



2. The Pure Paradox TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

James' letter was written originally to Jewish Christians of his day. But, his teaching remains valid to Christians even today. Immediately after greeting his audience, James makes a very paradoxical statement. He says, "Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds."

How can anyone consider "trials" or "troubles" to be 'pure joy' or even a matter of 'joy?' I for one have no appetite for trials and hardships, and have never consciously invited it. Most likely that is how you feel as well. To be fair, I don't think James is asking us to go out and look for trouble and hardship in order to find "pure joy."

Neither is he asking us to pretend that trials are an enjoyable to experience. Instead when James writes the word "consider" he is actually encouraging readers to examine and evaluate the way they look at trials.

He asks us to reframe and align our attitude to God's perspective on trials and hardships. James makes it clear to Christians that "trials of many kinds" is something every Christian will experience. So, James uses the word "whenever" when writing about trials that Christians will face rather than the word "if" they will have trials. This verse in James sounds like a clear echo of what Jesus told His disciples, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33).

James then goes on to explain why we should "consider trials to be pure joy."

According to James, God intends trials to test our faith and through it produce in us spiritual growth and stamina. Athletes endure hard physical training in a positive way because they know it will strengthen their muscles and stamina enabling them to win a prize. Similarly, James encourages Christians to embrace trials and hold firm to their faith in God and receive His promises. James puts it this way, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial, because having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life, that the Lord has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12)

Personally, whenever I have encountered trials and troubles, I have realized very quickly, there is only so much that I or my family and friends can do to overcome it. Troubles, make me acutely aware of my need to depend on Jesus. Each time I reached out to Him in times of trouble, I have experienced His undeserved grace and mercy. With each such experience my faith in Christ, spiritual muscle and stamina have grown. So much so, that today any trouble be it work related, financial, relational or physical by default, goes to Him.

That, I am sure, is a common experience for many of you, who by His grace and mercy have overcome troubles in the past. That was also the experience of Joseph. When Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37:1–38), he had no clue of what God would accomplish through his decades of suffering and perseverance while in Egypt. From Potiphar's palace for no fault of his he spends many years, forgotten in a prison. But, Joseph never forgot God in all those years and through his many trials and tests, Joseph learned to trust God. In the end, he finds himself in a place of honour in Egypt all by the grace of God. He is then able to rescue his family, the nation

of Israel and all of Egypt from starvation.

Joseph's faith had been tested through trials, and his perseverance helped finish its work. It is only after coming through the trials victoriously, Joseph understood God's good purpose in all he had endured.

We witness his fully developed spiritual maturity when Joseph spoke his famous words of forgiveness to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:19–20).

In the trials we encounter, God equips us not just to overcome them, but to also to grow us, mature us, that can lead to using to fulfill His purposes. Don't you think that is a good reason to rejoice and join James in "considering trials to be a matter of pure joy?"

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