



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 012: Grow through Life's Trials

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Read James 1:1-8,12.

Everyone has trials* in life; Christians are not exempt. (Read what Jesus warned His followers, in John 16:33.) James recognises this, but gives us some pointers as to how, when we face them with faith, trials might actually benefit us. (Peter writes in similar vein in 1 Peter 1:6-7.)

- 1. Take a positive attitude.** With what mind does James say we should approach trials (in verse 2)? Of course, this is not easy; but as you read on you will see there is an outcome that we can anticipate with joy. A complaining attitude to trials, on the other hand, develops a bitter spirit (read, for example, Exodus 16:2-3).
- 2. A positive lesson.** What is it (in verse 3)? Facing trials with the expectation that God is at work puts pressure on one's faith, but that very pressure strengthens faith as muscles are strengthened by physical endurance. Without faith, patience will wither through prolonged trials, but as faith is strengthened it will enable endurance to face the ordeal with ongoing patience. (The New International Version uses "perseverance", which perhaps better reveals the overcoming aspect of enduring the trial.)
- 3. A positive Outcome** (verses 4 and 12). Endured in the right spirit, trials will help perfect the character of the one who goes through them. We won't be perfect in every way, of course (see Mark 10:18), but the Greek word for "perfection" here means something that is finished, as opposed to something that is still in the making. That is why James can go on to say we shall be "*complete and lacking nothing*". What does Jude verse 24 tell us God is able to do? It seems, then, that God uses our trials as some of his "tools" for this purpose. Incidentally, see what God's verdict was on His original creation, which included mankind (Genesis 1:31).
- 4. A positive help** (verses 5-8). Some trials require an addition to faith if they are to be overcome or endured successfully, especially if they involve the need to make decisions. What should we ask for (verse 5)? The injunction to ask in faith, without wavering, makes sense. Uncertainty about whether we have received wisdom will cause us either to hesitate before deciding on a course of action, or to worry lest we have taken the wrong action. Firm belief that we act with inspired wisdom will lead to firm action and confidence we have acted correctly.

To think about: Read Romans 8:18,28-29. Consider (1) the meaning of "all things" and (2) God's ultimate purpose for us. How does this compare to what you have been reading in James 1:1-8?

To dig deeper: With the aid of a concordance or chain references, look up references to *trials* or *tribulation* and *perseverance* or *endurance*. See what these verses tell us about what we might gain by such.

*Note: The Authorised (Kings James) Version of the Bible uses the word *temptations* instead of *trials*. Most later translations prefer "trials" as being more appropriate to the context.