

# Withdrawal Symptoms?

What's Happening?

When the foundations are being destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?" <sup>Ps 11:3</sup>

Unless a person is too young, preoccupied with other matters or otherwise totally oblivious, they feel, hear and clearly see that the world's critical societal foundations are being destroyed before our very eyes. It takes neither a genius nor a prophet to recognize this reality. And this is another example of where the *Bible* is *far* more current, practical, realistic and helpful than are our current little leaders who promise great things while often adding to and compounding the damage and destruction.

"From the least to the greatest,  
all are greedy for gain;  
prophets and priests [our modern-day politicians] alike,  
all practice deceit.  
They dress the wound of my people  
as though it were not serious.  
'Peace, peace,' they say,  
when there is no peace.  
Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct?  
No, they have no shame at all;  
they do not even know how to blush." <sup>Jer 6:13 – 15</sup>

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. <sup>2Ti 3:1 – 5</sup>

Are these portrayals not timely and all too indicative to today's environment? And, likewise, which of the following do we see more and more of in contrast to lessening of its converse and antithesis?

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>Gal 5:19 - 21</sup>

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26 Gal 5:22 - 26</sup>

I guess a person *could* be positive and upbeat and say things are getting better (listen to the current "leaders" trying to get re-elected), but few really believe this. When we feel, hear and clearly see the key societal foundations being destroyed how can we reasonably ignore these rumblings and upheavals? And just as those seeking to keep their positions claim everything is getting better (with few people having faith in their sincerity), those out of office claim if only they were elected they would solve the problems they themselves, before the current batch of officeholders, helped create (or at least presided over the decaying foundations without much if any shoring-up or resolution). The foundations are surely being destroyed, of this no logical person could sensibly deny. The logical and correct next question then becomes – what can we (individually or corporately) do about it in light of this serious and sobering reality?

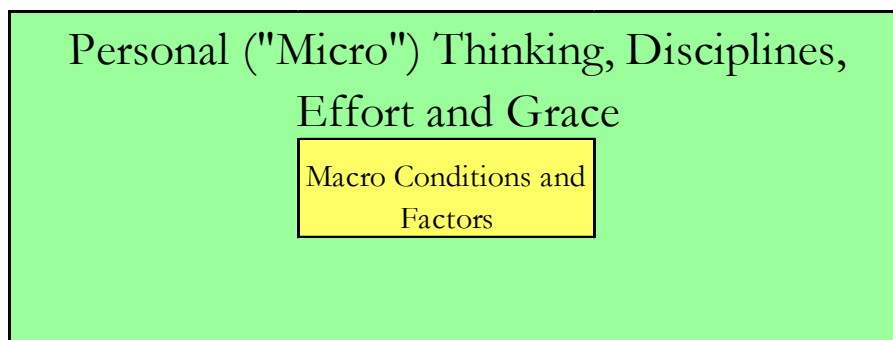
Societal foundations are similar to physical foundations in several instructive and key ways. Foundations can be destroyed either quickly or slowly. War can rapidly undercut a society's foundation analogous to an earthquake, tornado, fire or hurricane devastating a home in a moment. In contrast, termites can result in slow, but equally devastating, damage to a home in a similar way to societies imploding as mounting numbers of "takers" replace and finally overwhelm the shrinking numbers of producers and "givers."

Acute and immediate issues are obviously easier to identify and, as a result, people tend to pull together to confront and resolve them. Whether they are of a physical or broad societal nature, in times of natural disaster or war, people tend to work for the common good – many who, in times of peace and quiet, are takers will pitch in and become hardworking and productive givers in these critical times.

Slowly developing problems, on the other hand, tend not to bring out the same positive response in people. These issues and causes can be confusing since the "triggers" may be misunderstood, misplaced or simply overlooked. A slowly sagging beam may not be noticed because it is sagging so slowly or, if noticed, it may be considered normal wear and tear rather than correctly identified as serious and on-going termite destruction (maybe, in fact, more momentous than a much less damaging, but certainly more frightening, earthquake).

The "boiling frog syndrome" has, as its premise, that slow and gradual changes are typically overlooked (like the frog in the slowly heating water) as we little by little slowly adapt to new phenomenon. The idea is that people will often accept gradual changes that would be unthinkable if attempted at one time. People may even experience withdrawal symptoms they can't put their hand on because the changes are so slow and they, therefore, don't relate them to the underlying causes. Good changes can, in the same way, be overlooked if occurring slowly – a large pay increase, for example, will obviously be noticed and appreciated while slower increases might be overlooked or even considered as negatives rather than good things ("I should have gotten more . . . look at what everyone else has gotten . . .").

Not to be the slowly boiling frog requires we understand the key principle and truth that, in the final analysis, the key influences and the issues, and their *potential* benefits, blessings and potential woes of life, are 90% personal (micro) and only 10% macro. Therefore, we are wise to focus the great majority of our time, emotions, thoughts and efforts on the micro issues of our personal foundational circumstances and conditions. The following picture highlights why it is MUCH better to have a strong personal foundation (as a result of devoting thought, discipline and effort to finding God's personal grace for us) within a declining and decaying macro societal foundation context versus living in and on a strong macro foundation with our personal lives in shambles and disorder! It is better to have both strong macro and micro foundations, but we can (through individual efforts and grace) live quite well with an improving micro foundation while on a shaky macro foundation (as we see around us world-wide today).



So, to return to and try to answer our opening questions: Withdrawal Symptoms? What's Happening? And When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Ps 11:3

So, what are the obvious (if we take a minute to stop and think!) withdrawal symptoms we are experiencing on a macro basis that we need to guard against on a personal and micro level? It is withdrawal of/from grace. We can

(and many do) blame this on God, but, in reality, it is our turning from and walking away from Him, not Him leaving us!

The following verses contrast (on a macro and micro basis) an “in grace” versus out of God’s grace (along the consequences of each condition):

Blessed is the nation [or individual] whose God is the LORD. <sup>Ps 33:12</sup>

A man’s [nation] own folly ruins his life,  
yet his heart rages against the LORD. <sup>Pr 19:3</sup>

The disasters and destruction of the world’s macro foundations have been some time in the making and clearly of man’s own devices. But we are not frogs and therefore have no excuse for overlooking and failing to *personally* mitigate and prepare for this increasing phenomenon. Yet, in spite of this, there is good news for many people on a personal basis. Many, who may not have otherwise noticed the foundations being destroyed (if they were doing so less dramatically), have been shocked and awakened by the increasingly rapid signs of decay – they have been roused to thought and action to *personally* shore-up their personal foundations of grace! Good *can* come from bad!

In contrast, seeing and feeling this withdrawal of grace can (and far more often does) result in people working harder in the same way and direction and digging a deeper hole for themselves. History records how people, individually and as societies, have turned from God with the predictable resulting increasing problems likewise chronicled. *Deuteronomy* lays out the blessing and curses resulting from remaining or departing from God, His love and his grace:

If you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you . . . All these curses will come upon you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you. <sup>Dr 28:15 - 48</sup>

The current world-wide financial crisis is living proof and a picture of the serious and rapid destruction of key foundations. Any objective look at financial statistics will show we are in an era of unprecedented prosperity, but you wouldn’t know it from listening to people and their elected officials! “More! More!” people cry and all the while it seems there is less and less – governments seem to have insatiable appetites and needs for more while people have less to give them! Nations print and borrow massive amounts of money, but they still do not have enough. When we continue trying and depending on the apparent and obvious even though they are clearly failing (when things stop “adding up”) then we are wise to look at the less than obvious and apparent, the underlying conditions and causes and repent to that which is best and right. Something tangible and physical does not “add up” because God’s spiritual principles are over-riding and overwhelming them. Those who consider everything only from a physical/tangible standpoint miss this truth.

But, again, the current world-wide financial crisis is a significant macro issue totally out of our individual and personal control and, as a result, should consume little of our thought, time and emotions. Instead, on a personal level the only *sensible* approach is to:

- First, examine ourselves to ensure we are in the faith. <sup>2Co 13:5</sup> That we have placed ourselves under God’s grace and blessings rather than the curses (both of which are outlined in Deuteronomy, especially Chapters 27 and 28)
- And then, assuming this test is being met, find what we are personally told to do as we see the surrounding foundations are being destroyed – the steps we need to take *personally* to make sure we seek (rather than

neglect) God's grace by following Jesus' commands (building strong personal foundations even as the macro foundations are being destroyed).

- As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>Jn 15:9</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. <sup>Jn 15:4</sup> Just as a husband and wife must work to remain in each others' love (as the high divorce rates show, successful marriages are not a "given" – they must be fought for) we must have as an important personal focus, remaining in God's love – not walking away from Him and it. When we see danger, to be safe we *must* take shelter in the only real refuge offered us – Jesus Christ.
- Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. <sup>Mt 6:33</sup>
- Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. <sup>Jas 4:7 – 8</sup>

When all is said and done, it is MUCH better to be on a strong personal foundation of grace, surrounded by a crumbling macro foundation, than to be unsteady and shaky personally on the Rock of Gibraltar!

So, let it be said of us, that we are the ones who see and take appropriate action, for:

A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge,  
but the simple keep going and suffer for it. <sup>Pr 22:3 & Pr 27:12</sup>

. . . and that we individually and personally make sure it is *not* said of us, "you have fallen away from grace." <sup>Gal 5:2</sup>

Yes, those are grace withdrawal symptoms we are experiencing and feeling – and our *only* hope is that as the surrounding macro grace dissipates the personal and "micro" grace we are experiencing is increasing even more! That is what we *can* do when the foundations are being destroyed. And those who cannot see this are indeed blind, without hope now and forever!

It is tempting to do as others do when they feel or see shaky and decaying foundations – look around and see how others are reacting – "Well, they don't seem to be concerned, I guess everything is OK." But, this is simply a slowly boiling frog leading the naive frog! We are better served by being honest about the tremors we feel, hear and see, while, at the same time, analyzing the personal impact on ourselves individually and then taking the necessary personal actions to lessen these shakes. Yes, there is great hope (and counter-intuitively great blessings personally) as we see the foundations surrounding us being destroyed if these alert us to our personal need of greater grace and the only source of grace, Jesus Christ and the grace He offers us personally – the *only* grace, eternally, that will really matter!



There is little I can do about the current great macro destruction that is occurring – there is much, on the other hand, that I can and must do on a personal basis:

- Look to and submit myself to God.
- Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.
- Find his grace to develop the personal disciplines as a disciple of Jesus Christ – to remain in his love and grace!
- Emulate the great words of Joshua:

As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. <sup>Jos 24:15</sup>