

Happy When the Path is Rough



Tim Dilena October 12, 2019

“Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? *Then be happy*, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don’t try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete” (James 1:2-4, TLB).

James gives a command here: “Be happy when the way is rough.” He goes on to reason that if you obey this imperative, your patience will have a chance to grow and you will be ready for anything!

Everyone is looking for a way to live a happy life. In fact, when Yale University offered a class in its curriculum called “How to Live a Happy Life,” half the student body signed up to enroll. That class, Psych 157, became the most popular class in the history of the school.

One version of James 1: 2 reads, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (NIV). The word *consider* literally means to think forward. Don’t get stuck in the now — the present; think about what you’re facing in the future. This is huge because what James is saying is, “I want you to realize that the end of where you’re going has a purpose. Something good is on the other side.”

Peter says, “So be truly glad! There is a wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here” (1 Peter 1:6, TLB). What we can learn from both James and Peter is that heaven is not a location. Heaven is a motivation for us right now; a future thought when we are in present struggle. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to “count it all joy.” If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better.

It is vitally important to understand that when you are tested, your trials are not taking *from* you, they are producing *in* you — which is pretty amazing.

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