

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: SECTION TWO

Three Promises That Encourage the Hurting/Promise One: Enough is Enough

The first facet of the promise contained in 1 Corinthians 10:13, presents the hurting Christian with a dual opportunity. The word “temptation” can refer to “an enticement to evil,” but it can also mean “a difficult circumstance that tries and tests.” When the Christian is going through a time of suffering, he is being tested, not tempted, by God (James 1:12-13). God’s design of the test, and desire for His child in the midst of it, is that we pass the exam and develop spiritually as a result. Such testing is an integral part of being a Christian (1 Peter 4:12-19). When Paul encouraged believers to be strong in their faith, he didn’t promise a trouble-free life, but warned them of the very opposite (Acts 14:22).

However, by the very nature of the exam, the possibility for failure also exists. This is where Satan seizes his opportunity to use God’s testing of the Christian for his own purpose in tempting the believer. The devil’s evil desire is that we fail the test. And we will, if at the outset we draw inaccurate conclusions about the negative circumstance we are facing. The special target of the evil one is the Christian who is hurting and vulnerable, as a result of the difficulty he or she is encountering. Therefore, the positive and practical application of this initial phase of the promise is two-fold. *First, knowing that the trials we face are not unusual, helps us to remain strong and steadfast in our faith.* There is a certain measure of comfort in knowing that you haven’t been singled out for a specific negative experience with which no one else can identify. This awareness provides encouragement in creating a sense of hope that says, “If others have gone through this and have successfully survived it, so can I.” 1 Peter 5:8-9 confirms this truth –

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

Second, knowing that our adversities are not unique but common, prevents us from wallowing in self-pity. There is nothing wrong with asking the question “why me?” when we are hurting and confused because of some trial which has overwhelmed us. But it is wrong to ask this question with a bitter and withering spirit that says, “No one has ever gone through what I am going through. Why me? Why is God doing this to me?” Throwing a pity party for oneself in response to suffering, is the first step on the road to discouragement, not to mention isolation and loneliness, since no one else is likely to attend that party but you. To such a reaction, both Paul and Peter say in effect, “No! Don’t think like that. What you are going through is not unusual. It is just a test. So, remain firm in your faith and God will get you through this trial successfully, and use it in your life to develop you into the kind of person He wants you to be.” This is why Peter concludes his formula for handling adversity in 1 Peter 5:10, by writing the following –

“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”