

***Question: Does God allow us to face more suffering or troubles than we can bear?***

In an attempt to comfort or encourage a person facing troubles in life, we may hear someone say, “God will not allow you to face more than you can bear.” However, this is a misrepresentation of a statement found in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that says: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1Cor. 10:13 NIV). The word translated as “temptation” in this verse can also mean “testing” or “trials,” and sometimes in the New Testament these trials can include suffering. But this is not the case in this verse.

The context of 1 Corinthians 10:13 shows that it refers to the temptations of sin that we all face. After referring to the things that happened to the Israelites in the wilderness (See the book of Exodus), the writer stated that “God was not pleased with most of them;” and he added that these things serve as “examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.” Because they were guilty of things like idolatry, sexual immorality and grumbling against the Lord and his anointed leaders, many of them were killed by the “destroying angel” (1 Cor. 10:5-10 NIV).

The Christians in Corinth were being assured that God will not allow them to be overcome by any power seeking to seduce them to sin. Their faithful God who knows what they are facing will always provide a way out of the situation. If any Christian sins, it is because he chooses to do so and not because our Lord failed to provide the needed help for overcoming the temptation. This is not the same as saying that God will never allow his people to face more trouble in life than they can bear.

Surprisingly, the Bible indicates that God often allows us to face all kinds of suffering and trials. They are the means he uses to discipline us as a father does his son (Hebrews 12:6-11), to refine us like burning out impurities in gold (1 Peter 1:6-7), to produce in us perseverance, character and hope (Romans 5:2-5), and to allow him to show his great power through our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:7-10). As difficult as it may be for us to

understand, we would deny ourselves the presence and power of God if life was without these challenges. They can help us grow stronger through faith in Christ than is possible by depending only on our own strength.

Perhaps the clearest statement in scripture about suffering beyond our ability is found in a statement by the apostle Paul about his missionary travels. He told the Corinthian Christians: “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, *far beyond our ability to endure*, so that we despaired of life itself.” He then added that “we felt we had received the sentence of death.” But Paul also explained that “this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:8-9 NIV).

The Bible does NOT say that God never allows us to face more suffering than we can bear. It does teach us that God will provide his strength and power to help us when we do face more than we can bear. The emphasis points away from our ability in order for the ability of God to be displayed. Thus, it becomes extremely important for us to learn to trust in him instead of trusting only in our own understanding and power.

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