

Read

James 1:2-8
Romans 5:1-5

Consider

Several months ago, I was looking for a replacement chess board to go with a set of pieces that I had used since high school. Hoping to not spend too much money, I periodically checked out Kijiji and Facebook marketplace to see if I could find a rather inexpensive board that I could purchase. One of the searches produced a posting for an attractive looking option in my area for only 10 dollars. The 10 by 10 square black and white marble board looked like a good match for my chess pieces and I found myself about to send a message to the seller.

But as I was moving my cursor over to the button, something seemed off. It dawned on me at the last moment that a chess board should actually be in an 8 by 8 configuration; therefore revealing that this product was not indeed a chess board after all, though it bore a resemblance to one. If I had purchased it, I would have ended up with an unusable and functionless dud, at least when it came to playing a match of chess.

That small piece of information changed the complete perspective on this board. So as it is with today's passage and what James is hoping to communicate in regards to the purpose of trials and adversity in our lives. If we miss out on what he is trying to say, we can easily adopt a faulty doctrine that claims that a life in Jesus should be free of trouble and only leads to prosperity. With this mindset, we can see trials, hardships, and adversity as barriers to achieving a full and flourishing spiritual life, leading us to either avoid them, feel guilty about them, or treat them only as unnatural and demonic. Challenging moments and painful seasons of our lives can easily become unbearable, overwhelming, defeating, and drown us in despair.

But perhaps the reason that it is especially difficult to receive trials in our lives is because we often forget the missing narrative that trials, adversity, and suffering have the potential of producing invaluable riches in our walk with God. They become the very environment and space to encounter His presence, be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and stretch us out of our preoccupation with ourselves to extend grace and compassion to others going through trials of their own. Joy in trials is possible when believers consider how God works through them to build us up spiritually.

Pastor Jon Nip

Pray

Read Psalm 139 as your prayer today.

Invite God to show you how He is refining you through trials in your life. Ask for His wisdom to reveal how through difficult seasons, we can encounter His presence more deeply, become more like Christ and His character, and extend His grace and compassion to others. Pray for courage to follow in faith.

Diving Deeper

How does our attitude and posture change if trials in our life are meant to produce perseverance, maturity, and completeness in Christ? How does it impact our perspective of who God is?

How have challenges and hardships helped you encounter God and allow Him to shape you? How might the Holy Spirit be refining your life today?

Why is wisdom from God, as opposed to worldly wisdom, important in the midst of challenges? What do you think it means to be "double-minded"?

How might we want to walk alongside our brothers and sisters through their trials and adversity?

How can we live closer **WITH GOD** in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?