

Trials Have a Purpose

by Shane Idleman

Trials have a purpose and are meant to produce patience and maturity, and to help us develop trust in God.

Duration: 31:39

Scripture: James 1:2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith And Trials"

Description

This sermon focuses on the purpose of trials in our lives, emphasizing the need to view trials as opportunities for growth and character development. It delves into the importance of being a bondservant of God, trusting His sovereignty, seeking wisdom through trials, and maintaining faith without doubting. The speaker highlights the significance of patience, obedience, and single-mindedness in navigating trials, ultimately leading to spiritual maturity and being filled with the Spirit of God.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to James chapter 1, James chapter 1. The title of the message is Trials Have a Purpose. Now many of you are probably saying, I don't know about that because I don't like trials and I don't either. We're going through trials often, aren't we, weekly, if not daily.

But trials have a purpose and before I start reading James, let's just talk about James for a minute. James, the book of James was probably written around 45 AD, which is about 12 to 15 years after Jesus Christ was resurrected and taken away, went to the Father, sitting on the right hand of the Father, about 12 to 15 years after Jesus Christ left here. So he's writing with that framework, James chapter 1, James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings.

So let's stop there for a minute. He says, James says, I am a bondservant of God, basically that means bound to serve. And it's interesting, if you look back at many translations of the Bible, you can go back to the Latin Vulgate, you can go to Whitecliffe's translation, you can go to Martin Luther when he put the Bible into German language.

And the Bible often said slave, doulos is what this word is, it's a slave. But then we've changed it to servant, so it doesn't sound as bad, I guess. But if you go back, the original is doulos in the Greek language, it's a slave, I am owned by God, I'm a bondservant, I am bound, Lord, whatever you want me to do, whatever you want me to go through, and I don't know about you, but that changes the way I approach trials.

Oh, thank you. Now I can see everybody. So that was worry, like who's out there, is there any rotten eggs, you know, got the wrong crowd in here.

But isn't it, when I go through a trial, I get upset when I think it's about me, because it's not going my way, according to my agenda, my plan. But when I realize, God, I have been bought with a price, I am a slave, doulos, remember that word doulos. And I'm a slave, God, whatever you're putting me through, whatever I'm going through, I might not like it.

But I understand that you're my Lord, you're my master, you're taking me through whether it's a court system, or whether it's a trial at church or in a family trials, oh, my goodness, have you had any of those lately? Those are challenging, family dynamics, things at work, we get the letter resignation or firing or the job didn't go through or, and we have tons of trials by funders say, God, you're in control and I'm not, I'm your servant, even if you put me in a living under a bridge for a season, you can't do that with kids and a wife, but he can take you where he wants you to go. So if you look at life as a bond servant, and that's what James says, he's a bond servant, and he died for his faith eventually. But let's talk about who James was for a minute.

Many say that he was the brother of Jesus, you can find this in Matthew 13. And Mark three, they can they make the connection that James who was the brother of Jesus in those passages is is this same James? Maybe so the evidence isn't conclusive, but that's possible. He was head of the church in Jerusalem.

He was mentioned as a pillar of the church in Galatians. And he was not a believer until after the resurrection. You can reference that in John seven.

So this person, well, let me read the final thing. And according to Josephus, he was killed in 62 ad. So what you're about to read over the next few weeks, the next few months was written by somebody who actually died because of what they wrote and believed.

So this person, James, if he was a brother of Jesus, he was the head of the church, he's a pillar of the church, he became a believer after the resurrection. See, that's important. If there was no resurrection, if this is phony, why did he become a believer later? Because he saw the risen Lord.

So the words that we're going to read, if he's a brother of Jesus, if he was and for sure, a pillar of the church, he became a strong believer after the resurrection, and he died for what we're reading, it's a strong, what I would say, wake up, sit up, turn off the phone and listen to what this person has to say. Because it's very important. Now as a side note, many of you know, some may not a man by the name of Martin Luther.

In 1517, he challenged the Roman Catholic Church and he posted what's called the 95 Theses on the church doors of Wittenberg, Germany. He took those and he posted those theses saying, I have the problem with the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in these areas. And many of those same areas are still points of conflict today.

Why Protestants and Roman Catholics cannot worship really together because they're diametrically opposed in many points of doctrine. And if you had an hour, I could take you through some of those. But say this is and the reason I'm saying all this is this, this book of the Bible, Martin Luther did not like, because later, we're going to read that faith without works is dead.

So guess what Roman Catholicism trumped, and they went after all the time works, works, works, works, works, merits for grace, works to get out of purgatory, works to be right before God. It was works based and Martin Luther and the whole point of the Reformation is sola scriptura, meaning scripture alone, Christ alone, the Word of God alone. And that's that was that's why the Reformation they reformed, trying to reform what was going on in the church.

So he was all about Christ alone. It's not about works. The Roman Catholic Church was about works and works and works.

So he didn't like like James saying, without faith, without works, your faith is dead. But I see his point. But I, I don't really understand what what his problem was.

Because James just saying that, okay, you have faith, you say you have faith, but your works will confirm whether or not your faith is genuine. Because all of you are saying, oh, I have faith, but you have no works. So by their works, you will know them.

Faith without works is dead. Many people across our landscape here in America will say that they are Christian, but there is absolutely nothing in their life that shows that they are a believer. There's no fruit in their life.

So I don't know why he got upset at this. He actually called the book of James the epistle of straw. Hmm.

Well, okay, there. The next point to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad. The 12 tribes, it's interesting, they were taken by the Assyrians, the children of Israel, they are taken by the Egyptians, they were taken by the Babylonians, and they were taken by the Romans.

There's not 12 tribes still existing when James is writing. So we have to assume that he's writing to the Jewish believers, to all believers abroad. He's saying all of you out there, the 12 tribes that the Jews would identify with as well as Christians who are believers, he's writing to everybody who will listen.

Now what he's mainly doing, now this is interesting too, when the Jews were taken over by the Babylonians, the Assyrians, Egyptians, and finally Rome, in the book of Acts, which we're going to be in this weekend, chapter 2 is coming up, that when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit filled this place, and they spoke in tongues, these people say they are praising God in our own language. So you know the Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, all these people heard the praises of God in their own language. And it ties in with what James is saying here.

So James was calling, here's what he was doing, I guess it's what I like to do too. He was calling out accepted sins which were in the church. The Jewish believers and the Christian believers, by the time Acts was written, the time of the book of Acts, actually the occurrence happened before the book of James, is these believers were united, they were strong, they were on the same page, and then some years later, now all this division and corruption sneaks into the church, and believers are actually fine with certain sins.

So the whole point, one of the points of the book of James is to call out those things which are not acceptable in God's sight, and actually call them out, let the church know these are not acceptable in God's eye, this is not acceptable in God's eyes. And actually that's one of the primary roles of preaching. It's to encourage, it's to build up, but it's also to say, hello, this should not be happening in the house of God, in our own families, now it has to happen first in my life, right, and then I'm able to proclaim it to you, and we're all in here struggling in this walk together.

So all of what he is talking about fits with us perfectly. And verse two, we just read verse one, James a bond servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings. Now this next passage is called the way of the Lord is not fair, in some of your Bibles.

And I hear this often, daddy that's not fair. And the sooner you get this truth internalized, the better you'll be. It's not, God's not fair.

I didn't like that 20 years ago, but I like it now. You're not going to have the same house, and the same cars, and the same income, Lord why aren't they, why aren't they, just as soon as you can stop that, the better. As soon as you realize that God is not fair, and he is sovereign because he's sovereign, and you know, and I know, being parents, that when we say don't do that, or you can't have that, we're not fair, were you looking at the whole picture? My son just had sugar yesterday, he's not having sugar today, so my little daughter can have it, well that's not fair, no, but I don't want you to have too much because you had it yesterday.

No, you can't go play out there, but she can. Because you're going to climb up the top of the roof on our house and fall down and break your neck. She's not going to get more than six inches high.

I know, see, I know, I know how it's going to play out, so God is sovereign. So when we look, we go, that's not fair. Why can't I do that? Why can't I do this? That God's not fair.

And it works in our own lives, right? We look at finances sometimes. I mean, something came out, I remember some top, like some of the biggest churches out there, the pastors, their salaries are like \$600,000 a year, and I was like, I didn't know that's possible. That is not fair.

See, and some of you know, we've shared it before, that we've always wanted a house with property, an acre, two acres, and raise our kids, and farm type, and just love property. Where do we end up? In a track home. In Palmdale.

In Palmdale. It's like, that's not fair. We drive out here, and we're like, look at this, look at this, look at this, look at this.

This is not fair. Lord, what's wrong here? He's sovereign. He knows.

So just get the whole fair concept out of your mind, and say, God, I am a bondservant, doulos, I'm a slave of whatever you want me to be. Just change your mindset. Now we're so thankful we have a roof over our heads.

We're thankful we have running water and electricity. Lord, you have been so good, and you've provided so much, so you've got to get your mind back on that track. Don't drive by that big house up there.

And that cabin that's been empty for 25 years that I'm like, I'm going to write that owner and see if he's, you know, it's, it's, it's, you have to look at life through the lens of being a slave of God and wherever he leads. I'm not being facetious, I'm not minimizing it. But that is truly how the quicker and the, I don't know what the right word would be, not better.

But the sooner we realize that we're just a bondservant, and wherever God leads, life will become much more easy. Because that bill or that job, you lose your job, well, God, I'm just your slave, it's your problem, not mine. And Shane's not going to fix this.

So we look at the God, you're, you're in control, and I'll follow you. And it's hard because the flesh doesn't want to do that the flesh wants to fix it. My brethren counted all joy, when you fall into various trials.

That's another scripture we don't want to read and apply. Counted all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally to all without reproach.

And it will be given to him but let him ask in faith with no doubting for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double minded man and unstable in all of his ways.

So, here's what we're learning from this passage. Patience is waiting on God and not reacting. You know the difference between reacting and responding, correct? Responding and reacting means you hit me, I hit you.

Responding means you hit me, I'm going to take some time and pray about this and consider the best course of action here. And that's what patience does, it allows you to respond and not react. And I tell you all the time, I'm going to tell you again, don't send that email if you're upset, sleep on it.

I've changed about 80% of my emails by sleeping or just deleted them. Don't react, respond. That's what patience has its perfect work.

Because when you go through life with patience, you're slower, you're more deliberate. There's peace, you can rest in what God is doing. And wisdom, he says if you ask for wisdom, and I should clarify this, knowledge is knowing what to do, that's not wisdom.

Knowledge is knowing what to do, wisdom is applying the knowledge that you possess. So somebody can be very smart but very stupid. They can know it, but they don't do it, so they're foolish.

The Bible says you're very foolish. All these people that have PhDs and deny the existence of God, you have knowledge but you're very foolish. You don't have wisdom.

So let's look at the first point, count it all joy. Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Why do I count it as joy, Shane? Well, let me tell you why.

Because God is growing you and your character. You know you're going in the right direction often. See, a lot of times I don't look at challenges or trials as necessarily negative because God is shifting and focusing on our character.

Let me show you a recent, or let me give you a recent illustration of a trial that happened recently where I talked with Hope Chapel, and I talked to Pastor Sean. He's been telling me to find, you know, they're going to kick us out pretty soon for the last five years. He's been telling us, you got to go, you got to go, you're the 30-year-old living at home.

That kind of thing. So finally we talked, he said, yeah, I think it's time, it's time for you guys to move on and, you know, we'll get our building back and you need to, you know, just move everything in Leona Valley. Well, that was quick two weeks ago and trying to let people know.

But with that comes a lot of trials and a lot of testing, a lot of what are we going to do and different things. But count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Knowing that testing, you might say, well, Shane, I like that trial.

What about my trial? I've lost my job or my income or I don't know what's happening. Well, count it all joy because God's in control. You're developing trust.

How do you trust God if you never get that letter in the mail that says you might be losing your job? How do you trust God when the doctor says this doesn't look good? How do you trust God if you're not being challenged? You don't. We can't. So our faith is actually built by the challenges we go through.

You show me an older saint of God, full with the Spirit of God, and that person's been through a lot of stuff. Been through a lot of stuff because those challenges can bring out the best in us. Or they can bring out the, come on, you know what trials usually do, bring out the worst in us.

Now, I have to clarify this. When he says count it all joy when you fall into various trials, understand that these trials are the result of being a Christian, not trials as a result of sin. See, I've seen people get in a mess and their life is falling apart financially, the wife's about ready to walk out the door, everything, and they're like, brother, I'm just going through the trials.

No, you're going, your sin is causing these consequences. That's not a good trial. That trial is one that needs to be repented of.

So there are trials, as we're going through trials, if it's just the result of being a Christian, you persevere through that. If you're going through a trial as a result of sin, you repent. See the difference there? Next point, the testing of your faith produces patience.

The testing of your faith will produce patience if you are joyful. But if you're angry and bitter, it will not produce patience. It could say the testing of your faith can produce moodiness and anger and irritability and bitterness if you don't approach it with joy.

Now this doesn't mean that we are happy about our trials. In other words, oh, praise God, I just lost my job. Praise God, my child just didn't get into college, or whatever it is.

But it's like, you know what, Lord, I don't like this, but I'm joyful. And some of you know, you know this, when you're going through trials and you know God's there, there's a joy that comes, joy unspeakable, peace that surpasses all understanding, because you refocus, you take your thoughts captive, and you refocus on who God is, and what the purpose might be, and he's developing your character. And usually, many times, when you see a trial, there's fruit at the end.

There's blessing at the end, as long as we persevere. And then he says, but let patience have its perfect work. You might say, what does that mean? Well, perfect can mean complete.

So when you have patience, it's done its complete work. You can go through trials through that patience and perseverance. So let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

It means you won't be in short supply, there's not an inadequacy or insufficient. Do you ever feel that when you're going through a trial, that there's something insufficient here? I feel inadequate, something's going

on, I'm lacking. But with patience, you don't have those things.

Number four, if any one of you lacks wisdom, we're breaking down this long passage. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach. Let's talk about that for a minute.

If you lack wisdom, this would be like saying, Lord, maybe you've done this before. I know I have many times. I don't know what to do here.

I'm lacking wisdom. I need your help. And it says, God says, I will give it to you liberally and without reproach.

Reproach means disapproval or disappointment. God's not disappointed and he's not upset that you're asking for wisdom. He says, I will give it to you liberally and without any type of disappointment on my part.

Ask for wisdom, I will give it to you. Here's the problem. When you ask for wisdom, it has to be backed by obedience.

If I say, God, I need wisdom in this area, in any type of thing, but I'm not going to obey your word. I'm not going to follow your course, but please give me that wisdom. It's not going to happen.

Wisdom lines up as we follow his word. He begins to open certain doors and reveal certain things because of that, obeying his word. Just a quick example.

If this has happened before, believe it or not, you're probably going to say, how has that happened? Well, it has. I've met with people, and I've shared this six months ago, eight months ago, and they don't listen to the video, so it should be okay. But people come to me and they'll say, Shane, I need wisdom on my marriage.

I'm asking God, like this says, I need wisdom on my marriage. We're separated, and I need to know what to do. I don't know what to do.

I say, well, the first thing you need to do is you need to cancel that trip you have with your girlfriend to Las Vegas for next weekend. Or a camping trip, or whatever it is. Well, I can't do that.

We made plans months ago. And you want God to give you wisdom. This is real life stuff.

And see, God's not going to be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he reaps. And we ask for wisdom.

God, I need wisdom on what to do with my career. Well, I manipulate this, and I do this, and I lie, and I cheat, but I need wisdom. No.

The wisdom is followed by obedience. When we begin to do what we know to be right and trust God, the wisdom comes. He begins to show us what his wisdom is.

But then he says, but let him ask in faith. Let him ask in faith with no doubting. Don't doubt.

For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. The picture I have here is, Lord, I have trust in you. I have faith in you.

But if it doesn't happen by tomorrow at 3 o'clock, I'm running to plan B. And then plan B doesn't work. And then we go back to God. God, give me wisdom for this.

And Thursday comes, and well, I'm running to plan C. And you're tossed back and forth like a double-minded man, unstable in everything. You can't say, Lord, I trust you, but I don't trust you, so I'm going to do this. This isn't working.

Maybe I manipulate, but God, I need you. Do you see how foolish that is? That's a double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways. Well, what's the answer to that? Well, if double-mindedness is the problem, then single-mindedness is the answer.

Single-mindedness. Lord, I trust you. I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm trusting you and I'm waiting on you.

I've never seen God show up late when I say, Lord. Now, it's not my time, that's for sure. But, Lord, I'm trusting in you.

I'm waiting on you to show me. I'm going to have to. For example, when this church and our church decided to come together as one church, it was a long, drawn-out process that I was wanting to happen within a few weeks, a few months.

Lord, show us, show us, show us, show us. So every week was a testing there. And if we would have jumped ahead, we would have upset the whole thing.

And so you're waiting on God, and that is part of the trusting in him. You can't have a backup plan. You can't say when God doesn't come through, by Monday.

Because he won't come through by Monday. If you put him to the test like that, trust me, I've tried it. I've tried to get home loans and say, Lord, get that interest rate down to 3% by next Tuesday.

Instead, it goes up. And just be careful in this area. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

I don't know if you have it. If not, we might have it on your way out. But I have an article about being double-minded, what that means.

Lord, he's a double-minded man and stable in all his ways. This is overall wisdom he's talking about, but more specifically, wisdom through trials. So as you're going through a trial, you say, Lord, I need wisdom here.

Show me what the right answer is. But you don't doubt and go back and forth. Here's what we do.

You start with God, not MasterCard. Start with God, not a mean email. Start with God, not a lawsuit.

Start with God, not a resignation. And the reason I say that is all of this happens. We go through a trial, we put on MasterCard.

We go through a trial, we tell people off. We go through a trial, we're going to sue them. We go through something hard at work, well, I'm just going to quit.

And my advice often is if you ever have problems at work and you feel like, I'm just going to quit, I'm out of here, don't do it then. Don't do it when you're emotionally at the height of making a bad decision based on

emotion alone. Anytime you leave a job or anything difficult like that, you take it to the Lord, you wait on him.

There's peace, there's timing. God will close that door rather abruptly, and he will give you peace in that. So that's what he's saying here.

Rest in that. We ask and trust, which is faith, but we must wait, which we talked about already. No plan B's when it comes to God.

See, God is the plan. God is the plan. There's not plan B, plan C, plan D. Do you have plan B's and D's and C's and different things? Sure, of course.

But when it comes to God, there's no plan B. That might be a good sermon topic someday, title. I just thought of that. No plan B when it comes to God.

He is the plan. Double-minded danger. This is compromising, going back.

What double-mindedness is? Well, it's going back to old habits. I'm going back to my old habits, my old mindset. I'm trusting in God, but I'm going back.

Some old habits are fear, scared, depression, or anxiety, or handling things on your own. So we go back and forth between this double-mindedness. James says you're not going to get wisdom that way.

So here's the application. Like exercise, trials have a purpose. Trials have a purpose.

Here's the purpose of trials. You are clay in the hands of the potter. Have you ever seen a potter make something, how that just spins? And that clay, he just shapes it.

Can you imagine if the clay is not cooperative? You know, it's like, come on, turn. And it's just, no, the clay is fighting the potter. It's like that's not going to hurt more.

Anytime you fight God, it hurts more. So that's the purpose of a trial, really. It's like exercise.

You have to go through it. And many times, I don't know if you're aware, but when you lose weight or you build muscle, when you're writing or working out, it's not happening right then. The cellular, it takes place at the cellular level, the molecular level.

You build muscle, your muscle actually breaks down. And then during your sleep and your rapid eye movement, all these things, the muscle then begins to build back up from what happened earlier. Same thing with trials.

We have to go through things while God is shaping us. And I often have noticed that it's through the trial he directs me. Because I wouldn't do certain things unless the trial came up.

And then the trial kind of forces me out of my seat and causes me to move. And he uses those trials to shape. That's the purpose of trials, really, is to conform us into the image of Christ.

Recent examples, I won't give names or situations, but where we have been hurt, hurt deeply. Well, how do you develop forgiveness if you're not hurt deeply? There's an issue, I don't know, I don't know what's going on. I can't trust you.

Well, how do I develop trust in God if there's not something to trust him for? How do I develop the character of Christ when it comes to loving my enemies if I'm not given enemies to love? How do I know how to go through the furnace of affliction? The Bible would talk about, and at the end of it, I trust in God because I went through hell, and now I'm here. That's why one of the Old Testament writers would talk about, though I go through the river, it does not overflow me. And I go through the fire, it does not burn me, because God is my Lord, he is my right hand, he is my shelter.

See, you can't go through things without, that's how you conform to the image of Christ. That's how you persevere. How do you persevere? By going through a lot.

How do you develop love? Does the Lord give me love and patience and fill up your spirit? No, actually to be filled with the Spirit, you first have to be broken of your own self. The people I know, the people I know who are filled mightily with the Spirit of God have been broken, they've been hurt deeply. They've been hurt deeply.

And in that brokenness, and in that trial, you're not going to be filled with the Spirit of God without the trial. It's impossible. We're too arrogant, we're too in our comfort zone.

You're not going to wake up and have tons of money in the bank, everything going great, necessarily be filled with the Spirit of God all the time. You usually have to be broken before the Lord. Blessed, David said, that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

A broken and a contrite heart that God will not throw away, He will not cast away, He will not despise. So that trial, not only does it conform you into the image of Christ, it fills you with the Spirit of God because He gets you to a point of brokenness to now you can be used. Have you ever thought about how we get olive oil? What do you think the olives have to say about that? Do you know that perfume comes from crushed flowers? What do you think the flowers have to say about that? Same with us.

We have to be crushed, we have to be bruised, we have to be beaten inside sometimes. We have to go through life. It's like we go through life limping.

But God, I trust you. Yeah, my foot's broke, my arm's broke, and the shoulder's dislocated. I've went through that, but now I know God is my healer and my sustainer.

He is everything because He took me through that trial. That's the purpose of trials is to conform us into the image of Christ and so we can also be emptied of ourselves and to be filled with the Spirit of God.

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