

Jonathan Chao illustrates this point. He writes:

If you could have fellowship with house-church leaders in China, you would be impressed by their strength of character. Their characters are marked by strong faith, boldness in preaching the gospel, breadth of love for fellow co-workers and a self-sacrificing attitude. One of the itinerant preachers told me that he is a target for arrest by the Public Security Bureau (police) in the district where he ministers. He preaches every day in different villages. As soon as the local police learn of his arrival they attempt to arrest him. One day as he was preaching in the courtyard at a house-church meeting, a police chief arrived suddenly. The believers immediately encircled the police chief and meanwhile led the preacher away to a hiding place. At first the believers did not know where to take him for safety. But they got the idea of taking him to the home of the police chief, because the policeman's mother, wife, and children were all believers. He stayed with the policeman's son until he was escorted away at midnight to another village. "Repeated deliverances like this incident," he said, "have made me bold in the Lord because I believe that the Lord will protect me." Christian character is built in the heat of trials where we experience the power of God.

(p. 18)

5. God sometimes uses suffering as corrective discipline, so that we will turn from our sins and receive the grace needed to live the Christian life in a sinful world.

Psalm 119:67 – "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word."

1 Corinthians 11:28-32 – "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Hebrews 12:3-13 – "For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons: 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.' It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them,