

A Perspective on Problems . . .

Problems, troubles, difficulties and things-just not-going “right” are a part of life all of us would probably rather choose to not have to deal with -- but deal with such things we must! How do I (as a Christian) interpret the problems I face in light of Jesus’ promise of abundant life (Jo 10:10)?

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 . . .
1 Peter 4:12

Some False Ideas about Problems/Difficulties/Trials.

1. Problems are bad, injurious and are an interruption to our lives.
2. All problems can be avoided by hard work, careful planning, and clear thinking.
3. Good Christians do not have problems.
4. Problems are a result of sin and failure, and are a sign of a lack of faith, maturity, etc.

Developing a Biblical Perspective about Problems/Difficulties/Trials.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.
1 Peter 1:6-9

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
James 1:2-4

1. Accepting trials as a part of life (Ecclesiastes 3).
2. Reacting to trials: “consider it all joy.”

“Consider” (*hegeomai*): an imperative.

“All:” each, every, any, all, the whole, all things, everything, collectively, some of all types

“Joy” (not reluctantly, but genuinely); an “unnatural” reaction.

3. Understanding the nature of trials: various trials (NASB); trials of various kinds (NIV); diverse temptations (KJV).

A. Types/Kinds/Shapes/Sizes.

B. Private/Public.

C. Individual/Corporate.

D. Depth/Breadth.

E. Severity/Intensity.

F. Length/Time Span.

G. More or Less Predictable.

4. Recognizing the source of trials.

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| A. SIT (Self-Imposed Trouble). | D. LIT (Life-Involved “Trial”). |
| B. GIT (God-Initiated Tension). | E. ETC. |
| C. DIT (Devil-Invoked Turmoil). | F. IDK (Questions of the Unanswerable Kind). |

Note: God is not the source of temptation or evil (James 1:13); temptations are limited in intensity and time frame (1 Cor 10:13).

5. Anticipating the result of trials.

- A. What we need to know.
- B. What we can expect.

- 1. The testing/approving of our faith.
- 2. The producing of endurance.

Produces (*katergazomai*): to perform, accomplish, achieve, bring about, result in.

Endurance (*hupomone*): steadfastness, constancy, endurance, perseverance, patience, patient continuance.

3. The outcome of our faith:

James: Completeness (“perfection”) and “lack of lack.”

Peter: The components of (true and tested/refined) faith:

Not seeing, but loving Him

Not seeing Him now, but believing

Experiencing joy now (greatly . . . inexpressible . . . full of glory)

Final outcome (salvation of your soul)

Some additional “benefits/outcomes” (further developing a “theology” of problems/difficulties/trials):

- 1. Problems are a reminder of our weakness and need for the Lord’s help (2 Cor 12:7-10).
- 2. Problems humble us and cause us to deal with self-sufficient pride (Matt 5:45; James 4:6-7).
- 3. Problems test our foundations (Mat 7:24-27).
- 4. Problems can help us re-evaluate our priorities (1 Cor 3:13-15; 2 Cor 4:18).
- 5. Problems can work character in us (2 Cor 4:16-17).
- 6. Problems can lead us into new levels of obedience (Heb 5:8).
- 7. Problems can sometimes be the only way we learn compassion for others (2 Cor 1:4,5).