

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

### Three Promises That Encourage the Hurting – Promise One/Enough is Enough

A “way of escape” is what all of us look for and long for when going through a time of adversity. The final phase of the 1 Corinthians 10:13 promise affirms that God will provide such a way. Whether or not we avail ourselves of that provision is up to us. Let’s take a look at the example of Peter. Much has been made of his failure in denying Christ. We may sympathize with the life-threatening position in which he found himself and appreciate his genuine remorse in the aftermath of his denial (Luke 22:54-62). At the same time, Peter has no valid excuse for his spiritual collapse. In preparing His disciple for this test, Jesus warns him in Luke 22:31-32 –

**“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”**

Satan demands permission to test Peter. This confirms both the devil’s temporary jurisdiction over planet earth as the god of this world, as well as God’s ultimate sovereignty over all. It means that Satan’s authority to wreak havoc with our lives is always defined and limited by God. Nevertheless, the devil desires to tempt Peter and God grants the request. In so doing, Peter is given an enormous opportunity for spiritual success. He was to be severely tested, yet not to the point where he had no choice but to fail. The possibility of success was assured by the prayer of Christ. While we don’t know the specifics of the prayer, it is likely that a “way of escape” for Peter was an important part of Jesus’ intercession. Yet, in that crucial moment, Peter does not appropriate this resource and fails his test. By the grace of God, his failure of faith was not permanent. A restoration from his downfall was part of God’s plan for his future (John 21:15-17). The lesson? Peter was provided with a way of escape and so will we!

However, it is critical for us to understand that God furnishes more than one way of escape. This is implied by Paul when he seems to contradict himself in stating the promise. He says that God will provide a way of escape from our trial so that we in turn will be able to endure it. My response to such a claim is, “If God is providing me with a ‘way of escape’ from my adversity, why do I still have to endure it? Doesn’t escaping it mean not having to endure it?” Not necessarily. The Bible describes three ways of escape which God supplies in the midst of our suffering. Which one He gives to us for a specific situation is the one He considers best.

In some instances, a physical healing may take place or a difficult circumstance may just disappear. This form of deliverance is the simplest and most direct in that it involves a *removal* of the trial. At other times, a complete physical healing isn’t provided by God. Yet through medication and treatment, the symptoms are decreased, making it more bearable to live with. The same can apply to circumstances and relationships. The *reduction* serves as a fulfillment of God’s promise to provide a way of escape by keeping the difficult situation within the bounds of our endurance. Finally, the way of escape that is least desirable humanly, yet most profitable spiritually, consists of the supernatural *renewal* of the Christian by God. Without removing the trial or reducing its intensity, God uses it, in all of its severity, to create within the character of that individual, a deeper level of Christ-like maturity. A woman I once knew had a favorite saying in regard to the Christian and adversity: “*you wouldn’t have it, if you didn’t need it.*”