



Faith Matured by Suffering

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” Psalm 23:6 NKJV*

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It is easy to say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” when things are going well; when there is peace in my family; when we are all healthy; when all is well on the job; when we have a nice, steady income and all the bills are paid with no worry; when we are in a good Bible-teaching church with close friends. With a life like that, it is easy to say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

However, what do we think, feel, and say when the marriage is in trouble; the children are rebellious, there is serious illness for years; we lose a job; cannot pay the bills; have no medical insurance; lose a loved one; a family member is addicted to drugs, gambling, alcohol, or pornography; a close friend betrays us; you do not get the hoped-for promotion; you long to be married and have children, and the years keep passing, and you are alone; yourself or a loved one battles depression or other mental and emotional illnesses; a loved one is missing or murdered or raped; or we find ourselves in the middle of a church split.

Beloved, when it seems like we are living in an endless nightmare, can we still say with honesty, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”? James 1:2-4 (NIV) reads, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

God promises us in Romans 8:28 and 29 that He will cause all things to work together for good in the lives of those who love Him, and that He is conforming us to the image of Christ. In the midst of painful situations, Satan wants us to doubt God’s goodness and mercy. We wonder, “How can good come out of this situation? How can I consider this pain to be joy?”

Beloved, at some point every believer’s faith will be tested. The reason James tells us to count it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds is because God is in control of our lives. It is in the testing of our faith that we develop perseverance and maturity. At the time James wrote this, the believers were going through great suffering and persecution, being beaten and seeing loved ones tortured and killed, rejected by family and friends, having their homes burned, and losing all they owned.

The greatest church growth is in the countries where believers are suffering incredible persecution for their faith. They know the cost of placing their faith in Christ as their Savior. I look back on my own life, growing up in a violent, abusive, alcoholic home, and I look over my Christian life, where there has been much sorrow. Through God’s amazing grace, I can honestly say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” God has never failed me. He is maturing my faith and teaching me perseverance.

— Janice McBride

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