

A Healthy View of Trials, James 1

Since God is without beginning or end, we grow in our experience of Him over a lifetime without exhausting His depths. We have a deep-seated yearning to *experience His presence, hear His heart, and partner with Him to do His will by faith...right now*. Some of what belongs to our entire spiritual journey as norm, we may have only experienced occasionally as a *foretaste*. God has “*more*” available to us as His much-loved Bride.

For it has been **granted** to you on behalf of Christ not only to **believe** in him, but also to **suffer for him** (Philippians 1:29, **emphasis**).

Did you notice Paul’s description of Jesus’ twofold gift?

We have had *foretastes* in the midst of *trials* and *attacks* where we have felt carried on eagle’s wings. Now these *foretastes* are beginning to be more of the *norm*. If we were well taught as a young Christian, this is nothing new...yet very fresh. Struggle is the law of growth. Embrace it quickly. Every challenge or problem now has the inherent potential to draw us to commune and partner more deeply with our Family-of-Three. We more quickly see the opportunity inherent in necessary obstacles.

Why is suffering for Jesus a parallel gift with faith?

Can you feel the creative, paradoxical tension? Our Father and Groom are passionate about growing us up as His child and bride. Normally, trials do not *come* from Him but are used by Him for our good. Write Romans 8:28 in large letters over *your* trials.¹

And we know that **in all** things God **works for the good** of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28, **emphasis**).

Our good God uses difficult people and painful circumstances in order to bring about His highest good in our lives. In the midst of the pain, He comes alongside with His compassion and care. He remains with us until that trial has its perfect work, producing perseverance within so be become mature and complete, lacking nothing (James 1:2-4). No wonder James tells us to consider tests and challenges as a sheer gift of joy. Of course, not the trials. We are no masochists. We rejoice in the process and in the good results flowing from trials. “*Treasure hunt*” the results God accomplishes in and through us.

James has a mature view on tough times that’s well worth soaking in for a time (James 1:2-18). Please stop and take a few minutes now to read James 1:2-18 through reflectively before going on. Ask yourself: “*What does James refer to in this passage that will bring God’s good into my life, even if the process is difficult?*”

James gives us at least nine blessings we receive from trials, if we lean into God.

1. As I face trials squarely, they invite me into great joy in the process of testing my faith. The trial itself is not joyful, but the opportunity for change latent within as we turn to God, v 2.
2. God releases an ability for me to wait long enough in the heat of the testing of my faith for Him to further His work of maturing me by developing resiliency within, vv. 3-4.
3. Trials bring “gaps” in my life into the light so in faith I ask my generous Giver for practical wisdom to discern the source of the trial and my response to close these “gaps,” (the four sources of trials spawn a “*crisis of faith*”), vv. 5-8.

4. Don't get down on yourself when trials sweep over you. Remember that trials come uniquely and impartially to all, and don't necessarily mean I messed up, vv. 9-11.
5. After standing through the trial, "*treasure hunt*" within the trial to discover God's blessings and crown of life. Then reframe the painful event with this good (Heb. 12:2b; Rom. 8:28), v. 12. Trials are temporary, yet the results can be eternal, developing a buoyancy in your life so you are not sunk by tough times.
6. Never blame-shift, especially toward God since He is not in the tempting-business, v. 13. We empower trials as we set our focus on them since "*we become what we behold*," for gain or harm.
7. Under pressure, my self-life is forced into the open instead of hiding in darkness. Now I have the choice to stop my self-life from birthing more sin and deathlike events in me, vv. 14-15. God wastes nothing.
8. Trials are fertile soil for the Evil One to deceive me, unless I hang onto God's goodness with one hand ("*He's good & perfect*") and His greatness with the other (He sovereignly "*chose*," 18), vv. 16-17.
9. Expect God to birth fresh life in me through His Word (so dive into your "deep wells" in Scripture during these fluid times), v. 18.

If we fail to respond like this, our response points to an arena in our lives where we have a low *trust* level in God and subtly feel we need to keep *control*. As we see God's goodness in all things, we stop taking either insults or praise too seriously. I remember a recent experience reading through the Gospel of John when I came to John 14:30.

...the prince of this world is coming. He has **no hold over me** (John 14:30 **emphasis**).

If we are personally offended by another, this points to something *within us* that is still "offend-able." "*What would it be like in life if I had **nothing** in me that's offendable?*" Now when I feel offended, I'm exposed. I have a great opportunity for God to fill any empty place within me with His light, life, and love.

Forgiveness is just as quick when I sin (normally), yet more focused now on being certain I quickly *forgive all* who sin against me from my heart. I try to take whatever time is needed to examine the memories from the events or persons from my past that cast a debilitating shadow over my present. Forgiving others is initially only for *me*. I first quickly forgive others so I'm now free to minister more fruitfully, even to those who have tried to harm me. This develops an inner resiliency so I "*bounce well*" when life shoves me down.

For those stirred within by snatches of what you are reading, lean in hard to Jesus. The Father has provided all you need to enter into this deeper rest. We partner with the Spirit by adding our hard work and the grit of passion with perseverance. The only thing that excludes us from experiencing this third cycle is ourselves, if we refuse to combine the grit of passion and perseverance to enter in. *Which of these potpourri of ideas does the Eternal One want you to deepen in this season of life?*

ⁱ I'm learning to take the first step of compassion towards others who are in trials. Romans 8:28 is still true for them, but most people first need compassion and empathy. *Grace* comes before *truth* in Jesus' life (John 1:14) and must with us also.

With myself, however, I quickly go to Romans 8:28 because of the compassions of God poured out to me (like Philippians 2:1).