

God will Never give you More than You Can Handle - 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, 12:7-10
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

I know people are well meaning, and often trying to avoid the awkward. You know, you go grab coffee with someone thinking it will be a nice, uneventful conversation. Had you known they were going to vomit all of their life's troubles on you, well, you would have found another appointment that conflicted. But here you are, and there she is opening up about all of the trials in life, the pain of a trainwreck of events that has left your friend hurting and at the end of self. So you reach in your bag of Christian cliches designed to offer some level of help, the functional, "There, there" with a spiritual spin. These words come out, "You know, God will never give you more than you can handle." Then you hear your lips keep moving with the follow up, "Everything happens for a reason. Whenever God closes a door He opens a window." Instantly, you feel as if you were the help the friend needed in the moment, life has to get better after this avalanche of good Christian platitudes, and you now have an out to change the discussion to talk about the weather or politics.

OK, laying on the satire a little heavy this morning, but the truth is that these lines are thrown around often as people speak "Christianese". And they are really wrong for two reasons. First, they aren't that helpful when someone is experiencing deep trauma, massive struggle, and significant pain in life. Rather, these types of phrases can be more dismissive than helpful. But second, they just aren't true. For example, when life is hard and it seems there are no options, it often seems like God has opened a window and it is on the 8th floor. But the other reason these statements are problematic is because they just do not line up with Scripture.

People will often run to 1 Corinthians 10:31 for support, but go read this carefully. In this text the issue is the seductive call to idolatry and temptation, and in this case we are promised a way of escape to endure the temptation. But when the issue is difficulty in life, either because of the evil of persecution for the cause of the Gospel, the evil of sinful people doing injustice and hurtful things, or natural evil of sickness, disaster, or physical suffering, the truth is that we have both texts and Biblical examples of people having way more than they can handle. Think of the same conversation above while having coffee with Job. C'mon. We have two texts this week, and the key thing I hope you will see in them is that the Apostle Paul, the Gospel Globetrotter confesses two different situations that were more than he could bear. The first from 2 Corinthians 1 seemed to arise out of a moment of intense and life-threatening persecution. It's kind of funny, we don't know which situation Paul is referring because there are so many possibilities. Yet, his confession to this church he loved is that they were, "So utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself." That does not sound like God didn't give them more than they can bear. Paul describes the second from 2 Corinthians 12 as a "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me." Again, he does not share the specific of the situation. I have often thought this must be a Baptist deacon. Most scholars will point to the possibility that this is some form of physical suffering, possibly either the loss of eye sight or chronic pain from his persecutions an hard life. But he prays three times crying out to God to remove this thorn. Don't see this as three consecutive mornings, Paul is saying he has spent seasons of life begging God to take the thorn out because it is so difficult. And God says "no" and does not end the pain.

So is God a cosmic sadist relishing in our pain, then? Absolutely not. Paul helps us so much in these texts. Of course, he does not tell us that God won't give us more than we can bear. Just the opposite, he tells us that suffering is often designed by God to bring us to the end of ourselves, to leave us without resources to navigate the pain and difficulty. At this point we will either despair or we will trust. And in those times of broken nothingness,

well, Christ will meet us there, will become strength, will show us His mercy, and will reveal God's goodness. This is not easy, and often leaves us with the need for our brothers and sisters to walk through a season of life entering in to our pain to bring the comfort of Christ. But then that is also Paul's first point. God's comfort in our suffering becomes a source of comfort for our brothers and sisters as well. Pain was never designed to experience alone, and the community of faith will need each other to be a God given resource for times of pain. And when this happens we become a glorious picture of Jesus to the watching world.

So next time you are having that cup of coffee and someone and you start hearing the, what for them is unbearable pain. Just listen. No Christian platitudes or Bible verses. Enter their pain, and if needed, offer them the hope of Jesus who also suffered beyond what He was able to bear which is the hope for redemption for all of our pain.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Romans 13	Romans 14	Romans 15	Romans 16	Isaiah 1	Isaiah 2	Isaiah 3

Reading from this past week: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11,12:7-10

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Matthew 2:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Family Worship

Song - *The Lord, My God, My Salvation*

<https://youtu.be/RgikQg40ZEw>

Gospel Project

Story: God had a plan for Joseph

Big Picture Question: Who is in control of everything?

Answer: God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

Scripture: Genesis 37-50

New City Catechism

Question #47: Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work?

Answer: No, Christ died once for all.

Verse: 1 Peter 3:18

Scripture

2 Corinthians 1:3-11,12:7-10

- Why might telling people, "God won't give you more than you can handle," be so attractive when listening to someone share their pain? What is wrong with this phrase?
- How does Paul describe his pain and suffering in the passages for this week?
- What are some reasons Paul gives for his pain that is both more than he can handle and which he prays for God to remove, but God does not?
- Why would Paul begin the text by calling God the God of all comfort?

Prayer

*Pray that God would help you praise Him in the seasons of life when you do have more than you can handle.

*Just make sure you stop, take time to authentically give thanks this week.