

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – September 8, 2020

The Lord being with you.

Have you ever felt that God gave you more than you can bear?

And then someone tells you, Oh, that God promises us that he'll never give us more than we can bear.

Well, you look at the Bible and you will see that God never promises that he won't give us more than we can bear, but God does promise us something more wonderful, and it's that wonderful that I wanna look at today. I am in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, where the great apostle Paul is telling us about a chapter in his life when God did give him more than he could bear, and how out of that, God gave him something very wonderful. I wanna first read this passage and then say a few words about it.

Second Corinthians Chapter 1, I begin reading at Verse 8. We do not want you to be unaware of brothers and sisters of the affliction we experienced in Asia, for We were so utterly unbearably, crushed, that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we received the sentence of death so that we would not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Now, the Apostle Paul provides no information about this horrible experience he went through in Asia, and we learned nothing about it in the book of Acts, but Paul does say... He says, I do not want you to be unaware of it. I really like here that Paul does not deny His pain, he does not try to hide it, he does want others to know about it so that they can learn about those times they are facing more than they can bear. Paul says that he and his co-workers, he says, We were so utterly unbearably, crushed. They were in fact facing a situation that was more than they could bear, it was hopeless, and Paul here is using words that were used of a ship that was overloaded, so picture that, a ship that is overloaded and in danger of sinking. So whatever it was that Paul was going to... It was sinking him. It was too big for Paul, he couldn't handle it.

Now, keep in mind that this is... Yes, this is the same apostle Paul who in Philippians 4:13 says, I can do all things to Christ who strengthens me. But now Paul, he's telling us about a situation that he can't handle, it is more than he can bear. He says, We were so utterly unbearably, crushed, that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we received the sentence of death.

I really hope that you have the freedom in your church or in your home Bible study, or in your small group, that you have the freedom to say something like this to people without people looking at you like you're some great sinner... Or like you're crazy, because Paul is being honest about what they went through, he says, we despaired of life itself. I read this and I can well imagine that there were mornings of Paul struggled to even get on the bed. Paul continues indeed. We felt that. We received the sentence of death. Paul does not say that they actually did receive a sentence of death, he says like they felt like dead men walking, they despaired of life.

And here I'm just glad that someone didn't rush in and say, Oh Paul, God never promises you more than you can bear, you shouldn't talk like that, you are an apostle, but the situation frankly was out

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of control for Paul, it felt to him like it was the end. He says, Indeed, we felt that we we seen descendants of death, so that... So that... Now, in the Greek text, the word translated, so that is the word hina, that's hina, and it is a word that introduces what in Greek grammar is called a purpose clause, that means that there was a purpose in this class, there was purpose in what Paul is going through, it's not just some random purpose, less event, this marks God's purpose in the midst of all of this, so that... So that we would rely not on ourselves, but on God. Now, this marks a turning point in the life of Paul, as God is yet taking Paul ever deeper in his faith by allowing him to face a situation that is more than Paul can be.

Here's how the message version translates this as it says, as it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened instead of trusting in our own strength our wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust in God. Totally. And that's why so often in the Bible, you will read of saintly men and women who are facing more than he can bear, and you see them growing through it. Take for instance, in Psalm 55, verse 5. David doesn't hold back 'cause he says, fear and trembling came up on me and horror overwhelms me that David works his way through that so that by Verse 22, David can say, cast your burden on the Lord, that burden foot, which feels too much to bear. Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you.

Now, you might feel like Paul, you might feel like David, that you're in over your head. That you got more than you can bear, that you're thinking, you've done everything that you know to do, cast your burden on the Lord, put the full weight of your reliance on him. He won't let you down. He won't.

And the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace. But now and forever. Amen.

I am Tim Smith of fellow traveler in the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening until next time.

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