

"What is it that everyone wants out of life?" The answer is "Happiness." Whatever religion or philosophy is chosen it is done because it has promised to make ones life happier.

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness

We measure religion by the criteria of truthfulness, but then also by the fulfilment of its promise to bless our lives.

Some people are desperate to find happiness.

Some come under the influence of chemicals and these bright-eyed drugged-up people declare how wonderfully happy they are.

Others are the religious people who give a great impression of unreality, getting high on some counterfeit or fake kind of excitement.

Some have even tried Christianity, and discovered that the promised new happiness did not last very long.

Men are consumers. They think that to be happy is their right. Where did we get that idea? How much will it cost? Where may there be a better happiness? If it is from God then they will even go for that.

But, man the sinner has forfeited any rights before Almighty God. We have no entitlement to happiness - read any newspaper. The Lord Almighty is not a God who comes running at our beck and call to give us little joys.

Where may sinful people who deserve nothing find true blessedness?

James (1:12) writes "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has **stood the test**, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him,"

Stood the test - (Grk: dokimos) approved, tried, accepted, pleasing.

In the ancient world there was no banking system, as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation.

Some moneychangers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "dokimos" or "approved". —[Attributed to Donald Barnhouse](#)

What does it mean for us to stand the test?

Remember how the reading began. Count it (trials of many kinds) all joy! - This James is a nutter! Trials, trouble, persecution, temptation, and problems - all modern enough but count them joy! Like "Isn't it nice when you stop hitting your head against a wall." But nothing in life comes easily - childbirth, GCSE's, home improvements....

You can get instant tea, instant coffee, and instant credit - but not instant Christian maturity. No short cuts.

You don't have to be smart to find ready excuses for avoiding trials and all manner of troubles.

Remember ~~the bad news hidden in last week's reading?~~ 2 Timothy 3:12 "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"

If we want to enjoy His salvation-there is no way to escape His suffering.

Consider the queen - she gets colds, her mother died, she knows about family problems and relationship breakdowns, she had naughty children. Royalty does not make her immune.

Being a Christian does not make us immune.

How many of us in teenage years would have thought we would have coped with the problems and disasters we have come through already? You can't put old heads on young shoulders.

Who can escape trials? Blessedness comes not in avoiding them but in our response to them - that is James's message.

Consider Jesus, born into poverty in a stable, lived a life of poverty, dies at only 33 after brutal treatment and a corrupt judiciary. He had no family of his own, not even a home he could call his own for the last 3 years.

"Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine" (1 Peter 1:6 and 7).

A general is happier with a regiment of experienced, battle-scarred veterans coming to relieve his weary troops at the front than one composed of enthusiastic students who have never been under enemy fire. They need such trials for their own sake more than for the help they can give to others. So the first thing James says is that the blessed man is one who is not a stranger to trials.

No test or battle lasts forever - it just seems like it.

Note that James does not say that the trial is all joy. However, he tells us to count it joy. Bring eternity into the picture so you can see it from God's viewpoint. He will use it to fulfil His eternal purposes and our highest good.

James finds joy in the results of the trials, not in the trials themselves. Even difficult times can produce good qualities, such as perseverance.

The harder things get, the more we find we really are able to cope.

What is the fruit of this steadfast endurance?

A crown for those who endure trials (1:12).

The crowns about which we speak are not salvation. Nothing we have done deserves salvation; nothing we can do will make us any more deserving of it. Eternal life is God's free gift without any strings attached.

There was an occasion when Jesus was speaking and a woman, very moved by what she was hearing, cried out, "Blessed is the woman who gave you birth and nursed you!" But Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27 and 28). How truly happy those people alone are.

There is state of blessedness which is not a fake. It does not come from a bottle; it is not auto-suggestion: it is not induced by what has become known as touchy-feely religion; it does not bypass the mind and the rationality of man; it respects individuals and their own personalities and attainments. This blessedness is the result of God's work in our lives; his grace acting redemptively and lovingly, transforming and elevating us. It comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and as a result of his influence upon our lives we become a blessed people.

James promised that there is a reward for perseverance: **the crown of life.**

James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

We can't avoid trials but notice that God has promised this crown to all those who love Him. Surely this includes every believer.

The crown of life is the first and basic crown. It is given to those Christians who truly love Jesus. Because they love Him, they are faithful to Him. When trials and tests arrive in their life, they remain true to Him. They are the overcomers who endure temptations, those who overcome spiritual battles and win this crown of life for remaining faithful to Jesus. Remaining true to the Lord is evidence of our love for him. We may slip and fall on the way because we are not yet perfect – but the good news is that we will win!

The term "life" is used in scripture to indicate a right relationship with God. Jesus said, "...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). A crown of life -abundant life, a life of Peace, Love, Joy, Kindness, Gentleness, Self-control, Patience, Goodness and Faithfulness. How would you like an eternity of that!

The expression "**crown of life**" also appears in Revelation 2:10 "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." The highest form of worship is to be willing to give up one's life for the sake of God's glory. Christians who worship the Lord in sacrificial ways will receive a crown of life.

"I" he says, will give "you" this crown of life, it is as intimate as that. This crown is a gift. "Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life." It is not payment. You know the difference. One is earned: the other is of grace. Jesus Christ has promised it.

Here again it is promised to those who are faithful in perseverance and endurance. Notice the ironic contrast—those who are "faithful until death" will receive the "crown of life". This contrast is given to reassure those who are persecuted even to death, that eternal life and heavenly glory awaits them if their faith is the kind that perseveres to the very end.

Nail

The hammer is a useful tool, but the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence, could present another side of the story. For the nail knows the hammer only as an opponent, a brutal, merciless enemy who lives to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and clinch it into place. That is the nail's view of the hammer, and it is accurate except for one thing: The nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman. Let the nail but remember that the hammer is held by the workman and all resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head shall be beaten next and what hammer shall be used in the beating. That is his sovereign right. When the nail has surrendered to the will of the workman and has gotten a little glimpse of his plans for its future it will yield to the hammer without complaint.

Conclusion

It doesn't help to say - look on the bright side, things could be worse.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

When life gives you a lemon make lemonade.

Clichés are as helpful as an umbrella in a hurricane.

Romans 8:28 "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27 and 28). For they shall receive from Him the crown of life.

Paul doesn't promise that only good, or pleasurable, things will come to the Christian. What he does say is that even the difficult experiences can be used in God's overall plan for good. And remember nothing can separate us from the love of God. "The Arabs have a proverb "All sunshine makes a desert" and they should know. When life is easy, it is possible to live on the surface of things. But when trial and sorrow come, then one is driven to the deeper things. Then one can enter into the secrets and beauties of God. It is in the storm that God arches His rainbow over us, its multi-splendour revealing all the elements of colour that makes up the beauty of the world. Life greatest revelations come in its storms." Henry Gariepy quoted by Swindoll p94/5

James (1:12) "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has **stood the test**, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him,"
The Crown of Life is a reward for the right reaction to such suffering. (Give a nail to Ant, Vladimir or Lydia & explain why)

HOMEWORK-

When *God* declares a man to be "*blessed*", He is blessed indeed! — Far beyond anything we can imagine in this life!
How are we blessed in the Bible find 3 key verses to you.

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Note: I use many sources in preparation. If unacknowledged material has been used, I apologise. Please let me know (via contact tab) and I will add the acknowledgment when updating this material.