many or what!—*David Brandt Berg*⁵

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I had a tiny box, a precious box
Of human love—my spikenard of great price;
I kept it close within my heart of hearts
And scarce would lift the lid lest it should
Waste its perfume on the air. One day a strange
Deep sorrow came with crushing weight, and fell
Upon my costly treasure, sweet and rare
And broke the box to atoms. All my heart
Rose in dismay and sorrow at this waste,
But as I mourned, behold, a miracle
Of grace Divine. My human love was changed
To Heaven’s own and poured in healing streams
On other broken hearts, while soft and clear
A voice above me whispered, “Child of Mine,
With comfort wherewith thou art comforted,
From this time forth, go comfort others,
And thou shalt know blest fellowship with Me,
Whose broken heart of love hath healed the world.”
—*R. A. Torrey*

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No physician ever weighed out medicine to his patient with half so much care and exactness as God weighs out to us every trial. Not one grain too much does He ever permit to be placed on the scale.—*Henry Ward Beecher*

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Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.—*Psalm 119:67*[6](#)

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It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.—*Psalm 119:71*[7](#)

[1](#) Psalm 60:3 KJV.

[2](#) *Cold Tangerines* (Zondervan, 2007).

[3](#) Psalm 34:19 NKJV.

[4](#) Romans 8:28.

[5](#) *Obstacles Are for Overcoming* (Aurora Production AG, 2010).

[6](#) NIV.

[7](#) ESV.