

Stability Through Sufferings

by Alan Martin

God brings about stability in our lives through suffering, which allows us to learn obedience and to become complete in Christ.

Topics: "Sufferings"

Description

In this sermon, Alan Martin explores the profound truth that stability and steadfastness can be found in the midst of sufferings. He likely delves into the biblical perspective on suffering, revealing how it can be a refining fire that purifies and strengthens the believer's faith. Through scripture and personal testimony, Martin may encourage listeners to trust in God's sovereignty and goodness, even when faced with trials and tribulations, and to find comfort in the promise of God's presence and provision. As he shares from his heart, Martin invites believers to discover the stability and peace that can be theirs, even in the darkest of times, as they learn to trust in God's faithfulness and love.

Transcript

It's interesting, you know, do you remember what Jason started off sharing? He wanted to tie two things together. What did he start, what was on his heart? Steadfastness, stability, and understanding. And what do you remember what was on Brother Darren's heart? And watch how these things come together, because it's, you know... Turn in Romans, chapter 1, and look at the heart of Paul.

Well, I hope this becomes our heart. It becomes more and more my own heart. And I was really looking forward to coming here and spending some time with you guys.

This is why, look in verse 11. Really from the literal, he said, I have an intense longing, he said, to see you, so that I may impart some grace to you. You realize it's possible to impart grace to other brothers and sisters.

I hope when we come together, we're coming to impart grace, not just receive it. You know, it says of Jesus, from His fullness, we have all received what? Grace, for grace. I understand that to mean, from His fullness, we have all received grace to be able to give grace.

It's not just directed to us. And look at what Paul says. Paul believes, I long to see that I may impart some grace to you, some spiritual grace to you.

Why? In order that you may be established. More than ever before. Isn't that our concern? You want to see a husband and wife stable.

A stable marriage. You want to see parents and children in a stable relationship. You want to see a fellowship in Christ.

In stable, brotherly love. In stable peace. You want to see and hear the testimony of an individual brother, that he is walking stable.

Because an unstable man, or a man who's doubting, not strengthened in his faith, he can become unstable in all his ways. And that man, we're warned, that that man should not think that he should receive anything from the Lord. And I think more than I have ever been able to appreciate before, what I long for, is the result of my relationship with other brothers and sisters in Christ, is they are stabilized by the grace of Christ I'm receiving flowing in me and through me and actually producing stability in others.

And that was Paul's heart here. As a matter of fact, it was so much his heart. Look what he said.

He said this in 1 Thessalonians. I was peeking here. He expresses this again in 1 Thessalonians 3. Do you remember when he said, when I could stand it no longer? You know, Paul, he so much had these Thessalonians on his mind.

And he's wondering how they're doing. And he finally said, I couldn't stand it any longer. I'm going to send Timothy to check and see how they were doing in the faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 3, he expresses this. Right there, just the very first verse of chapter 3. Therefore, no longer enduring, we were well pleased to be left behind in Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and servant of God and fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, for one purpose. What? To establish you.

To establish you. Because what is he concerned about? He's concerned that no one had been unsettled. You know, it's a hard thing when you come into believers' lives and you see they're unsettled.

They're shaken. They're not stable. Their focus on Christ has been shaken.

They're not experiencing the mind of the Spirit, the life in peace. They're unsettled by the things they're going through. That's not God's intention.

And obviously, it's God's intention that we go through things. But it's not His intention that those things unsettle us. There's a big difference.

God's intention is that the things we go through settle us, not unsettle us. Now look in 1 Peter 5 and see this. God has a way and a design for us to be settled.

And it's not the way we would think. You know how we would like to be settled? Everything in our circumstances just becomes easy. You know.

God, fix my circumstances and I'll be settled. Tell me, have we been in the Lord long enough to realize that? The vain hope? Okay. My peace I give unto you.

What did He say? Not as the world gives. What does the world need to be settled? Circumstantial peace. I've overcome the world.

So I have a peace. I have proven I can be at peace when the world is unsettled. And that's the peace the Lord offers us.

But how does He work that in us? Okay. It's a promise. But a promise not experienced is a theory, isn't it? What do you want to show? What do you want your children to be told? What do you want to tell your children? That there's a promise that Christ can, that He can, that He can? Or do you want to walk in such a way that He is, that He is, that He is? And you yourself be a living demonstration that His grace is sufficient.

And that it's so sufficient that it's actually the perfect thing for every weakness that we have. Right? Isn't that it? Isn't that it? You really begin to tap into genuine grace when the strength of Christ is perfecting your weakness. That's when it's genuinely Christ is becoming your life.

His wisdom is guiding you. His mind is literally keeping your mind in light and peace. His stability, His consistency, His oneness with the Father is literally stabilizing you, making you steadfast, consistent, so that regardless of the difficulty you're going through, you react the same way.

You do what Christ says. You follow the leading of the Spirit. And it stops this.

And it brings you into this place where you are steadfast, unmovable. Unmovable from what? Unmovable from abiding in Christ. Looking to Him for a direction.

Hearing a word and doing that. That's called being led by the Spirit. And when that begins to be the place you are not moved from, you stop fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

You stop yielding to anger. You stop yielding to contention. You stop yielding to depression.

You stop yielding to the weaknesses of the flesh, the practices of the body. And by simply the hearing of faith, being unmoved from, I'm going to do what Jesus Christ tells me. The flesh is put to death.

And you develop what you were describing, attempting to describe. You called it the mindset, like setting your mind. And it is the process, because you only get there by an intentional, deliberate setting of your mind.

But the word there, the mind of the Spirit, those who walk according to the Spirit, Deuteronomy 8. Mind of the Spirit, the word there is phronimos. And the phronimos comes from the root of the Greek word there is to reign in. And basically what they've done is they've learned to reign in their thoughts.

And they've developed a mind frame, a mindset. They think within certain parameters, I will not allow an unwholesome word to ever leave my mouth. That's a mindset.

And that mindset, when I have all kinds of thoughts bouncing in my mind, that set keeps me from walking after the flesh. And you set your mind in that. And man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God.

So when you're in the thralls of anger, there is a set, a mind frame has been made. You set your heart and your mind in this way. And though you are suffering and though you are tempted, this mind frame causes you to follow the Spirit and not the flesh.

So how? How does God, in Christ, through the Spirit, develop in us this mind of the Spirit? And the good news here is that God wants us to be stable. Listen to this. Did you turn to 1 Peter? Did I tell you to turn there? 1 Peter 5. 1 Peter 5. It's interesting that Peter's heart was the very same as Paul's.

Peter wanted the disciples to be established. He knew this was on the heart of the Lord. So, start in verse 8 of Peter 5. Be alert.

Stay sober. Be watchful. Maybe Peter finally got it.

He heard this from the Lord all the time. I think he finally did get it. He finally heard it.

Be sober. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil is roaming about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him. What? Being steadfast in your faith. Knowing this, the same sufferings in the world your brotherhood are experiencing.

Now, let's take just a minute here to read the various translations. And I'm going to explain to you that they missed it here. Most of them that I've read have missed it.

What is the last part of that verse 9? Just a couple of you read verse 9. I want you to read the different ways it says it. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished in your brotherhood who are in the world. There it says, are being accomplished in your brotherhood.

Is there another way when he verses it? It says resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. That's the idea that these translators were struggling to find. But, you know, I can't explain why.

But there is an understanding I've received about the basic word teleo. Which is to become complete. To become mature.

To be perfected. To be completed. And literally how I would read this would be, knowing that your brothers in the world are experiencing the same sufferings in order to be completed.

The reason I would translate it that way is that's actually the way I would just take it from the Greek itself. I could explain why grammatically, but take my word for it, study it out for yourself. I wasn't aware of that.

But here's the reason that's so important. I ask a question. We know that God wants us to be established and stable and settled.

How does he bring this about? How does he bring this about for us? Well, we have to look and see how did he bring it about for our Lord? And it's interesting. It will use this same word to become completed. To become perfected.

You mentioned this. Oh, you mentioned it I think. That we no longer be like children.

Blown and tossed by the wind. But instead, until we all reach the unity of the faith. The full knowledge of the Son of God.

But until the perfect man. The mature man. The completed man.

The stable man. The steadfast man. A brother and sister who's not shaken by trials anymore.

But established by them. Perfected by them. Completed by them.

And when you begin to walk in that way, The world has reason to ask you about the hope that lies within you. Because they can see you overcome the world in your daily life. You're not affected by the world.

You are affecting the world around you. Like our Lord did. Light is greater than darkness.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. So how does our Lord do this in us? How did he do it in our Lord? Even our Lord. If He's going to be made like us in every way.

He had to start as an infant like we do. And go through the process of becoming completed. Or else He couldn't be made like us in every way.

So our Lord, in order for Him to be made like us in every way. He had to also become completed. And grow from infancy to maturity.

So how did our Lord? How did God the Father bring our Lord to maturity? Through suffering. Look at Hebrews chapter 2. It says so. Remember the question is, How is God the Father going to bring us to maturity? To completeness? To stability? He's going to do it the same way He did it to His own son.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 10. Someone read it. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and by Him bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Perfect through suffering. Did our Lord ever suffer because He did something wrong? No. That's not why He suffered.

He never sinned, and yet He suffered. What caused the suffering then of our Lord? What does the Scripture say caused our Lord to suffer? If God uses suffering to make us complete, what's the source of the suffering? What's the agent He uses to make us suffer? What's the agent He used to make Jesus suffer? What does the Scripture say? He suffered being tempted. Look in Hebrews chapter 5. Most of the time, and before we read these verses, think with me.

There are times we actually do well, and praise the Lord, there are times we do well. Even when things are difficult, and we can rejoice in that. But if you'll reflect back, and I've been honest and reflected back in my own life, most of the time that I responded according to the flesh, or I reacted as you used the word, or I allowed the thought, the attack, the temptation to cause me to miss the mark, to sin.

To not follow the Spirit, but to react from another suggestion, either within myself or from the enemy, with what I was suffering. Some kind of passion, some kind of struggle was going on, and in that vulnerability, in that weakness, I missed the Spirit. That's usually when it happens.

That's why this is where we overcome. This is where we learn. We learn.

In that regard, look at what the Scripture says about our Lord. In Hebrews 5, in verse 7, someone want to read just verses 7 through 9, and then we'll go over those. In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and was heard because of his godly fears, though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

And having been perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obeyed him. Okay. During the days, plural, of his flesh.

Now, the day of the cross was one day. So, the days of his flesh are longer than one day, right? So, during the days of his flesh, he offered up loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. What death? Was he talking about the death on the cross? What death was he trying to be saved from? The soul that sins shall die.

One sin, Christ would have died. Now, if he's going to be tempted in all points like you and I are, that's how we're tempted, right? We're tempted as human beings with the possibility of dying if we sin. If he's tempted just like we are, that's how he was tempted.

And when he was tempted, he offered up loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. And he was heard in that he feared. And though he was a son, what did he learn? He learned obedience.

What he learned is the word hupo-akuo. Hupo is the word for under. We would say in English it's hypo.

If you're hypoallergenic, it's low. It's under. If it's hyper, it's above.

It comes straight from the Greek language. To hear under. What Jesus learned to do when he was being tempted is he learned, and he learned it perfectly, to not one time ever react in any other way than, Father, what would you have me do? He learned to obey.

You have to obey what you hear. And the whole mystery of how we become stable is we learn through suffering how to hear what the Spirit says. The way Jesus never ever erred, even once, was every time he was tempted, every difficult situation he was in, every time he was challenged, every time he was misperceived, every time he was lied about, every time someone else let him down, every single time he looked to his Father and said, what would you have me do? Now, is that overly simplistic? No.

It's such the way to life. Do you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or what? The hearing of faith. Not just the hearing of the Gospel one time.

Faith comes by hearing in every situation you're in. Every time you're tempted. Every time there's a difficulty between two people.

Every time something is causing your soul to experience passion and it's causing you to groan in your weakness. Faith comes by hearing. And if you hear what the Spirit says in that situation, faith comes.

And what happens when faith comes? This is the victory that overcomes the world. Even by faith. So, hearing what the Spirit says is simply not fulfilling the lust of the flesh and being led by the Spirit in a moment-by-moment situation.

And that's why it says that those who are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God. They've matured. They've grown up into this completeness, this maturity the Scripture talks about.

Because Paul described infants that are immature in Christ as what? Babes, but also carnal. He's describing them as carnal. Their thinking is carnal.

They have not developed the sound mind of the Spirit. The sound mind that reigns in our thoughts and creates in us a stability. A stability.

Now, this stability that God Himself wants to perfect in us. Now back to 1 Peter. And look at it again.

1 Peter 5, there where we were. I'm going to start in verse 10. We looked at verse 9 pretty close.

I'll read it again. Resist Satan standing steadfast in your faith knowing that your brothers in the world are undergoing the same sufferings in order to be completed. In order to be matured, perfected.

But the God of all grace, verse 10, the One having called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus a little while, what? Having suffered. I want to encourage you. I want to make sure this actually works.

Because you need to realize something. It's just a little while of suffering. Now how can I say that? I'll put it this way.

Andrew, how old are you? 36? I have to guess. You're kidding. 36.

So if you live to the ripe old age of 90, you have another 54 years of suffering. That's all. Compared to the far exceeding weight of glory, what are these? What are they? They're light and momentary.

54 years of suffering from being tempted knowing already that this will produce a good work in you, that it will actually bring about in you the ability to learn obedience and to learn to put to death the practices of the flesh and be led by the Spirit into this transformation from a carnal to spiritual. So you can see it's the way God perfects us. So not only is it only temporary and short, it's actually beneficial.

It's win-win. It's win-win when you understand how God perfects His people. So get this.

This is good news for every one of you. You are going to suffer even when you're doing well. You're not going to suffer just because you're doing something wrong.

When you're doing nothing wrong, you're still going to suffer. You're still going to be tempted. You're still going to feel weak in your natural self.

In this world, you will have tribulation. And you're going to have difficulty like that. Like dads have difficulty with kids and husbands have difficulties with wives and wives have difficulties with husbands and moms with kids.

Because you're in the world. And because you have an enemy. And God will make it all work together for good.

To produce in us stability, strength, to teach us obedience in the way of His Spirit. And He'll use these very things to conform us into the very same image of His Son. And what happens then... And look at this 1 Peter again.

Here's what happens. And this part of what I... I understand the process of it somewhat. I think I understand it better than I can communicate it.

But I'm going to try to communicate part of how this happens. In verse 10, But the God of all grace, having called you into His eternally glory in Christ Jesus, having suffered for a little while, make you complete. This is what we long to see happen in a saint.

The word complete is kata artisan. And the word artist itself means joint. So this word together means bring you to the place where everything fits together.

You understand it. It fits. You're going through difficulty because you're in the world.

You're being tempted because you're in the world. You're being tempted because there's a devil. You're weak in your natural cells.

That makes it difficult. You suffer because of the situation you're in. It's what it is.

Understand it. See the purpose of it. It comes together.

It doesn't mean I've done something wrong. It doesn't mean God's against me. I mean, if God's for me, does that mean I'm going to leap out of the house and immediately smell the lilacs and the roses and there'll be no traffic.

And my boss will think I'm the greatest. If that's your expectation, it hasn't come together yet. It hasn't properly fit that as long as you're in this world, that's not going to happen.

It is going to happen someday when our Lord takes His authority and He begins to reign. It'll happen. It'll begin to happen.

But if you hope for that now and you expect that now and you don't understand, that's not His way now. And if it doesn't come together with you, you'll be confused. And what does confusion do? What's the next thing that follows confusion? Discouragement.

And condemnation. And what you see follows that path? Defeat. You surrender.

You stop giving thanks. You stop being filled. Because it's not coming together.

When it begins to come together, it's like in those moments when you say, oh, I get it. I see it. You see how it fits.

And what's beautiful is more and more saints, if they really are instructed and they really begin to understand and it begins to come together in their own mind, then they help a fellowship to come together. Then they begin to even properly relate to each other. Husbands and wives properly relate to each other.

Difficulties, they fit. They're not trying to cram square pegs in a round hole anymore. I mean, they fit.

Peace and order and stability are the fruit of believers beginning to see things come together in a proper relationship. That is part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And it's what pastors and teachers and evangelists and prophets and apostles are supposed to be doing.

It's the equipping, the same word, kata artisan, the joining together of all the saints, helping the saints be properly related to Christ, helping the saints be properly related to one another. And what it produces is beauty and order even in the midst of the world's chaos. We come together and as we begin to see it, we fit together properly and become a unit.

A unit supporting one another because that's what really needs to happen. Now, most of us, if we saw an area, something in our house, we see something begin to give way, something that needs to be this way, you can describe it if I were to say, if it's in our yard and we begin to see the ground begin to bulge, what do we know is going to happen? It's going to give way. What do we do? Right away we know that needs support.

That needs something fitted together with it to produce stability. The same way in the body of Christ. When we begin to see one another's fault in this way, if I see a fault in you, what's my response? Step back.

So when you fall, it doesn't hit me? You're not seeing it. Because when you really see it, when we see something about to happen, we see someone in a vulnerable place, we should support. It needs another guide wire this way.

It needs to be supported this way. This brother needs to be joined here. He needs prayer support here.

And things begin to come together properly in your mind. And that's what, after this word in 1 Peter, it says, after having suffered for a while, caused you to really become complete. Come together.

And He will establish you, strengthen you, and settle you. Just and very much like what Paul said in Ephesians 4. Until we come to that place, to the unity of the faith, and become no longer infants blown to and fro through every wind of doctrine. But in all things, we grow up into Christ who is the Head.

So I just thought these two things wanted to come together because to hope for a life without difficulty is to be disappointed. And hope deferred does what? It makes the heart sick. So the person who hopes in the Lord properly hopes for this.

This is what he hopes for. This is why everything will be okay. This is why in everything you can give thanks.

This is why in everything you can give thanks. Why can you give thanks in every single thing? Because you're with me. Because God is with me.

And He has something for me in this. Everything that comes from Him is grace to me. Everything that comes from Him is grace.

And in every temptation, in every trial, there's grace in God that wants to flow to me. And it's good for your heart to be strengthened by this kind of grace. I cannot tell you how sweet life becomes.

And how I am able. I am able. Not I will be.

I am able to give thanks in all things. It's because I realize in every situation, God's grace flows to me. It's flowing to me.

Even when I make a misstep. You know condemnation does not flow to me when I make a misstep? Correction does. The grace of correction.

The grace of reproof. The grace of long-suffering. The grace of Him not wanting anyone to perish.

The grace of wanting the gift of repentance. It flows. And I think when my heart has begun to be strengthened by that grace, and it's brought together and just through the help of the Holy Spirit, things have come together that I see God has... It's because of His long-suffering that He's not destroyed Satan, right? We understand that, right? The Gospel has not yet gone to the four corners of the earth and God wants everyone to have a chance to hear the Gospel.

So He's decided to delay His wrath a little longer and that is such good news. But that means if He's decided to delay His wrath and destroy evil entirely, then that means Satan's going to have more free reign in this world. And there's going to be more suffering and there's going to be more temptation and it's going to be difficult.

But that's okay. Because His grace for me is able to reach me in every single day. Every single situation even in this world.

And it's just the perfect thing for my weakness. And He allows me to experience tribulation and difficulty and to suffer temptation and to suffer when I'm tempted so that I can learn to draw from His grace in the very same way His Son did. And when you begin to see life in that way, even in your questions, even when you don't know what to do, can you still say by faith, You're with me.

You've not forsaken me. You have the answer. It's good for a soul to wait upon the Lord.

What happens to those who wait upon the Lord? They renew their strength. You see, even those waiting upon the Lord need strength. Even a good man needs to be warned, admonished, encouraged, exhorted.

And the older I get and have saints that I interact with and live with, and more than ever before, my real heart's desire is to see stable, established saints. Stable. Genuinely able to give thanks in all things.

Genuinely able to endure difficulty. Genuinely able to receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in every situation and say, just like Paul, His grace is sufficient for me. Because when I see it, when I walk in it myself, and when I see it in other saints, I believe that's when the world begins to see good fruit.

You mentioned the foolish virgins. The word for foolish virgins in the Greek is morose. The word for the wise virgins was the same word used for the mind of the spirit, the phronimos.

You know what, the wise virgins were five virgins who had their mind trained, developed. And that's what made them prudent. The others had the opportunity to see that they needed oil.

But those who trained their mind knowing that they can't do anything by training themselves. I need Thee every hour. Every hour I need Thee.

That mind frame that His grace is sufficient, that mind frame in them made the difference why they got oil. But the point of the morose virgins, and here's the word, the morose is used in one other place in the New Testament in a very powerful way. It's used, ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt becomes morose, it's good for nothing.

The very things that set us apart and keep us affecting others. Because that's the whole thing of salt, right? Salt is not something that can be affected, the dead has no purpose. Salt, it's purpose is to be an effect.

If you lost the ability to be an effect, there is no purpose as a saint. Light is created to bring manifestation, to make visible. There's no other purpose for it.

That's it's purpose, it's to give, to produce an effect. And that's what we are. The five morose virgins had lost their ability to be an effect on others.

Why? It took a long time. And they hadn't prepared. You see the challenge there? Don't allow what we go through in this world from not understanding, don't allow that to wear you down and cause you to lose heart.

You and I are going to have difficulty in the world because we're in the world. And because God is long-suffering, He's continuing to allow Satan time to harass and deceive and hurt and war with saints. That's okay.

Through the suffering that's going to come to you from this time, God intends for that very suffering to be the very thing that is used to stabilize you, mature you, strengthen you and settle you and teach you to overcome by faith. And when it comes together in your own mind in that way, you won't be unsettled, destabilized by trial. There will be a staying power in your walk.

And you won't be one of the ones that fall away. You won't be one of those who rejoice quickly having heard, but when trouble or persecution arises, you quickly fall away. This kind of understanding will produce a deep-rooted stability in Christ that I can be a part of helping bring other saints into.

I just see it as a great need in our day. This is our purpose of gathering together in gatherings like this. Having the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly.

Exhorting one another all the more as you see the day approaching because the difficulty in this world and the problem that we have to go through, what it has, if people are not careful, they get discouraged, they become confused and the heart gets hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. So that's a purpose in this and I really appreciate you guys still getting together on a regular basis to exhort one another all the more as you see the day approaching until everyone here is stable, steadfast, immovable, consistent. That's the goal.

The goal is not to have meetings. The goal is the meetings to stabilize saints. You know the difference? That needs to be what's happening.

And however, what every kind of exhortation daily, that's why I send text messages. I don't have a fetish for text messages or emails. I have a desire to see saints stabilize.

And one of the ways that saints are helped unto stability is exhorting one another daily. That's why.

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