

## **ABORTION SERMON - TRENDING SLIDE**

### **WELCOME - JAMES SLIDE**

Alright, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to James chapter 1. James 1. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to James 1. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, James 1 will be on page **1011**.

### **INTRODUCTION**

So, last week we got to work on this book by doing background work...

- We found that the author was James the brother of Jesus.
- He had been an unbelieving, skeptic
- until Jesus revealed himself to his brother after the resurrection.
- **And we said that the resurrection changes everything!**
- **EVEN BELIEVING YOUR BROTHER IS GOD!**

So, James the brother of Jesus...

- is the senior pastor over the church in Jerusalem,
- but very soon after this new church movement begins,
- heavy persecution breaks out against these new Christians,
- and they are scattered...
- they are dispersed all around the ancient Near East.

And to these Christians, James writes his letter.

- He is writing to believers, not to unbelievers.
- James is assuming that they have been saved by faith.
- They have been justified by faith.

But one of the main themes of James is the question:

- **What does genuine faith look like?**

Because the Christians he's writing to are relatively new to this whole thing.

- Like, in most churches today
- there is a mix of mature Christians
- and immature Christians.

But you'd have to imagine...

- that most, if not all...
- of the Christians at this time
- are pretty new to their faith.
- The whole movement is still really new!

So, James is writing to saved Christians to help them understand what genuine faith looks like.

## **ILLUSTRATION: CALVINIST**

And we get this today.

- Lots of people "get saved"...
- they "have faith" in Christ...
- but how do we know if it's genuine?

So, when I got saved in high school,

- I started hanging with this crew of friends in my youth group.
- The group was maybe five or six of us,
- and we all had conversion experiences,
- and we were growing in our faiths,
- and we went on mission trips,
- I mean we were into it.

But interestingly enough,

- after high school,
- most of that crew,
  - to my knowledge,
- are no longer actively following Jesus.

They would probably still check the 'Christian' box

- on religious preference...
- but for all intents and purposes
- they aren't doing any of the things Christians do.

Now, I talked to one of those guys about this once. And I asked:

- *"Bro, why aren't you following the Lord anymore?"*
- *"Like, what happened?"*

And he knows I'm a pastor, and sees the stuff I post on social media, and so, here's what he said to me.

- *"Chris, aren't you a Calvinist now?"*
  - And I'm like,
- *"Well, I don't have a t-shirt..."*
- *but yeah, I fall in that camp."*

And so, he's like,

- *"Ok, so that means you believe in once-saved-always-saved."*

And I'm like,

- *"Well, it's a little more complicated than that...ok..."*
  - First mistake: boiling down an entire theological system
  - into a tweet...but whatever.
  - But I said,
- *"Yes, I believe that once Jesus saves you,*
- *he will bring your salvation to completion."*

And so, his response to that was,

- *"Ok. Then that means that my salvation at age 13 still holds,*
- *even if I don't believe in God right now.*
- *'Once saved, always saved,' right?*
- *That means that I can just keep doing what I'm doing,*
- *and if God exists and Jesus is the only way,*
- *then I'm good!"*

## **TRANSITION**

What do you say to that?

- He HAD prayed to ask Jesus into his heart...
- and all indications were that he was very sincere at the time.

Is that genuine faith?

- Well, I think most of us would say,
- *"Yeah, that just doesn't sit right with me."*

So, what does genuine faith look like?

As believers who profess faith in Christ, we need to ask ourselves,

- *“Is the faith that we claim to have a genuine faith?”*

You see, when we become believers, it takes time for our lives and actions to match up with what we say we believe...

- but, do you have ANY desire to progress?
- Have you made ANY steps forward?

James is not trying to condemn people in this book...

- No! He’s trying to encourage those of us who do believe
- to move and grow...
- to GO DEEPER, as we say at Fathom.

So, let’s get into our text for the day. James 1, starting in verse 2.

## **JAMES 1:2-4**

[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **POINT 1: PERSEVERANCE**

As we talk about what genuine faith looks like, I’ll make some points from our text. And the first point is:

#### **SLIDE GENUINE FAITH PERSEVERES IN TRIALS**

This is the first thing that James says to these relatively new believers in the Dispersion. Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds.

And the first word I want us to focus in on in that verse is **WHEN**.

- **WHEN you meet trials.**
  - Not IF.
  - Not, YOU MIGHT.
- But, **WHEN you meet trials.**

One theologian I read this week,

- in response to the question
- of what the greatest defect of American Christianity was,
- replied that we have an *“inadequate view of suffering.”*

You see, many people I meet with have been taught EXPLICITLY...

- that if you really love and follow Christ you won't suffer.

OR they have IMPLICITLY believed the same thing...

- by not having a robust theology of suffering taught to them.
- And that can be just as bad!

The church has made some mistakes in not adequately preparing her people for the trials that we WILL have in this world.

- **But if we want to survive in the day of trial,**
- **we must have a good theology of suffering!**

Trials should be your EXPECTATION as a follower of Christ.

- And many people
- who have claimed to have faith
- show that faith as superficial
- when trials arise.

You've heard the message? *"God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life."*

- Well, God DOES love you...
- and he DOES have a wonderful plan for your life...
- But many immature Christians
- are taken by surprise
- when God's wonderful plan for their life
- includes suffering.

Been there?

You been there?

### **EXPLAIN: JOY**

Well, James says that in those moments of trial, we are to count it all joy.

- So, what does that mean?
- How is that possible?
- Does that mean we are just happy and clappy...
- when life is ravaging us?

### **ILLUSTRATION: MARYSE**

Many of you know that my wife has had ongoing health issues...

For years she has struggles and suffered with undiagnosed issues...

And so, we've seen a TON of doctors...but there's a problem...

- Maryse's just unbelievably sweet and kind...
  - which are great traits....
- But sometimes they play against her.

Like, a couple months ago she had appendicitis...

- and she literally could not stand up straight from the pain...
- but as soon as she meets the receptionist at the ER, she's like,
  - "Oh hi...yeah I'm good..."

#### YOU CANNOT STAND UP!

- And I'm like, "babe, work the system!"
- MILK IT!

If I need to get in to see the doctor...it's like a Broadway caliber show!

- I'm like dry heaving...
- and moaning.

Like, they should think you're dying!

## **APPLICATION**

This isn't saying, we are just happy and cheerful when things are awful.

- NO! When you are suffering,
- that's unbelievably hard!

So, then, how are we joyful in the mist of trials?

Well, James' answer...

- is that **God is up to something in our trials.**
  - **There is purpose in our pain.**
- James is arguing that trials produce something.

If you have superficial faith,

- trials might produce anger towards God,
- resentment towards him,
- even abandonment of one's faith altogether.

But with genuine faith, trials produce steadfastness.

- And if you can consider that!
- If you can count it all up in the midst of trials,
- you can actually find joy!

## EXPLAIN: STEADFASTNESS

Now, what is steadfastness?

Well, James is talking about

- an active and intentional endurance
  - rather than resignation.
- It's a determined act of the will
  - that I will get through whatever trial faces me
  - with my eyes fixed on Christ.

And if we look at this as kind of an equation it would go like this:

- you start with faith...
- add onto that, trials as a test of that faith...
- which produces steadfastness...

And if you let steadfastness have its full effect, you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing...

- which doesn't mean perfect,
  - like we don't struggle or sin anymore.
- No, it means you will mature.

The process is:

- faith,
- tested in trials,
- producing steadfastness,
- that leads to spiritual maturity.

So, GENUINE FAITH PERSEVERES IN TRIALS.

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## TRANSITION

Then James goes on. While still trying to encourage these young believers to persevere in trials, he then says this in verse 5:

### JAMES 1:5-11

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

[9] Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, [10] and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. [11] For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

## POINT 2: DEPENDENCE

Now, this next section is so very important. James just said,

- genuine faith perseveres in trials...
- and that will produce steadfastness
- which will lead to maturity.

But then he says, *“But hey, do any of you lack wisdom?”*

I mean, he’s kinda like,

- *“You’ll be mature!”*
- *“But hey, anyone here not feel like they are mature?”*

So, let me make my next point here.

### **SLIDE** GENUINE FAITH GROWS IN DEPENDENCE

- You don’t become more independent as you become mature
- NO! You become more dependent.
- More dependent on God!

So, the logic of this passage is:

- if you persevere in trials you’ll grow in maturity...
- but if in that process...you lack wisdom...
  - like if you haven’t reached that maturity yet...
- you ask God for help!

So, sometimes we think maturity means not needing help...

- being self-sufficient...
  - but that’s not true.
- It is assumed that you will need wisdom on this journey.

And notice in verse 5 that when asked, God will give wisdom.

- It's promised!
- God never refuses the request for wisdom!

"Well," you ask,

- *"then why aren't there a whole lot more*
- *wise Christians walking around?*
- *Cause I look around, and it's kinda like...eeesh..."*

## **EXPLAIN: WISDOM**

Well, let me offer this...

- I think, when trials come upon us...
- our guttural instinct is NOT to ask for wisdom.

You know what I ask for when I'm in a tough place?

- When trials come upon me
- I usually first ask for God to get me out of this trial...

I normally pray,

- *"God get me out of this..."*
  - or,
- *"God, tell me what to do to get out of this!"*

But, you see, that isn't asking for wisdom...that's asking for knowledge.

And those are different things.

When we think wisdom, biblically, we think of Solomon. Right?

- Solomon famously asked God for wisdom,
- not for wealth or power.
- But look with me at what Solomon actually asks for:

## SLIDE 1 KINGS 3:9

[9] Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

That's a different request than,

- "God, just tell me what to do."
  - No!
- "God, give me *an understanding mind to discern.*"

## SLIDE GENUINE FAITH GROWS IN DEPENDENCE

### ILLUSTRATION: STORM

And we use the metaphor of storms when talking of trials

- because when suffering comes,
- and when trials are upon us,
- and when it feels like the bottom has dropped out of our lives,
- it often feels like we are being wrecked by a storm.

And I don't know about you,

- but my experience,
  - and the testimony I find in the scriptures
- is that
  - God's way, most often,
  - isn't to save us from the storm...
  - but to deliver us through the storm.

This is the difference between

- praying for God to get us out of a storm...
- and God giving us wisdom to survive the storm.

You see, God's way, most often,

- isn't like a helicopter dad,
  - just [chick-chick- chick-chick]
  - plucking people out of storms....
- most often he does not save us from the storm,
- but he delivers us through the storm.

My experience with Jesus thus far has been that

- when I'm in the storm,
- and I raise my hand for help...
  - *"Father, help me!*
  - *This storm is just beating the snot out of me."*

It's like my heavenly father,

- more often than not,
- takes me by the hand
- and he doesn't lift me out of the storm...
- but guides me through it.
  - And I'm like,
    - *"I feel like I can't breathe."*
  - And he's like,
    - *"Yes, I know. That's part of it."*
  - And I'm like,
    - *Why don't you save me FROM this?"*

- And he's like,
  - *"No, I'm going to deliver you THROUGH this."*

## APPLICATION

But we just saw that in those trials and sufferings...God is producing maturity in us!

I mean, I don't know about you,

- but when has your faith matured the most?
- Is it when everything's going awesome?
  - Or is it when you're so desperate for God
  - that if he doesn't show up
  - you know you're toast?

Trials produce maturity...because they grow us in dependence.

- So, we ask for wisdom...
  - not just relief...
- but we ask for God's wisdom
- to know how to take the trial we are in
- and live in a way that honors God.

And that's how he most often walks with us through storms.

- We ask for wisdom,
- and he grows us
- in dependence on him.

## EXPLAIN: REPROACH

And did you notice that verse 5 says:

- He generously gives to all without reproach.
- No reproach! That's great news!
- If you ask for wisdom, he won't say,
  - *"Are you kidding me?!?"*
  - *You didn't even use the wisdom from last time!*
  - *Forget it!"*
- No, we humbly ask for wisdom...
- we depend on God...
- and he generously gives.

## EXPLAIN: DOUBLE-MINDED

Now, the whole doubt and double-minded thing is weird, right?

God says,

- *"You're confused about this trial?"*
- *Ask me for wisdom...*
  - *but don't doubt...*
- *Because if you doubt,*
- *you shouldn't expect anything from me.*
- *You're a double-minded man."*

Sheesh! What are we supposed to do with that?

Well, let me explain:

The double-minded man is the man who is like,

- *“Yeah, I follow God...*
- *But he’s not going to help me.*
- *I’m not even gonna ask.*
- *I can take care of this myself!”*

You’re not even crying out to God for help...

That’s the double-minded man,

- paying lip service to God,
- pretending to be all put together when you’re not.

This is...

- *“I’m fine...*
- *I’ve got this...*
- *Marriage is a train wreck...*
- *Your kids are a nightmare!*
  - *Your house is on fire back there!*
- *We’re good...*
  - *What? That over there? Don’t worry about that...*
  - *It’s under control...*
- *Man, wasn’t Chris funny this morning...*
- *He’s so funny...*
- *I just love that guy...*

But that fake-it-till-you-make-it WON’T WORK! I said it a few weeks ago,

- but the worst thing you can do is to pretend you’re ok
- WHEN YOU’RE NOT!

James is showing us that GENUINE FAITH GROWS IN DEPENDENCE.

## EXPLAIN: EVERYONE

And then, in verses 9-11 we find a theme that we'll see in the book of James: and that is the flattening of the curve, as it were.

- Everyone endures trials.
- Everyone struggles.
  - It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor.
  - Educated or uneducated.
  - In a place of honor or a place of shame.
- Everyone will have seasons in which the sky is clear,
- and we'll have seasons in which it's storming.

God is leading us into maturity. He's showing us our need for him.

## TRANSITION

So,

- GENUINE FAITH PERSEVERES IN TRIALS.
- GENUINE FAITH GROWS IN DEPENDENCE.

And my final point for this morning is found in verses 12-18:

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## JAMES 1:12-18

[12] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. [13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. [14] But each person is tempted when he is lured

and enticed by his own desire. [15] Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

[16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. [18] Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

### POINT 3: TEMPTATION

Point three this morning is this:

#### **SLIDE GENUINE FAITH FIGHTS TEMPTATION**

James starts by reiterating God's goodness in testing and trials.

But then he turns to the opposite response.

- Yes, you can persevere,
- and ask for wisdom,
- and mature in your faith.

But there's another option.

You see, how a Christian responds to trials...

- determines whether that suffering
- will ultimately prove a test to pass...
- or a temptation to sin.

It's fascinating,

- but the Greek word translated "trial" in verse 2
  - comes from the same root
- as the word translated as "tempted" in verse 13.

There's a way that sufferings can be trials that produces steadfastness...

And then there's a way where it can become a temptation to sin...

And it's gonna be a fight.

- Cause if you're not careful,
- you're going to be tempted
- and drawn by your flesh
- to betray God's invitation to maturity.
- And that will lead to death.

So, there's this warning tagged on to the end.

- Trials are meant for your joy.
- They're meant for your maturity.
- They're meant to grow you in genuine faith.

But they can become temptations to sin...

- to run from God,
- rather than running to him.
- And we must fight against that.

GENUINE FAITH FIGHTS TEMPTATION.

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## CONCLUSION

So, let me end with this illustration. I use it all the time, but I think it's helpful when talking about trials and suffering that God uses to mature us.

Harper is at the point in life where when I take her to the pediatrician she knows what's coming.

Like, when she was younger Harper loved our pediatrician, Dr. Kelly,

- she pretended to be Dr. Kelly when we were at home...
- and she'd give me check-ups...
  - which was the best game,
  - cause as an exhausted parent
  - I got to just lay on the floor with my eyes closed...
  - Can I get a witness?
- But we'd seen enough episodes of Doc McStuffins
- For her to think the doctor was fun!

But we're past that point now.

- Now it's, *"You've got a check-up today."*
  - *"I don't wanna get a shot!"*
- We get to the doctor's office...
  - *"I don't wanna get a shot!"*
- Dr. Kelly comes in,
  - *"I don't wanna get a shot!"*
- She says, *"Well, let's just do your checkup first!"*
  - Does the check-up...everything's looking good.
  - Dr. Kelly says, *"Well, that's it...except for two shots."*

And she freaks out.

- *"I don't wanna get a shot!"*
- *I don't wanna get a shot!*
- *I don't wanna get a shot!"*

And she's bigger now...so, I now have to sit my not-so-little girl on my lap,

- and she fights me, and struggles, and cries.
  - She doesn't want to go through with it.
    - And I don't blame her!
  - But she has to get the shots.
- And so, I have to grab ahold of her arms.
- And grab ahold of her legs.
- And I have to overpower her with my strength.

And she looks at me...with tears streaming down her face...

- *"Daddy...I don't wanna get a shot..."*
- *Daddy...why do I have to get a shot?"*

And listen, all the knowledge...all the facts...they don't help her in that.

- I show her that poster
- of all the sick and dying kids on the wall
- to try to convince her that a shot is better than Diphtheria...

But it doesn't matter.

*"I don't wanna get a shot...I don't wanna get a shot..."*

But she needs the shot!

And I'm not making a point here about vaccines, alright!

## ENDING

And to God, so many of us are just like,

- *"I don't wanna get a shot..."*
- *I don't wanna get a shot...*
- *I don't wanna get a shot!"*

**But the only way to get you healthy is get a shot.**

That's what our text is saying today.

- Trials will come.
- Consider it all joy.
- God is good.
- He is for you.

I'm not saying your trial is not awful. It might be the most terrible thing ever!

- But you haven't been forsaken.
- You can scream and cry and shake your fist at the heavens,
- and all of that is ok.

But if you are a believer in Christ...

- if you have genuine faith...
- then he is working for your maturity.

He's removing something that might hurt you...

He's protecting you from something that might kill you...

And he's doing all this because he loves you...

Are you in the midst of a trial?

- Don't be deceived.
- Don't be fooled.
- Your flesh is going to incite you.
- You're going to want to believe that God isn't good.

**But every good and perfect gift is from him.**

This is genuine faith.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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