

A look at James 1:2-4

Joy in the Midst of Trials

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Perseverance must finish its work

so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

THINK ABOUT IT

Sometimes I'm not sure that I want to accept all the implications of this passage. Do I really want to "consider it pure joy" when I am experiencing trials? For that matter, do I REALLY need trials in order to mature? (I'd rather "have a nice day" everyday!)

This is a good time for me to think about some of the trials I have recently faced and how I have reacted to them. How do these trials test my faith? Should I have reacted differently to them? What should I have done?

How does faith (trusting God during trials) develop perseverance? Why do I need perseverance, anyway? Do I really want to be "mature and complete, not lacking anything"? Then why do I complain about trials???

I pray that God will help me change my attitude toward the things he brings into my life. After all, they are for my good! (Maybe this is one of those things that Romans 8:28 is all about!)

I also pray for others who are experiencing trials. May I be a blessing and an encouragement to them, rather than making matters worse for them!

LOOKING FURTHER

When we experience trials, we are following in the footsteps of our Master, Jesus Christ. We should not be surprised if trials come - especially those that result from the opposition of the world. Yet we need to remember that our perspective is different from that of the world: We see the eternal outcome of all that happens. And from this perspective, our trials - though they may seem to go on "forever" - are but for a little while.

Because we know the outcome, we can rejoice even in the midst of trials. We have a great and glorious future - a hope that the world doesn't have. More than this, we are blessed even in this present life! For God has guaranteed that he will take these trials and turn them into a means of making us more like Christ, or like "our Father in heaven."

At times in which we need to repent from sin and humble ourselves before our God, it may be improper to be filled with joy. But even then, we have hope. The Lord himself has promised to be there to lift us up.

So don't give up! Set your focus on Jesus, who endured trials (the cross) for you. Look also to the examples of godly men of the past, such as Job. When you "stick to it" in the midst of trials, you are demonstrating that Christ has truly done a work of grace within your heart. And who knows? Perhaps you will even have opportunity to share with others the reason that your hope in Christ does not fade away! Remember that God's grace is best seen when contrasted with man's weakness.

The following verses can help you begin to explore this topic:

- Matthew 5:48; Luke 8:15; John 16:20-22
- Romans 5:3-5; 8:24-25; 12:12; 15:2-6
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 4:16-5:1; 6:3-10; 8:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 1:6-7; 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12; 3:3-5
- Hebrews 10:32-35; 12:1-3; 12:11
- James 1:2; 1:12; 3:2; 4:7-10; 5:10-11
- 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2:20-21; 3:13-17; 4:12; 2 Peter 1:5-11
- 1 John 2:28-3:3; Revelation 13:10; 14:12

IN THE VERSES THAT FOLLOW (James 1:5+)

Maybe I need wisdom in responding to trials! Do I question God's reliability to provide in these situations; do I doubt his goodness and wisdom?...

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