

# **Title: Proven in the Trenches**

**Scripture: James 1: 2-4** – *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and lack nothing.”*

## **Introduction:**

It seems as if everyone loves the spotlight. Everyone loves the celebration. But very few are willing to endure the trenches. The low, quiet, dark, messy places. Sometimes the very hard and difficult places. You know, the places where there is no clapping, nobody is cheering you on, and sometimes nobody even sees you!

Yet it is in the trenches not the platform that we are truly proven. In those trenches, knee deep in the mud, smack dab in the middle of those hard-fought battles are the places we can elevate.

Today I want to tell you a little bit about my story over the last year. But first I want to inform you of something that I personally know to be a fact.

**God does some of His best work in the trenches.** I’m living proof of that.

## **My Story:**

January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 I had four seizures, four strokes that led to two subdural hematomata’s, I spent five days in the emergency room and 35 days in the intensive care unit. I was truly in a battle for my life.

My doctors told my brother on three different occasions I was going to die. But when God stepped in, beyond all medical understanding on all three occasions, I survived.

Then I went into a comma for seven days. The medical team tried on four occasions to pull me out and were unsuccessful. During this time, I

believe is when I had my encounter with God, and I will go into full detail in my upcoming full length testimony video.

That being said. After the fourth time the doctors told my brother that if they keep trying it could possibly kill me. Just a few moments later, I sat up in bed on my own. Once again, the doctors were in disbelief. They could not understand how this was happening. This kind of thing only happens when God shows up on the scene. Even with the doctor's disbelief, they told my brother that I would never walk again, never talk again. Basically, I would be a hostage in my own body. (Thank you, God, for showing up for me.)

I said all that to say this. When I finally got to my brother's house, after leaving the hospital, that is when my trench work began.

### **The Trenches Are Where Your Faith is Truly Tested**

It's easy to talk faith when everything is going your way. When you're on top of the mountain. But the big question is, do you still trust God when you're in the trenches. When you feel stuck, when you're feeling broken, and when defeat seems like it's just around the corner. Even when you sometimes may feel forgotten, can you still trust God.

I learned something very valuable to me during my rehab time. (**My trench Time.**) True Faith is proven when it is the hardest to believe. When you're working so hard, but you feel like you're getting nowhere. Can you still have that hard fought faith to completely trust in God.

Let me tell you a little bit about my story. My (**trench time.**) When I arrived at my brother's house after leaving the hospital, that's when my trench time began. I could not walk. My speech sometimes was not that great. It was difficult getting dressed. I even forgot how to tie my shoes. To be honest, everything was difficult for me.

One of the first things I learned right out the gate was that I was right where He wanted me. I was stuck per say. I really couldn't move around on my own much. I would put the work into taking baby steps when I could, and spend the rest of my time in the word.

So, if you're in a trench right now, you could be right on course. Right where God wants you to be. **Learn** from it, **grow** from it, and **elevate** from it. With God by my side, I was able to do that, and I believe you can too.

### **What my trench taught me**

Trying to walk again without any assistance, (Walker) was no easy task. I experienced defeat after defeat. Falling down a lot, and that was not good being that I only had half a skull at this time.

Trying to get from the couch to the bathroom was a battle that I often lost, that's why I had to wear adult diapers. It's ok, you can laugh, there is no shame in my game. Lol. By the way I don't have to wear them anymore, thank God.

I was trying to do things on my own and it wasn't working out at all for me. I couldn't win the daily battles on my own strength. But when I totally surrendered my battle and my trench to God, that's when the tables turned for me. I allowed God to fight my battle through me, and in my trench, He began to shape me and grow me. I wasn't falling down anymore. I began to make it to the bathroom on time. This may not sound like much to you, but it was huge for me. (Thank You Lord) If you let God fight through you, you will win your battle and, in your trenches, you will become someone greater.

### **God Never Wastes a Trial**

If you are in a trench right now in your life, where it feels overwhelming, you feel like the pressure is about to suffocate you. Maybe you're feeling unappreciated and unloved. Maybe feeling alone. You're not.

I can tell you from experience. In those moment's God is refining your heart, building your character, and maximizing your endurance. He is shaping you for victory and victories to come. That's what He did for me, and I believe in Him, and that he will do it for you too.

## **You Can't Fake it in the Trenches**

There is one thing I learned in my 2024 trench; was you can't fake it until you make it. In the trenches you can't fake peace, you can't fake patience, and you sure can't fake trust. It's either real, or it's not. That's not a bad thing, that's giving God a chance to build something real in you.

James says it best, "the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Without testing, there is no proving. Without proving there is no perseverance.

True faith is proven when there is no logical reason to keep believing, but we do.

## **The Trenches Teach You to Fight God's Way**

Let's look at David for a minute. We don't win by our own strength. David didn't. David was tested and proven in the fields, (trenches)

David didn't become a giant slayer the day he faced Goliath. He became a giant slayer in the fields, keeping sheep, protecting them from lions and bears, when no one was watching. Our private victories prepare us for the public ones.

I am not the same man I was in the year 2024. I was tested and proven right here in the living room, alone, just me and God. Like David, my living room was my trench and thank God I didn't have any lions or bears to face. David's trench was in the fields, and he came out on the other side a giant slayer.

I'm not at all comparing myself to David. I'm just saying that with God we both defeated our own Goliath.

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:6 says "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may lift you up in due time. Honestly there were times I would ask when am I going to be lifted? When is my due time? You know what I

learned and what I was shown. My lifting up and my due time came after my trench time. Trench time is not punishment, it's preparation for something grater that we just don't understand in the moment.

Stay faithful, stay obedient, even in the small things. I encourage you to stay in the fight, don't give up, keep grinding, because our trench time is our training grounds.

### **Closing:**

Some of you are in a trench right now. You're feeling exhausted, alone, unseen. You may be wondering if what you're doing is making a difference at all. I can tell you from experience that God sees you and He is always with you. And He is preparing you for something greater than you can even imagine.

I want to encourage you to not despise the trench. That's where warriors are made. That's where your faith is forged.

That's where you are proven, not to the world, not even to yourself, but to God, the One who is calling you to be something greater. He is shaping you to be able to handle everything He has for you.

I know you have days when you wake up and you feel like you just don't have it in you to keep going, to keep fighting. I understand because I had those days. I encourage you to keep grinding, stay in the fight, because when you come out on the other side you will be a giant slayer proven for your promise.

Have a great day and be blessed.

**Lite Winds.**

*Derek Strickland*