

Joy Through Suffering

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,
whenever you face trials of many kinds,
because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete,
not lacking anything.
James 1:2-4 (NIV)*

Life holds many contradictions for those who are interested in human nature and the world around us.

For example there has been difficulty in physics explaining the nature of light. The wave theory and light theory each explain certain characteristics of light but it has been thought that light cannot be both a wave and particles at the same time.

Recently astronomers, using the Hubble telescope to observe distant galaxies, have come to the conclusion that over 90% of matter and energy in the universe is undetectable with our measuring instruments. All we see is likely less than 5% of what exists. Sounds crazy but when trying to explain what we do observe we must agree that most of what exists is invisible.

On a much smaller scale there are contradictions in life that we encounter every day. If we wish to enjoy good

health we must work at it through diet and exercise. But avoiding delicious foods and taking time to sweat in the local gyms is not most people's idea of pleasure!

To walk faithfully with the Lord is both a delight and hard work at the same time. We actually need opposition from our daily life in order to walk close to the Lord.

Our verses for today speak of joy through suffering. That certainly sounds contradictory. However, when we pause to think of it, there is evidence that we benefit from our daily struggles in life.

Most of the people who have the best views on life – who are the most balanced in their personalities – are the people who have suffered much. People who are merciful, patient and kind hearted, tend to be those people who have been hurt greatly by life experiences.

Those who have not suffered much in life reject the notion

that to be a truly well rounded individual the price is sorrow. They want to be thought of as balanced and attractive people without going to the school of hard knocks.

Looking at life from the other side of it we all recognize that the selfish, merciless, and cruel people tend to be those who have had an easy life of it. We quickly know what people mean when they say someone is a "spoiled brat". Always getting our own way ruins our character.

You may be under great sorrow today, but pray to the Lord and ask that you will become better – and not bitter – through the difficulty. It is a fine line that is drawn between the benefits and the losses in suffering. You will certainly become better or bitter.

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