

How to Find Joy in Times of Trial

1 Thessalonians 3.1-13

Paul's epistles are so upbeat and optimistic, we forget that he faced constant opposition and discouragement in ministry. The Christians in Thessalonica suffered persecution, too, so Paul shared secrets of joy in the midst of trials. These are valuable lessons for us today.

- *Prepare for spiritual confrontation (4; Jn.16.33b; 2 Tim. 3.12)*
- *Focus on encouraging others in their need (1-3,5)*
- *Focus on those standing strong despite facing trials (6-8)*
- *Thank God for His provision for others facing trials (9)*
- *Get personally involved with those facing trials (10-13)*



1. It's not fun to think about trials, but despite our efforts to avoid them, they are a part of life in a fallen world. To begin thinking about trials, let's get a bit of perspective. James 1.2 tells us to "consider it all joy when you encounter *various trials*." *Various* comes from the Greek word ποικίλος (*poikilos*), which means *multi-colored, many kinds, diverse*. *Trials* comes from the Greek word πειρασμός (*peirasmos*), meaning *test, examination, fiery ordeal, temptation*. What different kinds of trials can Christians face in this life? Now read verses 3-4. What do trials produce in our lives? Can you recall times of trial in your life in which you gained *spiritual endurance* and *maturity*?
2. While God *could* excuse Christians from trials, He does not do so (heaven is when that happens!). Before Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road, he persecuted Christians; after, he was the one who faced persecution and hardship! In 1 Thess. 3.4, Paul indicates he *expected* to 'suffer affliction.' Why is this? To get a biblical perspective, read Matt. 10.34; John 15.18-19; 16.33; 2 Tim. 3.12; Heb. 12.3-11; 1 Pet. 4.12-19.
3. In 1 Thess. 3.1-5, Paul 'bares his heart' for the Thessalonians. Twice he indicates that 'he could endure it no longer'! What is he concerned about? What was his purpose in sending Timothy to them? What did Timothy report about how the Christians in Thessalonica were doing (vv6-8)? How did this affect Paul?
4. The best 'medicine' for us when we are going through trials is to focus on others. In what ways did Paul engage in helping the Christians in Thessalonica (vv10-13)?
5. In all our sufferings, the 'ultimate goal' is that *our hearts may be established without blame in holiness...at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints* (13). It's good to get our focus off ourselves in times of trial, and also to focus on the coming of the Lord – and hearing Jesus' words! (See Matt. 25.23, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZu7mfYS_VY)