

## Practicing the Way - The Pathway of Pain James 1:2-8

Proverbs 17:3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart.

- God inspired James to write a letter to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith.

### 1. Anticipate Pain

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials...

- “trials” – “an attempt to learn the nature or character of something.”

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

Psalm 13:1-6 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the *sleep of* death, 4 And my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” *and* my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken. 5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.

### 2. Alter Your Perspective

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.

- C. S. Lewis: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”
- Pain may be the main context where Christlikeness becomes a possibility.
- Joy is not a feeling or the absence of sorrow. Joy is a choice.
- Consider it Joy = Choose Joy.
- Kay Warren: Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that everything will be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation.
- How do we consider pain with joy?
  - o We accept that God allowed our pain to happen. Rom 8:28
  - o We believe that God is always at work in our lives. Jn 5:17
  - o We conform to God’s will in our circumstances. Rom 12:2
  - o We hold onto God with confidence that He is going to accomplish something wonderful through our suffering. Heb 11:6
  - o We surrender to God’s touch as He forms our lives through difficulty. James 4:8-10
  - o We serve God through our newfound knowledge that was gained only through pain.

2 Corinthians 1:3 [God] comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

### 3. **Accept change**

James 1:3-4 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Spiritual formation is about change.

- **Something we need to know – Pain is productive**

- “know” = intellectual and experiential

- Endurance leads to maturity

- It leads to spiritual formation.

- Romans 5:3-5 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- **Something we need to do – Pray**

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

- God’s goal is our formation, and understanding what’s going on in our lives has great formative value.

- We don’t ask God why to accuse Him or to suggest an alternative plan.

- Our first prayer should not be for deliverance.

- We need wisdom to learn the lessons from our struggle.

Our pain doesn’t diminish His love. It may even reveal His love.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way I take; *when* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Job 13:15 “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”