



ARE TROUBLES NECESSARY?

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Are troubles really necessary to grow spiritually?

What do you think?

Let us have look at what James says...

The readers were in spiritual trouble:

- They were proud and critical.
- They were worldly and their lifestyles did not match what they said they believed.
- They discriminated against the poor.
- They did not control their tongues.
- They were arrogant towards their employees.
- They did not handle the many trials and temptations they faced well at all.
- They were frustrated with their prayer life – it felt like God was not answering their prayers.

In short, they were BACKSLIDDEN and the Book of James is a guide to spiritual recovery.

Our situation and challenges are not much different to what the initial readers of the Book of James faced.

James was an experienced Elder and Pastor. He was there when the church started. He experienced a mighty move of God. Then, the church got scattered, sown like seed among the nations. Many of these early believers started to struggle, started to compromise, and started to fall into sin. James is seeking to help them recover spiritually.

Today we are going to allow James to teach us on how to handle the troubles and trials we face in a wise and Godly manner:

Reference: James 1:2-13 and 5:7-11

ARE TROUBLES REALLY NECESSARY TO GROW SPIRITUALLY?

The short answer is: "Yes!"

Upfront: Where does trouble come from? God or the Devil?

Verse 13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*

- The devil sends trials because he hates you.
- God allows trials because He loves you.
- The devil sends trials to damage you. To derail your faith. To make you blame God.
- God allows trials to strengthen you.

The first thing James begins with is the way we must face trials and difficulties. (Verses 2-4)

James 1:2-13 ESV

(2) *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,*

(3) *for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness*

(4) *And let steadfastness have its full effect [perfect work], that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

- *Trials: [peirasmos – putting to proof, testing, temptation to sin, calamity, affliction, experience of evil, adversity, proving, or trouble]*
- *Steadfastness: [hupomone – patient (hopeful) endurance, perseverance, constancy, steadfast waiting – there is a purpose for enduring]*
- *Be Perfect: [brought to completion, fully developed, not partial and limited, in mental and moral character, of full age, brought to its end, mature]*
- *Complete: [having all its parts, without blemish]*

James 1:2-4 MSG Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. (3) You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. (4) So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

James 1:2-4 NLT Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. (3) For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. (4) So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

James 1:2-4 TPT My fellow believers, when it seems as though you are facing nothing but difficulties see it as an invaluable opportunity to experience the greatest joy that you can! (3) For you know that when your faith is tested it stirs up power within you to endure all things. (4) And then as your endurance grows even stronger it will release perfection into every part of your being until there is nothing missing and nothing lacking.

- Why joy in trials? Not for the trial itself, but for the outcome it will produce! Our attitude is most of the battle!
- Our faith is tested. The primary thing we do with our faith is to wisely live by it. “*The just shall live by his faith*” and “*Without faith it is impossible to please God*”.
- It is our faith that produces real life change. It helps us to act like God’s people. How well do your actions mirror the faith you proclaim? I am willing to endure and wait because I know God is doing something good in me and for me.
- God uses your present trials to prepare you for greater conquests in your future. He prepares you for what lies ahead. (Example: Preparing your children for adulthood)
- Remember God is faithful to this process! You can ask for help. He will give us wisdom.

(5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

(6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

(7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive [take hold of] anything from the Lord;

(8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- Wisdom: [knowing what is the best end and knowing the best means of attaining it]
- Double-Minded: [double-hearted, two souls: wants to secure both worlds – Heaven's Riches and Earthly Riches – does not want to let go of either]

Next, James guides his readers on how to deal with their double-mindedness (their love for God and their love for the world):

(9) Let the lowly brother boast [rejoice] in his exaltation,

(10) and the rich [rejoice] in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

(11) For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

James 1:9-11 TPT *The believer who is poor still has reasons to boast, for he has been placed on high. (10) But those who are rich should boast in how God has brought them low and humbled them, for all their earthly glory will one day fade away like a wildflower in the meadow. (11) For as the scorching heat of the sun causes the petals of the wildflower to fall off and lose its appearance of beauty, so the rich in the midst of their pursuit of wealth will wither away.*

James has advice for two groups of believers: for the poor and for the rich [all in one church]. He exhorts both groups to rejoice, the first because God has raised them to a high estate, the second because they will soon perish like flowers in a field.

- A poor man who knows Christ ceases to be a man of low degree. In worldly possessions he is poor, but in the possessions of real value (because they last for eternity), he is wealthy.
- The joy of the rich man is that God has brought him low. His debasement takes the form of being denied the privilege of holding on to his earthly wealth forever. The fact that he will soon lose his wealth helps a rich man keep his priorities straight. It reminds him day after day that he needs to be compiling a good record for eternity rather than building an empire here. The same fact helps him view his poor brothers with proper love and respect. It protects him from feeling superior. After all, his present position in society is only temporary. The time will come when they stand before God as equals, and the rich man will give account for his treatment of the poor man.

Conclusion: Summary

Verse 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

- Every man is in this life in a state of temptation or trial. In this state he is prepared for another and a better world to come - he that stands in his trial shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.
- Eternal life is a free gift to everyone and anyone who believes in Jesus. The crown of life is a reward for a life well-lived. It is an honour that Jesus bestows upon those who endure the trials and temptations of this life.
- It is our love for God that enables us to endure the trials of life.

James 5:7-11 ESV

(7) Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

(8) You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

(9) Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

(10) As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

(11) Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

- Be patient – wait for the fruit. That is how faith is tested. If you value the outcome, you will embrace the pain of the process – you will joyfully endure it! (Every athlete knows this)
- Establish your hearts – Stop being double-hearted. Love God. Trust God's purpose and process – Know that God is compassionate and merciful – Ask Him to help you – Ask for Wisdom.
- When we do not understand and embrace God's process and dealings with us – we tend to compare ourselves to others – that is why James exhorts us not to grumble against one another.
- God has given us many examples, recorded in the Bible, of those who endured and remained steadfast in their faith – That is meant for our encouragement. They are the cloud of witnesses cheering us on! (Hebrews 12)
- Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. (2) We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne.*

APPLICATION

1. Are you starting to get a different perspective on trials? Can you see that God wants to help you grow up in your faith through difficult circumstances?
 2. Does this perspective help you to rejoice in sufferings as you look forward to the fruit that is busy forming in your life?
 3. We all face the temptation to give up, but God has given us a family – a community of believers – to walk through this life with us and help us through difficult times. If you're struggling, reach out to someone for help today. If you don't someone to speak to, contact one of our pastors or community group leaders, or call 072 986 4368.
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Assistance:

If you need prayer or assistance, please contact our pastoral care line 072 986 4368 or one of our pastors directly.

To join a community group, contact Marli (072 986 4368) or Jen (084 308 5185) or one of our community group leaders directly. Link: <http://christiancentre.co.za/community.html#groups>

Note: During the current Lockdown Level 4, we are not permitted to meet in person, but our community groups are staying in contact via digital platforms.