

Hardship: Is God Punishing Me? Counseling from Hebrews 12:7-11

DR. JOHN D. STREET

A 70 year old Russian woman has sought you out for counseling. She has been attending your church for over a year and had previously been led to the Lord by her granddaughter. It was her granddaughter who also got her interested in attending your church. During the past several months she confesses she has grown considerably under the teaching, but you can tell something really bothers her. As she talks it is difficult to understand her since she still possesses a heavy Russian accent even though she has been living here for many years. Looking to the floor, with an anguished look, she says she has something to tell you that she has never told anyone before.

She was born and raised in a pastor's family under the Soviet regime in Russia. When she was a teenager she fell in love with a young man and tragically slept with him one night and got pregnant. This was a horrible shame on her father, the family and the little secret church he pastored. When the young man found out she was pregnant he ceased having anything to do with her. She was deeply hurt. Her father, in order to preserve her and the family from shame immediately made arrangements to have her sent to a work camp in the north. Now she was both deeply hurt and horrified. Nevertheless, she was placed on a train and sent north. This was a work camp of over 600 men where she was the only woman to work in the kitchen endless hours day after day. Over the next few months of her pregnancy she was repeatedly raped and there was no one to which she could make an appeal for protection.

One day, during a very cold and wintery day, she was walking to the little nearby town and her baby was born. She tells you that by that time she was so angry over everything that had transpired that she delivered the baby from between her legs and threw it out onto the icy tundra to die. She then continued her trip into the little town to purchase supplies. She says to you, "there has not been a day of my life where I have not thought about what I did that day."

Through a set of unique circumstances she was able to escape the Soviet Union and make her way to Western Europe. During this time she met another man, married him and she eventually became pregnant. When she announced she was pregnant, this man immediately left her and she never saw him again. Now she was left to raise her baby girl without a father. About twenty years past and her daughter met a young man and married him, not long after she became pregnant and delivered her granddaughter. Several months after her granddaughter's birth he daughter, son-in-law were in a horrible car accident. Her daughter and son-in-law were killed. The granddaughter barely survived serious injuries. Again, she is left to raise her granddaughter without the child's father or mother.

Eventually grandmother and granddaughter make it to America where the granddaughter is gloriously saved through a friend in your church. She shares Christ with her grandmother and she surrenders her life to Christ and begins attending your church. Throughout the entire time grandma has shared this story tears have rolled down her red cheeks and you find yourself visibly moved by the whole story. Then she lifts her eyes from staring at the floor to look you straight in the eyes and asks the



question critical question that has plagued her life for over fifty years. Has God been punishing me for what I did in killing my baby? Is there really any hope for me?

Hebrews 12:7-11

- I. What is a biblical view of God's Discipline? (Hebrews 12:7)
 - A. Relating to God's Discipline as Judgment—Punishment, God is Judge

 - B. Relating to God's Discipline as Correction—Purifying, God is Father

- II. The Proof that God is your Father (Hebrews 12:8-10a)

- III. The Purpose of God's Discipline of His Children (Hebrews 12:10b; cf. Proverbs 3:11-12)

- IV. The Purification of God's Discipline of His Children (Hebrews 12:11)

