

Good News for Hard Heads pt 1: Other Side of the Valley

Series Intro:

- The Apostle Paul spent about 15 years starting churches all over Asia and Europe
 - 15-20 churches !!!!
- After a church was established he trained pastors for the day to day care, and then he would keep moving and he wrote letters and periodically visited the churches to stay in touch
- One church he established was the CHURCH AT CORINTH
- Corinth is widely viewed as the Black Sheep Church**
- There is more sin being confronted, more problems with destructive leadership, more inner conflict and divisiveness than any of his other churches
- So Paul wrote a long and pointed letter to the church at Corinth called 1 Corinthians
 - he was hopeful they would respond to it and he would later find that they became the best church of all those he planted
- After Paul wrote 1 Corinthians he traveled to the city, he was excited to see how they had grown, after applying his first letter,,, BUT HE IS DISAPPOINTED
 - Paul spends time there trying to instruct and bring them along
 - Then as he leaves he tells them he will be back on his RETURN TRIP
- But while Paul is gone, he gets word that the church at Corinth is still moving in the wrong direction.
 - they still don't seem to "GET IT"
- Rather than visit a second time Paul sends a Second Letter**
 - He wants to give them another opportunity to GET IT STRAIGHT!
 - He wants them to grow in Obedience, Character, love, and unity
- Paul pours out the GRACE OF GOD, through the CORRECTION in this 2nd letter.
 - Rather than sending Lightning Bolts from Heaven, God sends a letter**
 - Paul wants them to respond in obedience to this letter so that then when he does come back in Person it can be TO CELEBRATE and ENCOURAGE...*
- The message of 2 Corinthians is GOOD NEWS FOR HARD HEADS.
 - here is a group of Christians that **should have GOTTEN IT by now**, but they didn't
- In Mercy God Circles back to help them catch up.**
 - there are so many ways that we can relate to that church at Corinth:
 - maybe we are still doing things we know we shouldn't be doing
 - or not doing things we know we should
 - still filled with Anger, Judgment, Prejudice, Fear, Greed

-maybe after years of christianity we still know very little of the Bible but can quote sitcoms word for word.....

-culturally rich but biblically poor

-there are so many ways that, personally ,and as The American Church we can relate to this Spiritually Hard Headed Corinthian Church

-But God's love for Corinth and for Us is so Big that he Circles back again and again to show us what we should already know and be doing.

-Brea already read the whole section of scripture we will cover today but I want to re-read and zoom in on our starting point.

-2 Corinthians 1:8-9 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. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.

We may encounter hardship beyond our ability to endure; and situations beyond our ability to navigate.

-All my life I have heard people say *"God doesn't give you more than you can handle"*

-but Paul seems to think that God did give him more than he could handle

-"far beyond our ability to endure"

-Where did we get the idea that God never gives us more than we can take?

-1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that: no temptation has taken you except what is common to man, and God is faithful he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear

-what that verse is saying: God will not allow a temptation to sin to be completely unavoidable ,,,, there is always a way out IF WE ARE LOOKING FOR IT

-that verse is all about temptation, not hardship

-SO: *"God will not give you more than you can handle" is not biblical truth but simply a pleasant sounding cliché.*

-but Paul doesn't deal in cliché but reality

-Paul does not hide from the reality of what he experienced.

-he didn't down play it

-he said, "we thought for sure we would all die"

-this is coming from Paul who experienced crazy persecution and hardship

-Paul doesn't immediately reframe it all, through rose colored glasses

-When it says that "he despaired of life itself" that means that he would have rather been dead than go through what he went through.

-We will encounter situations that are simply beyond our capacity.

-it is not a lack of faith to say that you are in over your head!

-it is not a lack of spirituality to say, this is SO HARD I dont know if I can do it

-Romans 12:15 tells us "rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn

-Sometimes as Christians we are too quick to try and "Turn the Page" and get to "The Bright Side"

-Between: Covid 19,,, financial fall out,,, mass unemployment,,, racial injustice,,, civil unrest,,, political nonsense and bickering

-We can look at life and say "i dont know how to navigate this..."

-On the personal side:

-you may be facing a disease that is threatening your life, or wellness

-you may struggle with mental illness that you cannot overcome

-you may have experienced the LOSS of a LOVED ONE

-and are BEWILDERED as to how to proceed

-maybe your marriage or family relationships Exploded,,, and you are brokenhearted and dont know how to face life now.....

-maybe you somehow invited in the Demon of Addiction, and now, it feels too strong to stand up to

-Paul, this spiritual giant, said "man, there was this season of life where I didn't think I would live through,,, and honestly I didn't want to."

-first: of all that is real

-second: its ok to be a person of faith and reach that point

-third: it doesn't even demonstrate a lack of faith

-Your perceived inability may actually be accurate. This may be more than you have the ability to deal with.

But it doesn't end there!!!!

-2 Corinthians 1:9-10 But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope

Once we exhaust hope in our own ability we may actually begin to hope in God.

-Illustration: Rock Climbing Auto Belayer (picture)

-rock climbing date at Climb So Ill....

-they have auto belays ...

-but this thing has like a spring and motion activated clutch system

-you have to actually let go of the wall and fall for a second before the mechanism catches you

-i couldn't bring myself to trust it,, I wanted to feel it hold me before I let go.....

-so for the first 10 climbs, I climbed all the way up and all the way back down

-most people just lean back feet against the wall and jump out and as you fall it catches and swings you back to the wall and you just repeat that over and over

-Eventually I was SO EXHAUSTED that I had to let go and trust that the machine was going to work.

-it did

-but I was never able to really BENEFIT from this device until I was So tired that I didn't have a choice but to let go and trust it.

-At some point something will happen that takes you to the end of your ability:

-When you have nothing else to try, you might actually place all of your hope in God.

-He will come through

-either you will see him intervene in a miraculous way

-or he will give you some level of strength that you had never had or tapped into before. (his strength...)

-Paul said: the way God intervened felt almost like he was dead & then RAISED FROM THE DEAD!

-There will be things that happen to you that are too much for you, but they are not too much for God!

-You will face overwhelming, but God is not on his heels.

-when you reach that point you will finally be out of moves, so you will be still

-you will run out of ideas, so you will be looking beyond yourself

-you will have no useful ability, so you will be desperate for intervention

-From that point, if you look to God and wait until he acts, God will act on your behalf.

-the experience will be so stark that it will be as if you were : stuck, done, dead in the water but God raised you ,, unstuck you ,, and gave you a new hope, new lease on life, and new direction,,,

Once you have walked the valley of the shadow of death and come out the other side, there is not much left that can shake you.

“He delivered us from deadly peril and he will deliver us again, we have put our hope in him”

-Now nothing is impossible,, now nothing is too much

-Once the Auto belay catches you the first time, it changes how you climb from then on.

-there is a freedom and looseness then

-you are no longer clinging to dear life,,, if you slip, you slip (no problem)

-you are trying things you are not sure you can do,,,, because you now know this thing will kick in when you fail....

-ultimately you are not the one keeping your circumstances from crashing,,, God is

-2 Corinthians 12:9 (God talking) My strength is made perfect in human weakness

-You will never see God fully kick in, until the point where you cut out.

-When you finally reach the end of yourself and all that is left is him, you realize he has always been enough.

- If you have him, you NEED NOTHING ELSE.

Once he meets us there, we get to share him.

-2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

-This level of hardship is one of THE GREAT KEYS in unlocking the Depth of our faith in God and our encounter with his power.

- but these are tough waters to swim in
- this is a tough trail to walk

-So God gives guides to walk us through:

- once we have suffered and found God, and his comfort in that suffering
- we can then BE HIS PRESENCE and COMFORT for others in their suffering

-This is just one reason why the Unity of the Church is so Crucial.

-so much of the provision God has, so much of what you need is made available through those alongside you

-as you walk through unemployment, financial ruin,,,,,or whatever there are people here who have walked that valley and found God's comfort and provision,,, and God wants to use them to walk you through

- cancer. -divorce. -illness. -loss of a loved one
- overwhelmed with the state of the world....

-for all of these and more, people around you have already walked through those valleys and been pushed beyond their limits but found God at that point and been forever changed

-God wants to link you with them for you to walk through it..... and emerge....

-Check on people,,,,, Recognize what God had given you,,,,, Ask people if they are ok...

-call some people,,,,, send some messages

-you are his plan,,, for you to give comfort with the comfort you have received.

-If you haven't already found this out, you will:

-You will encounter things that are just too much for you

-But once you reach the end of your ability, you are finally in place to see God kick in

—you never benefit from the delay until you let go of the rocks

-Once you have come out the other side of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, there isn't much left to shake you.

-Dont miss the Ways in which God wants to be present with you,,, dont miss his comfort found in others

-Dont miss the opportunity yourself to Comfort others with the comfort you yourself received from God