

Why am I still Suffering?

James 1:2-4

Pastor Too Teh Hsin

Pain and suffering is an unavoidable part of human existence. We live in a broken world with broken people. Pain is real and hard, whether to a child, youth, adult, or elderly.

3 Transformations of Trials

1. From Trials to Joy

The book of James was written by James, the brother of Jesus. It is a book about wisdom and how to live as Christians.

v. 2 - James addressed the most pressing issue that was plaguing the Jewish Christian - persecution and suffering. He brings together two things that do not come together - trials and joy. James is not appealing to our emotions, but our minds, to consider it all joy when we face trials of various kinds. *"I'm convinced that there are a good many things in this life that we really can't do anything about, but that God wants us to do something with."* - Elisabeth Elliot. We must see what God is doing in and through us amidst pain. Pain is like the chisel in the hands of a master craftsman, to create a sculpture from a dull piece of rock.

2 Sources to find Joy from in our Trials

#1 Spiritual Joy - this joy is a fruit of the spirit given by the Holy Spirit that only the children of God can receive.

#2 Reward that comes after Pain and Suffering - James calls for us not to focus on the present pain but to look beyond to the future reward of steadfastness and lacking nothing. Fixing our eyes on the reward would help us see our present suffering not as a loss, but a pathway to the reward.

The Apostle Paul echoes this; in light of the reward he would gain, he counted all his loss and suffering as rubbish (Phil. 3:8). Let us look to gain Christ in our pain and suffering!

2. From Testing to Steadfastness

The testing (v. 3) is a test for two things:

#1 Our true love - when we are faced with temptation, do we love the temptation to sin, or God? Every sin against God flows out of a heart that worships and loves something other than God. In the testing of our faith, we are training ourselves to run to God rather than sin for relief. When we turn away from sin, it will be painful because we are crucifying the desires of our flesh for the love of God so that we may break the bondage of sin and taste the freedom that Christ has purchased for us.

#2 True refinement - when our faith is tested by fire, steadfastness is produced where it had not existed before. The original Greek word for steadfastness means perseverance and endurance. Whatever hardship we might face, trust that God is walking with us (Isa. 43:1-2). *"For gold is proved in the fire and men (and women) acceptable to God in the furnace of affliction."* - Peter H. Davids.

3. From Steadfastness to Perfection

v. 4 - The final reward of our pain and suffering is being perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. This process is called sanctification; becoming more Christlike. There is a danger if we give up too early in this journey, so we must remain steadfast in our pain and suffering! God is honoured and glorified especially through our weakness. The very path that we want to run away from is the only path to end our suffering. Christ endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him; the salvation of sinners (Heb. 12:2). Jesus overcame the world so that we may endure all kinds of trials. Take heart in God through your suffering!