

## Living as a Christian in Times of Difficulty

James 1:1-11  
Sunday, March 22, 2020

### Introduction

This has been a week that most of us never would have expected or predicted. As Coronavirus has spread throughout the nation most of us have found ourselves homebound. Now more than ever we recognize that we do not know what tomorrow holds.

In times like these the question must be asked, how should we, as followers of Jesus, respond during these unusual and uncertain times?

Today we turn to the book of James where we have this reminder: that while trials are certain and come in all shapes and sizes, joy is possible as we recognize God's purpose and provision in the midst of our trials.

### Context

James was the half-brother of Jesus and he was a leader in the church in Jerusalem in the years following Jesus's return to Heaven. James writes this letter to Jewish Christians who have been scattered by persecution. This short book is aimed at helping Christians know what it looks like, in very practical ways, to live as faithful followers of Jesus.

### The Call for Joy (1:2a)

The first phrase of verse 2 provides a call that frames the entire section that follows. James is calling on Christians who are facing trials to consider their trials with joy.

On its own this may seem like a call to unsubstantiated happiness, but the verses that follow reveal the reason Christians can truly, *count it all joy*.

### We can Experience Joy in our Trials By Knowing that Our Trials have a Purpose (1:2-4)

- **A Message for Christians** – James refers to His readers as *brothers*. This reminds us of two things: First, that James is writing to Christians, and second, that He is writing to people for whom he has affection because of their shared relationship through Christ.
- **God's Purpose in our Trials** – As we face trials we can have this hope: That God is using our trials to make us perfect and complete.
- **A New Testament Message** – The call for joy or rejoicing in the knowledge that God uses trials to bring us to maturity is a theme throughout the New Testament (1 Peter 1:6-7; Romans 5:1-5).

- **The Example of Jesus** (How can we endure with joy?)
  - Jesus endured the cross with joy as his motivation (Hebrews 12:2)
  - While Jesus endured the cross with joy, He still experienced pain, grief and sorrow (Matthew 26:37-39)
  - Enduring with joy does not mean we don't experience pain, but it does mean that we have hope and purpose in the process

### We can Experience Joy in our Trials by Knowing that God Provides Wisdom for the Journey (1:5-8)

- **The Need for Wisdom** – In times of difficulty we become acutely aware of our need for wisdom. It is easy to feel lost or unprepared.
- **The Source of Wisdom** - God does not leave us alone to find our way through our trials, He generously and graciously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.
- **Asking in Faith** – God is ready and willing to give wisdom, but there is a qualifier, we must ask believing that He will give it. We must trust that He will hear and answer our request. The person who doubts is described as double-minded and will not receive wisdom from God.

### Living it Out: James Applies His Teaching to a Real Life Situation (1:9-11)

- James is writing to real people, in a real situation. These are people who are facing real trials, and he is good pastor. As a good pastor he wants to help his readers apply what he has taught.
- He applies the truth of enduring with joy and godly wisdom to two different situations: the situation of a poor man and of a rich man. Both the poor and the rich are called to see themselves rightly in respect to God and others.
- Verses 9-11 are written in the context of responding to trials. James's application to these specific situations not only shows his pastoral sensibilities, but it also reminds us that each of us must apply these unchanging truths of purpose and wisdom in trials to our varied situations.

**Summary** – As individuals and as a church we must strive to have a view toward joy in the midst of this unexpected situation. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust that God will use these trials to accomplish His purposes. As we navigate uncertain times we must trust His plan, submit to His work in us and go to Him in faith asking for wisdom.