

Faithfulness Through Life's Trials

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have _____. But take heart! I have _____ the world."
John 16:33*

*They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through _____ to enter the kingdom of God," they said.
Acts 14:21-22*

Jesus never promises an easy road in this life. He has promised to never leave us or forsake us and to give us joy and peace along the journey. Once the weight of sin and the burden of guilt and self effort are dealt with we are candidates for the abundant life in Jesus.

*I have come that they may have _____, and that they may have it more _____.
John 10:10 (NKJ)*

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you _____. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is _____ and my burden is _____."
Matthew 11:28-30*

But the abundant life is not free from difficulties, trials and temptations. How are we encouraged to respond to these difficulties?

*Not only so, but we also _____ in our sufferings,
Rom 5:3-5*

*Consider it _____, my brothers,
whenever you face trials of many kinds,
James 1:2-4*

*This study was written by Eric Stovesand
Pastor, Church on the Mountain
384 South Landing Drive
HCR 79 Box 71
Crowley Lake, CA 93546
eric@churchonthemountain.org
760-935-4272*

It is clear from these scriptures that the Lord is at work even in hard circumstances. But how? What is the reasoning that should cause us to rejoice?

Why should we consider it all Joy?

Here are nine reasons from the Bible to explain why the Lord allows trials into our lives, how we can benefit from them, and why we should learn to consider them joy.

1. Trials cause us to develop Christian character.

.....because we know that suffering produces _____; perseverance, _____; and character, _____. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:3,4

.....because you know that the testing of your faith develops _____. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:3,4

The virtues of faith and perseverance proclaimed in these scriptures are the end result of godly responses to difficulties. God allows these difficulties to come into our lives for several reasons but the end result is always the same, to bring us further into the image of Jesus. And therefore, we can agree with the heavenly perspective: **It is a good thing for us to become like Jesus!** Amen.

2. Embracing trials and difficulties brings us to maturity.

Even Jesus had to embrace difficulties to develop and mature.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered....

Heb 5:8

3. Responding properly to God while under trials or mistreatment gives us a unique opportunity to honor and glorify God.

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Pet 2:19-21

Memory Verse:

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Rom 5:3-5 (NIV)

With out really understanding what the old man meant nor hardly caring what the strange riddle might mean the two men continued on their journey. Sure enough, not far from where they left the old man they came to the riverbed. And they remembered his words... "Pick up some of the gravel" Without much thought they both grabbed a handful of stones from the dry streambed and continued on their way.

A good distance now from their encounter with the old man and the dry riverbed they set up camp. The next morning as they were about to set off again they reached into their pockets to find what they had thought was nothing but worthless pebbles to be, in fact, gold, diamonds and precious stones. And they remembered the old man's words..... "In the morning, you will be very happy and very sad." And so it was true. They were very happy that they had grabbed a handful of the precious stones and very sad that they had not taken more.....

In the dim starlight of the night they could not see the value of what was in their hands. But as the light dawned they saw more clearly.

And this is the meaning and application.

You and I see dimly the values of difficulties in this life. Most seem blind to their precious purpose so they are avoided, dreaded and murmured and complained about. But God is at work molding, shaping fashioning us into His image, developing His life within us thorough these very trials. The day is coming when many will be very happy they rejoiced in some and very sad that they did not run with hearts full of faith and joy to meet His shaping hands.

Consider it joy brothers.....

One final consideration:

An important distinction between the topic of this study "Life's Trials" and sickness needs to be made. Throughout the New Testament ministry of Jesus, sickness was always viewed as an enemy and not as a trial to be embraced. Healing is always to be pursued and although some of the same benefits may well be accrued for one persevering under a burden of illness this is not the type of trial that we are encouraged by scripture to welcome joyfully. Instead, the Scriptures enjoin us to persevere in our faith as we look to the Lord for healing, rejoicing in Him who has overcome every enemy looking to the day when even death will be swallowed in his overwhelming victory.

4. Some difficulties are meant to refine our hearts.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your _____ -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be _____ and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
1 Peter 1:6-7

5. Some difficulties reveal our hearts and teach us to trust in Christ more deeply.

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to _____ you that man does not live on bread alone but on _____ that comes from the _____.
Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not _____ but on _____, who raises the dead.
2 Corinthians 1:9

6. God allows some difficulties for discipline and correction.

Endure _____ as _____; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?
Hebrews 12:7

For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the _____ are the way to life,
Proverbs 6:23

7. Some difficulties come to keep us from sin and ineffectiveness.

To _____ because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.
2 Corinthians 12:7

- **What was Paul’s ultimate conclusion in the trial of his “thorn” in the flesh?**

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, _____ in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

8. There are special promises of blessing to those who persevere under trials.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the _____ that God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself _____ and _____, _____ and _____.

Peter 5:10

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness (the peaceable fruit of righteousness NKJ) and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12: 7 &11

9. A Special Promise of ‘Great’ Reward’ for those who endure persecution.

For those who endure the trials and difficulties of persecution there is a special promise of reward.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because _____ _____ in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matt 5:10-12

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are _____, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Pet 4:14

Putting it all together

In the context of James 1 the connection to this perspective and godly wisdom is clear. He even appeals to someone who might be tempted to lose this perspective by adding,

If any of you lacks _____ (the clarity of mind to see the value and purpose of trials), he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt (knowing that the Lord will restore his vision to see the value and purpose of these difficulties), because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. (One minute trusting Christ the next doubting if He is truly at work)

James 1:5-6

God is more interested in seeing our character developed than we are. We can lose the wisdom of the eternal point of view and settle for the shallow comforts of this life. God is constantly at work to help us see the eternal, the goal of running the race and winning the prize of a life fully dedicated to Christ.

A parable that brings these truths to light

There were two men on a journey one night across a vast barren desert. As they trudged on their way they heard the voice of an old man, a prospector, no doubt, who had been injured, crying out for help. When they got to him they were able to help and quickly he was out of danger. As the two young men prepared to go on their way the old man said something strange to them. “When you travel on tonight, not very far from here, you will come to a dry riverbed. When you cross it be sure to pick up some of the gravel from the middle of the stream bed. Then in the morning you will be very happy and very sad.”