

March 13, 2022

The Journey Back

“Joy in Hard Places”

--the Jessica Long story

James 1:2-4, 12

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, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 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.

1. Choose joy when life tries to suck it out of you – v. 2

- You have a choice as to how you choose to live in the midst of suffering. This is about the _____ you choose to embrace, not the _____ in which you find yourself.
- The bond we share in Christ ought to be the means by which we can be lifted above our suffering to see the goodness of our Lord.
- We suffer because of our own actions and sometimes because of the actions of another. Other times we suffer for reasons that are seemingly unexplainable.

2. Understand that testing produces endurance – v. 3

- Anchor your mind in the revealed truth of God’s Word.
- Patience might be a virtue, but that staying power is the _____ that God is trying to grow in my life.

3. Embrace God’s sovereign process to make you complete – v. 4

- Permit steadfastness to carry out its work to completion. _____ before the process is completed.
- When we allow steadfastness to grow in us it sets us up to become mature and complete.
- The hardship you are enduring may in fact be God’s sovereign work of _____ to fill what is lacking in you.

4. Believe that the reward is worth the struggle – v. 12

- Trials produce patience, which lead to maturity, and all of this works together to prove the _____ of our _____, which will ultimately usher us into our eternal reward.
- The real reward is _____—for all eternity.

Table Talk

1. Who do you know that is facing hardships right now? How could you pray for him or her? How do you think God might use you to encourage that person?
2. How difficult is it to choose joy in the midst of suffering? Why is that?
3. What purpose does patience play in the work that God is doing in the life of a believer through suffering? Is patience the end goal? What really is the end goal of God's sovereign work in your life?
4. What comes to mind when you think of something that is complete, lacking nothing?
5. What is the difference between believing "everything happens for a reason" and the hope that James gives us in verse 12? What hope does this give you in your circumstances today?