

TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARK

James 1:5-12

How do we respond when the pressure rises?

...times are hard; we don't know what to expect next?

James writes to help us face such times.

...writes to Jewish believers scattered by persecution

Expelled from synagogue Rejected by family Lost jobs

Our troubles aren't about persecution; but, just as real!

Jas. tells us how to live, when pressure rises.

Call to LIVING faith—faith that works.

Living faith produces fruit, under pressure

LIVING FAITH ENDURES TRIBULATION 1:2-12

7 principles help us endure under pressure:

1. Principle of a joyful attitude 2 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds”*

We *rejoice* under pressure because

we understand God's good purpose

2. Principle of God's perspective 3-4 *“The testing of your faith develops perseverance.*

Perseverance must finish its work so you may be mature & complete, not lacking anything.”

PRESSURE=> PERSEVERANCE => MATURITY

Pressure is process God uses to help us become all He wants us to be.

3. Principle of patient endurance 4

God wants pressure to continue until we receive **FULL** benefit.

So we'll be complete—**not lacking anything**.

4. Principle of discernment 5 *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”*

We understand God's perspective on suffering in general,

but when we're suffering, we struggle to understand

Proper question is NOT **“WHY?”**

“Lord, what do you want to accomplish through this?”

My life is but a weaving, between my Lord and me;

I cannot choose the colors. He worketh steadily.

Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow and I in foolish pride,

Forget he sees the upper & I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly,

Shall God unroll the canvas & explain the reason why,

The dark threads are as needful in the Weaver's skillful hand, as the threads of gold & silver, in the pattern He has planned.

People with living faith ask God for wisdom to know how to respond under pressure.

“Ask the giving God” —Who gives generously, without reproach, for understanding

God doesn't answer: *“You again?”*

He's patient with us; willing to give answer we need

5. Principle of trusting God 6-8 “When he asks, he must believe & not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown & tossed by the wind. ⁷That man shouldn’t think he’ll receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he’s a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

This isn’t about trusting God to get us out of this mess!

It’s trusting Him in the mess; asking Him for wisdom to understand what He’s doing, from *HIS* perspective.

PRESSURE (suffering) + FAITH => MATURITY PRESSURE (suffering) = FAITH => CONFUSION

6. Principle of contentment 9-11 “The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position –because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat & withers the plant; its blossom falls & its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.”

We endure because our perspective is different

Ability to endure under pressure...

Doesn't depend on what we own.

Depends on our contentment with God.

Poor people can take pride in God's work in us.

High position=>“brother”–in God’s family–heir of God

We’re given every spiritual blessing. **We lack nothing!**

If we could truly comprehend all that’s ours in Christ, we’d realize how **RICH** we are!

Rich people struggle; wealth lures us to focus on our *stuff*

If we place confidence in possessions, we could lose everything.

Rich & poor have basis to rejoice in what God gives us.

TRUE CONCEPT OF EXALTATION:

God exalts the humble; humbles the proud.

People exalt the rich; humble the poor.

Suffering eliminates social distinctions

Humble are elevated; God cares for US!

Wealthy humbled; God doesn’t play favorites

Riches & appearance are temporary

“Beautiful appearance” dries up and fades away.

Our *stuff's* like delicate flowers; sun quickly withers

If our contentment depends on our stuff, one tragedy can take it all! [Dallas friend]

If our contentment depends on our relationship with God, we’ll never lose it!

7. Principle of ultimate reward 12 “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

People with living faith endure pressure

because we understand God’s promise.

We look beyond temporary rewards that pass away!

People with living faith remain faithful,

pass the test, & receive the crown of life.

Our reward, our “victory wreath” = *life* itself!

–at end of the struggle, we obtain life–*eternal* life!

Process leads to contentment, under pressure!

Pliny, Roman governor wrote to Trajan the Emperor,
for advice about how to deal with Christians.

He had problem with one. He decided to threaten him:

“I will banish thee,” he said.

“Thou canst not, for all the world is my father’s house.”

“I will take away thy possessions;”

“Thou canst not, for my treasure is in heaven.”

“I’ll drive thee away from man; thou shalt have no friend

“Thou canst not, for I have an unseen Friend,
from Whom thou art not able to separate me.”

What could poor governor, limited to power of life & death,
torture & stake, do with people like that?

How should WE react to hard times?

Persevering is worth it; the crown of life is worth more than escaping the pressure!

When financial security crashes–investments tank

When health is disabled, When family is killed,...

When actions are misunderstood, or we’re slandered,

is Christ still worth following?

Persevering is worth it, because crown of life’s worth more than escaping pressure!

When pressure rises, it can cause JOY!

WE CAN TRUST GOD IN THE DARK!