

Proof of Life: Joy in Trials

(James 1:1–12)

WHAT IS TRUE AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO:

Finding joy amid trials reflects a healthy and maturing spiritual life, which also builds endurance. Christians should ask God for wisdom and view their trials as humbling experiences that God can use to deepen their faith.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD ...¹

1.) Keep _____ at the _____ in Christ that your trials bring about (1–4).

- Why? Trials have a purifying quality. The result of the testing of faith is “perseverance” or endurance, which brings about a maturing of one’s character.
- A basic quality of the Christian life is _____. A slave has no inherent rights. As a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are to be conformed to your Master, who ensures you lack nothing.
- James is not commanding how one should emotionally “feel,” but instead, how one should “think” of their situation. “Consider” implies a firm attitude toward difficult circumstances.

2.) Keep _____ God for _____ when undergoing trials (5–8).

- We should confidently _____ His wisdom, power, authority, resources, and sovereignty. God generously and without prejudice gives wisdom to believers who prayerfully ask for it.

3.) Keep _____ in the Lord Jesus Christ with _____ that trials make all people equally dependent upon God; by faith, rich and poor believers, alike, have the privilege of a high spiritual standing before God. (9–12)

- _____ that your trials should lessen as a believer. Trials are not a sign of God’s displeasure but are opportunities to persevere in the LORD (possibly while being a blessing to others).
- You should look at your life from a _____ perspective, not an earthly one. It is not your earthly status that defines you.
- We serve the One whom this world, which is passing away, rejects.

APPLICATION:

- ✓ These verses are not saying that everything that happens to us is somehow innately good and, therefore, a direct reason to rejoice.
- ✓ Instead, we must remember that God can transform evil events and produce good.
- ✓ Trials can be opportunities for us to become more Christ-like.
- ✓ We need wisdom in trials to see the good of the trial and to know how to respond appropriately.
- ✓ If prayers are to be answered, we must not doubt our conviction that God is good, and that God is all-powerful.
- ✓ *Trials come to poor men and rich men* (1:9–11)
 - **The Poor (1:9):** “Proof of life in the poor is seen in those who rejoice that God has given him a high position in Christ. He can rejoice even in the fact that he is poor, for had he possessed this *world’s natural riches*, he might never have turned to God to receive *God’s spiritual riches*.”²
 - **The trial of a rich man (1:10, 11):** “Proof of life in the rich is seen in those who rejoice in the fact that in Christ, he has been made low and has been enriched with the lowly, meek, and humble spirit of Christ (Matt. 5:5, 11:29; Phil. 2:3–11). He can rejoice even in the fact that he is rich, for perhaps it was his riches which caused him to become disenchanted with the world and to turn to Christ. God caused him to realize that he and his riches are like the grass, here in beauty and glory today but faded and gone tomorrow. See 1 Cor. 7:31 and 1 Peter 1:24.”²
- ✓ Trials bring final blessedness (1:12): If we trustingly and prayerfully endure our trials, we prove the genuineness of our faith in God and our love for God, and then in the world to come, we will be given a victor’s crown, a crown consisting of eternal life and its fulness.
- ✓ The award is given, not to trials or to the endurance of trials, but to faith tested and proved to be genuine through trials.
- ✓ Service to God that is motivated by a calculated desire for reward is the exact opposite of Christian spirituality. But the New Testament consistently invites Christians to contemplate the inheritance that awaits them. We serve from love, not selfish gain.

¹ Craig L. Blomberg and Marjiam J. Kamell, James, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 58–59.

² Roy E. Gingrich, The Book of James (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2005), 10.