

Talk – 5 Things Jesus Never Said: 'God will never give you more than you can handle'

Central Truth

God *will* give you more than *you* can handle, but He will *never* give you more than *He* can handle.

Bible Readings

Psalm 61:1-8

2 Cor 1:3-11

CHECK TIME

Talk

Note - a Very hot day – on the day preached.

- Is anyone else praying for snow?
- Be comforted – apparently... 'God will never give you more than you can handle!'

Prayer

Father, we come before your word, many of us beset by affliction and trouble. Comfort us with words that you express. Amen.

Intro

- 'God will never give you more than you can handle!'
Hmmm.
- Does that match anyone's experience here?

- I am not someone who has suffered quite to the extent as I know some here have – and yet when I think just of my life, the claim that 'God will never give me more than I can handle!' doesn't seem to ring true.
- There have been times when I know I have not been able to handle life!
- Maybe that is you as well.

- A difficulty with the topics in this January sermon series is that they are all false claims – that is, they *don't* have a biblical foundation. It is always hard to argue for a fallacy.
- So first, I need to acknowledge the claim and how it is used.
- Our statement 'God will never give you more than you can handle' is often used in a *secular sense* - offered when there are no comfortable answers to a situation.
- For example, when something bad happens, or an injustice occurs – then the claim that 'God will never give you more than you can handle' is a way to say: 'toughen up, straighten up, you'll get through this'. Hardly comforting. But words without meaning rarely are comforting.
- Similarly, this claim 'God will never give you more than you can handle' is often used in a *Christian sense* as well.
- What do you say to a person whose life is falling apart? To the person who's lost a job, a home, a spouse, a child, a relationship, or maybe just all sense of purpose - what comfort can you give?

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- What do you say to the person who is depressed, or suffering from grief, or lives with any form of Post-Traumatic Stress – what comfort can you give?
- **[9am/10.30am]** What do you say to the global partner [Maggie/Wim and Maaika] who is/are about to set out for the mission field, nervous, apprehensive, uncertain? What comfort can you give?
- **[5pm]** What do you say to Violet years from today when she faces troubles or crossroads in her faith journey?

- 'Don't worry, God will never give you more than you can handle!'
- You know - If that were true – they would be comforting words.
- But friends, that sentiment, even if motivated by good reason – is not something that the Bible promises – it is not God's intention, it is not a teaching from Jesus, it is not a doctrine of the early apostles.
- I can give you something close! The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 10:13 says: '*God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear*'.
- The mistake that is often made is that we make too much of that verse. Ignoring the context, which limits the statement to the area of *temptation*, we apply the verse to suffering or trials instead. 'God is faithful, he will not let you 'suffer' beyond what you can bear'.

- Friends, with scripture open in front of us, we can check what is actually said and ensure that we don't turn our secular wishes into what we think are scriptural slogans – because if we do we will end up saying something like, "Don't worry, this wouldn't happen in your life if God didn't think you could bear it."
- And the sufferer may object, shaking their head, and raising their hands in hopelessness. Only for you to insist, "Look, seriously, the Bible promises God won't ever give you more in life than you can handle."
- That is *secular mantra* masquerading as *biblical truth*.

- So, although this opens a topic that is way too large to cover well in the few moments that we have before this hot day, let me point us in a more helpful direction.
- A more helpful statement, reflecting what the Bible stays would be this:

God will give you more than you can handle, but He will never give you more than He can handle.

God will give you more than you can handle, but He will never give you more than He can handle.

- There are experiences, circumstances which we can't handle - all kinds of suffering, pain, and darkness. Rarely do we see it coming.

Psalm 61:1-3

- Turn with me to Psalm 61 [*Page: 567*]

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- This is a Psalm of David – a prayer for help.
- The exact situation to which David needs help is not known, but it mentions his foes, so it is possible that David is out on battlefield and his enemies are making things difficult for him.
- He calls out – verse 1 *'Hear my cry O God; listen to my prayer'*
- *'From the ends of the earth I call to you'* – he is saying, I am at the end of my tether, I have nothing left in the tank, I am failing, I am losing.
- And as his heart grows faint he says: *'lead me to the rock that is higher than I'*
- *'lead me to the rock that is higher than I'*
- I love this picture.
- David knows that his safety, his comfort cannot be found on his own. His ability to handle the circumstances in which he finds himself is waning – and so in his present trouble, he calls out to the Lord for his comfort and his refuge.
- David (as we today sometimes find) is experiencing far more than he can handle psychologically, emotionally, physically.
- Where does he go when he is at his end? Well, he goes higher.
- He gives the Lord his lament. He gives the Lord his pain. He gives the Lord his tears.
- The point of this Psalm is to show that even though things can be bad, the Lord can handle the worst of it – and the best thing David can do is to stick with the Lord for refuge.
- It is not a unique Psalm, there are plenty of other Psalms which speak of the comfort that the Lord provide despite ever present suffering
 - Psalm 46 *'God is our refuge and strength'*.
 - Psalm 23 *'even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for the Lord is with me'*.
 - Psalm 7 *'The Lord my God, I take refuge in you, save and deliver me from those who want to tear me and rip me to pieces like a lion'*.

God may give David more than *he* could handle, but He will *never* give David more than *God himself* could handle.

Application

- We might each benefit from taking a leaf out of David's book here – and when things do get tough, or things do get too much to handle – recognise that there is a safe place – and it is with the Lord.
- **[9am/10.30am]** Maggie/Wim and Miike – only God knows the trouble that is before you as you return to the mission field. Find your refuge in him.
- **[5pm]** Jon & Heidi – on those occasions down the track when Violet comes to you in tears – help her to find her refuge in the Lord.

PAUSE

- The second half of Psalm 61 – looks beyond the present troubles and looks to what the Lord promises forever and on into eternity.
- But given the heat, permit me to jump over that.

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2 Corinthians 1:3-11

- Psalms are ancient I hear you say. They belong to antiquity.
- So, let me take you to passage which is more recent in the Bible.
- Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 1 [*Page: 1142*]
- Although it is still written years ago, it is written into the same age as we are today. Jesus has lived, died and risen – but is yet to return. That is the same period of history that we belong too.
- This passage is perhaps the Bible greatest text on 'comfort' – it is written by the apostle Paul who speaks more about suffering than all the Bible writers.
- And it is in this chapter is where he speaks most about comfort.
- Paul recalled a time when God gave him and Timothy more than they could bear.
- Verse 8 - *'We do not want you to be uninformed about the hardships we suffered. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. In our hearts, we felt the sentence of death'*
- To be so burdened, to be so afflicted, that they were beyond their own strength to endure. Even to the point of death. That is tough.

Explanation

- I wonder how many today can relate to the sentiment that Paul expresses here.
- In our present, there are burdens which can just be so encompassing – to the point that we can question whether we will ever get through.
- And even if that is not you right now, the stark reality is that before us lies a time when we will die and for most that will be a drawn-out process and one that won't be helped by someone saying: 'Don't worry, God will never give you more than you can handle' – because if that were true, we would be able to find our own way through even death.

PAUSE

- The apostle Paul says something different.
- Look at verse 3 - He praises God, and calls him the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.
- He speaks of what God has done and will do in the face of suffering – verse 4 – he comforts us in *all our troubles*.
- Take special note of that – 'all our troubles' - not some of our troubles, but every one of them. There is no trouble that is too big for God.
- As we looked more closely at this chapter you would see that Paul recognises that his suffering, can be an encouragement for those in Corinth and in fact one of the gifts God gives is others who may share in similar sufferings. It may be burden to suffer, but there will be others who will also be able to comfort.
- Paul is not offering pad answers. He is speaking as one who has suffered in many ways - imprisoned numerous times, beaten, stoned on one occasion (in Lystra), falsely accused, run out of town, ship-wrecked, eventually he will lose his life.

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- He knows what it is too suffer.
- And in his case, that suffering came because he was doing everything he could to speak about Jesus.
- If 'God never gave you more than you could handle', then why give Paul so much hardship as he did the work of the Lord? Surely of all people, he would be one who would be protected from such pain?
- If that were true, can you imagine how much more Christians would talk about Jesus?! If the one sure way that we could avoid suffering was to talk about Jesus, then we would be out there in a flash!
- But no! As we read on, we are given a crucial insight into the point of his despair – insight into why he and his companions were given more than they could handle? – verse 9 – *'this happened that we might rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead'*
- God gave Paul more than he could handle so that when things were hardest, they would not look *inward* but to the Lord himself who would comfort them.

Application

- Friends, suffering comes in many shapes and sizes – and no shape or size fits!
- If suffering could be ordered in a catalogue, then that is one catalogue that we would all throw away.
- What Paul does in 2 Corinthians is to show believers how to live in a troubled world.
- He doesn't promise the troubles would be removed, but he does point out that the troubles that believers experience, will strengthen them, and ultimately will comfort them.
- How is that the case?
- You see without troubles, there would be little reason to pay any attention to God -because we would simply continue on our own merry way relying on our own abilities to control and manage our own lives.
- And as attractive as that sounds, that does nothing to address the inevitable problem that lies before us as we die.

- In fact, what Paul does for us is point out that God gives an answer to suffering and highlights how God comforts – he alludes to it in verse 5 – *'just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows'*
- God, far from being remote and removed from the troubles that we endure, sent his son Jesus into the world where he also suffered.
- His purpose was to bring an ultimate answer to the problem of suffering.
- To deliver us. To be the ultimate and once and for all refuge for all who believe.
- To be the ultimate answer to the prayer that David prayed in Psalm 61.
- And how did he do that? – well, first by living with the troubles that we endure so that he could empathise fully with what we experience.
- And then, second – to die the death that we all will die.
- As tragic as that suffering sounds, what it highlights is that God is not removed from the sufferings that we experience. In fact, he is prepared for it.

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- Go back to verse 9 – while Paul may have *felt* the sentence of death, the Lord Jesus *experienced* it when he died on the cross.

Explanation

- One of the problems with the idea that 'God will never give us more than we can handle' is that it expects of God that he will *not* treat us as we deserve.

Let me explain that.

- When someone suffers, our instinct is to think that is wrong and that God being fair and just will stop it. And when he doesn't we question his fairness and goodness.
- Yet if we changed the scenario from *suffering* to *sin* – what it exposes is our own inconsistency.
- When anyone sins, when anyone does wrong, it will cause suffering (sometime to ourselves, but most often to others). Yet we hate the idea that God will call us to account for our sin.
- On the one hand we *want* God to act against suffering and be fair, while on the other hand we *don't* want God to act against our sin or to treat us as we deserve.
- And so what God does is remarkable – he deals with sin, by giving his sinless son over to suffering even suffering to the point of death.
 - So that those who suffer because of sin, might also be comforted by the one who he raised from the dead.
- Paul's certain hope in this chapter is a hope for those who know and trust in Jesus.
- He suggests that while believers may share in the same sufferings that Christ did, they will also share in the same comfort.
- Verse 10 – '*He has delivered us from such deadly peril, he will deliver us, he will continue to deliver us.*'
- **God gave Paul more than *he* could handle, but He *never* gave Paul more than *God himself* could handle.**
- Paul isn't trying to minimize affliction; he's trying to maximize perspective.

Application

- Friends, where do you go when everything is falling apart?
- Don't look in.
- Don't look at the troubles.
- Don't listen to a secular wish.
- Look to the higher rock. The greater refuge. The stronger tower. The Lord himself.
- Look to his cross – and recognise that through his suffering people are brought to God.
- And when you grow faint, when you tire, when you get overwhelmed, even when you get to the point of death, be rest assured, God's heart never grows faint. He never tires. He never gets overwhelmed. An best of all, for those who are friends with Jesus - he raises them from death just as he did with his son.
- **[9am/10.30am]** Maggie/Wim and Miiaka serve the Lord in the face of whatever troubles you face – and do it in his strength.

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- **[5pm]** Jon and Heidi – as you raise Violet, along with the help of your amazing family – serve the Lord in the face of whatever troubles you or Violet may face – and do it in his strength.
- **God *may* give you more than *you* can handle, but He will *never* give you more than *he* can handle.**

Pray

Lord, as much as we would love to have all the answers, any of the numerous troubles we face remind us that we need you. Help us not to rely on ourselves, but to look and rest in you – through Jesus. Amen.