

watch and pray that they not fall into temptation. There is a danger when we include others in the burden we are carrying. Sometimes as we share our burden they share theirs with us. So our burden is compounded by the burden of the other. Yet, I think it is worth it. It is worth it not to go through life alone. It is worth it to find the friend, the brother and sister in Christ who can bear the burden with us. We need not feel overwhelmed alone.

Jesus also knew the power of prayer in such a moment. Jesus we are told went a little further and prayed. His prayer is very honest. His prayer begins with trust and relationship. Jesus prays Abba Father. That intimate address that says so much. It is the common way of calling someone "daddy." It indicates relationship and intimacy. In other words, this is not Jesus first moment of prayer. One of the reasons that we are sometimes overwhelmed by the moment is that we have not been regular with prayer and our relationship with God. Now there is nothing wrong with calling out to God, even if we have not in the past. However, how much better for a prayer to begin with the acknowledgement of God's love and care that has been learned in the past. Jesus is praying to His Father whom He knows loves Him and He can trust.

It is a prayer of possibility. All things are possible with You, God. God, You are sovereign. You could work a miracle. You could create something new. Yet, there is a dose of reality. Yet, not what I will but what you will. If this is what life has for me then I will face it. In our moments of being overwhelmed, there is incredible power in honest prayer.

The last step of Jesus in His moment of being overwhelmed is to be obedient and faithful. Nothing changes as the result of Jesus' prayer in regard to the circumstance. The cross is still coming. Jesus chooses obedience and faithfulness anyway.

There are many ways people choose to deal with the moments that overwhelm. Some ignore them or deny them. Some run from them. Some are completely paralyzed by them. Not Jesus. Jesus gets up from His place of prayer and with great courage becomes obedient and faithful to what awaits Him.

My friends, that is what God asks of us. God asks us to be obedient and faithful, even when we are overwhelmed.

Are you overwhelmed by life? It might be a tragedy, grief or challenge you are going through. It might be that this challenge is now the routine of life and you are just tired. It could be you are simply on the fast merry-go-round and you think you are going to be thrown for a fall any moment.

God will not give you more than you can handle is not in the Bible. However, here is one that is in the Bible. A promise from God's word... "Come unto me all you who are weary, and burdened down and I will give you rest."

Jesus can make that promise to us because Jesus has been there.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Overwhelmed by the Moment

Mark 14:32-41



Penny Saved is a Penny Earned! Not in the Bible. And that is not the only common saying that we attribute to the Bible that actually is not in the Bible. Some of the sayings that people say, "the Bible says" are not in the Bible and then there are others that are a fusion of a Biblical idea or verse and then common sense or moral teaching. Here are some others:

- Cleanliness is next to Godliness- You should be clean in body but that will not make you pure of heart.
- God works in mysterious ways- God's ways are not our ways but the Bible does not say God works in mysterious ways.
- Money is the root of all evil- the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.
- To thine own self be true- Just the statement reminds you that we are to be true to Jesus not ourselves.
- Spare the rod and spoil the child- this is a mistranslation of Proverbs 13:24.
- God helps those who help themselves- that might help us rationalize not helping hurting people, but not in the Bible.
- This too shall pass- Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but this too shall pass is not in the Bible.
- Moderation in all things- Again not in the Bible.

God will not give you more than you can bear... wait a minute. Wait just a minute, Pastor. I know that is in there. I know that is true. That better be true. Well, it is not. The Bible never says that God will not give your more than you can bear, especially in the way that we use that phrase. When we say God will not give me

more than I can bear, what we usually mean is that I am going through something difficult and things have gone from bad to worse, but God will not give me more than I can bear. Yet, many of us know that there have been moments in life when we have been completely overwhelmed, and we have wondered if that promise is true. I have heard many people half-heartedly joke to me after pouring out their pain and sorrow "but God said he would not give me more than I can bear, but I don't know about that right now."

In contrast to this phantom verse and promise, in the Bible we find the words of Jesus in Gethsemane. When faced with the cross, sin, death, pain and separation from these that He shared life with, He said to them "I am overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."

Those are the words of Jesus. Jesus the Son of God says I am overwhelmed. The word overwhelmed means to be buried, swamped, defeated, vanquished and crushed. Jesus says I am overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He literally says something to the effect of "I feel like I am going to die."

It is interesting that we have developed a theology where we believe that we should never face trials, trouble or be overwhelmed when Jesus says I am overwhelmed.

How did we get here? It is the mistranslation and interpretation of a verse that we misquote. The idea that God will not give us more than we can bear comes from 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

Lets read it together:

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation [c] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted [d] beyond what you

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can bear. But when you are tempted, [e] He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

What is the context of this verse? Paul has been instructing the Corinthian Church to beware of disobedience and sin. He has mentioned those who in the past have chosen sinful ways and it has led to destruction. Then Paul says, “so stand firm so you don’t sin. There is no temptation you are going to face that others have not faced or are facing. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond that you can bear, but will provide you a way out so you can endure the temptation.”

Paul is not speaking about the burdens we have in life, but rather of the temptations we face that leads us to sin and disobedience. He is reminding us that there is no sin that we cannot resist. We are not simply pawns in some spiritual game between the tempter and God. We have a free will. We have the power of choice. We can overcome any temptation and choose not to sin. If we turn to God, God will help us avoid the sin and overcome the temptation.

Think about Jesus’ temptations. Jesus was tempted to serve self and not God. Jesus was tempted to depend on self and not God. Jesus was tempted to avoid the hard way and take the easy way, but chose the hard way with God. In all of Jesus’ temptations, Jesus turned to the Father and God’s word and promises. Jesus withstood temptation as an example to us. Now Paul says God promises that there is nothing we will face in regard to temptation that we cannot choose obedience.

Now the one way we might use this verse in regards to the burdens and challenges of life might be, to see that burdens and challenges of life can sometimes lead us to loose faith. In this way, then yes, it is true there is nothing that we face that will lead us to abandon faith if we turn to God. However, the gest of this verse has to do with disobedience and not the feeling of being overwhelmed. The truth is the Bible is filled with people who felt overwhelmed by life.

The apostle Paul writes ““Brothers and sisters, we don’t want you to be unaware of the troubles that we went through in Asia. We were weighed down with a load of suffering that was so far beyond our strength that we were afraid we might not survive.” (2 Corinthians 1:8 CEB)

And elsewhere in scripture we find similar sentiments.

In the Psalms:

“I’m worn out, completely crushed; I groan because of my miserable heart.” (Psalms 38:8 CEB)

“My wrongdoings are stacked higher than my head; they are a weight that’s way too heavy for me.” (Psalms 38:4 CEB)

In Hebrews, we find the list of the faithful ones who are the ones who are unnamed and yet were commended for their faith. The first part of Hebrews 11 tells us of well known and unnamed servants of the God, who through their faith were rewarded in this life with God’s blessings from the Israelites going into the land of promise to others receiving their children back from the dead. However, the end of the chapter mentions those who were faithful and yet, never were saved from their despair:

Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; [e] they were sawed in two; the sword killed them. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

How odd it would sound to say to these faithful servants God will never give you anything too much for you to bear. You should not feel overwhelmed.

We have witnessed the brutality of ISIS and their hatred toward not only America, but also Christians who they mistakenly think are one and the same. How many of us were not overwhelmed at the site of those 21 Christians who were paraded upon that Libyan beach and then beheaded for the world to see.

How shallow and trite it sounds for us to say God never puts more on you than you can bear. Jesus said I am overwhelmed with sorrow unto death.

Why was Jesus overwhelmed that night in Gethsemane? Well of course it was the cross, which was coming. Jesus knew the cross was coming and He would even pray for the cup to pass from Him if there was another way, but in His moment of total obedience Jesus prayed not my will, but thy will be done.

We can really only speculate on what caused Jesus to be overwhelmed that night. We can understand it from the side of His divinity. Jesus was God’s one and only unique son. God had sent Jesus on a saving mission. God had sent Jesus out of love to bring salvation once and for all for a creation that had gone array. Many scholars suggest that the cup, which Jesus speaks of, is not the cross and its pain but the weight of sin, which would be placed on Him. From the view of Jesus’ divinity we can understand the thought of the one who knew no sin to literally become sin and be crucified on the cross. To become sin on the cross would mean total abandonment for Jesus. It could be that Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow unto death, at the thought of all of the sin of the world being placed on Him as the complete sacrifice for our sins.

We can also understand Jesus being overwhelmed from a purely human point of view. Jesus was fully divine and yet, also fully human. What we get in Gethsemane is a picture of Jesus’ humanity. It is a picture that we can all relate to. It is this view that the writer of Hebrews speaks of when he reminds us that we have a high priest that is Jesus, who has been tempted in every way and is without sin. That Jesus sympathizes with us.

Jesus was facing death, pain, humiliation, injustice, desertion of friends and separation from those he loved. He also knew He could not be faithful to the Father without obedience to the cross. Jesus is overwhelmed.

Our moments of being overwhelmed can be categorized like these examples of Jesus. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by our sinful choices and the sinful choices of others. Sin and disobedience can produce moments in our lives when we are overwhelmed with disappointment, shame, guilt and the death of a dream of who we wanted to be or that which we thought about another.

We are also overwhelmed by moments that life brings. These moments are many times not the result of our choice or really even the choice of another... they are just life. There is sickness, pain, disappointment, the grief of the death of a loved one, the grief of the death

of a life we had imagined, the sorrow of facing our own death and knowing the searing pain of regrets and things undone. There are sometimes we just feel overwhelmed by the every day business of life.

They don’t have them anymore because I guess they were dangerous, but when I was a child there were those items on every playground that was like a merry go round that you sat on. You would grab the handles and you would push it round and round, faster and faster and then jump on and hold on for dear life. Each moment usually ended with someone being thrown off and normally there was some minor injury. That did not keep you from climbing back on and saying push me faster.

How many days do we say we are overwhelmed only to start the next day with faster, faster and hold on? Then we somehow are surprised that we and others are thrown off and there is injury. Sometimes it is just the demands of life that cause us to feel overwhelmed.

I think we can all agree that there are moments that we, like Jesus, are overwhelmed. What can we do in these moments? I do not want to belittle the moment, nor

do I want to offer us today some trite little formula for these hard moments in life. However, I do think in Jesus we find some way through.

I think we begin with confession. Jesus the Son of God had no problem saying to His friends, His inner circle of disciples “I am overwhelmed.” Naming it is the first step. There are many of us who carry the burdens of life alone and we need not do so. There are many of us who carry this feeling of being overwhelmed and we think to admit it show weakness. We should be able to do this we say to ourselves. There are many who have it worse, we tell ourselves. There is something very freeing in admitting, “I can’t do it all or I can’t do this alone.” Jesus took his disciples with Him and He shared with them His deep feeling of grief.

Jesus also included others. He not only told them He was overwhelmed, but invited them to join Him in carrying the burden. He asked them to keep watch and later to keep watch and pray. To add to Jesus’ burden that night was the faith of His disciples. He kept telling them to

WE HAVE A FREE WILL. WE HAVE THE POWER OF CHOICE. WE CAN OVERCOME ANY TEMPTATION AND CHOOSE NOT TO SIN. IF WE TURN TO GOD, GOD WILL HELP US AVOID THE SIN AND OVERCOME THE TEMPTATION.