

Articles and Sermons :: You Cannot Be Tested Beyond Your Ability -poonen**You Cannot Be Tested Beyond Your Ability -poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/6/12 12:58****You Cannot Be Tested Beyond Your Ability***by Zac Poonen*

1 Corinthians 10:13 is a glorious verse. There is a tremendous comfort in it for all of us. It says, "God is faithful, Who will NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE, but with the temptation (trial) will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." People often say that they are going through unbearable trials and sorrows. That may perhaps be true for the children of Adam; but it is certainly not true for the children of God - for God watches carefully over every trial and temptation that comes their way. Satan and those who hate us, may desire to trouble us in many ways. But they can't get at us without God's permission. Even in the Old Testament, Satan realised that God had put a hedge around Job, so that no evil could touch him. Satan told God, "Hast Thou not made a hedge about Job and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." (Job 1:10). But, for Job's sanctification, God allowed that hedge to be opened up just a little, and Satan was permitted to attack him. The extent of the opening in the hedge was however determined by God. It was opened a little bit initially (Job 1) and a little more later on (Job 2). The Sabeans and the Chaldeans who stole Job's property had all come through the opening that God had made in that hedge. "And the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword..... The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword." (Job 1:15,17). The storm that blew down the house on Job's children, also came through that same opening in the hedge. The opening however was not wide enough for disease to come through to attack Job's body. But later, when God opened up the hedge a little more, disease too could come through and afflict Job. Job didn't realise initially that God was in control of everything that was going on. He realised it much later (at the end of the story). But we can't blame him, for he did not have the written Scriptures, as we have.

But now we have the Word of God to show us Who controls the opening in the hedge. The hedge is actually God Himself as a wall of fire around us. "For I will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst, says the Lord" (Zechariah 2:5). But, as we read in the Old Testament about Elisha's servant, our eyes are often blind and we don't see the wall of fire that surrounds us. Elisha however saw it and so he had no fear. "Now when the attendant of the man of God (Elisha) had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:15-17). The servant was terrified because he couldn't see what Elisha saw. When Elisha prayed for him, his eyes were opened. Then he came to rest. We need to have our eyes opened too. God knows when to close up the hedge too. He controls our circumstances very carefully and exactly, according to our spiritual capacity and according to our eagerness to press on to His highest. When we are spiritually immature and weak, God won't allow us to be tempted by any massive temptation. Neither will He allow Satan to attack us too violently. At the same time, if God sees that we are not interested in His purpose for our lives, He will allow us to have an easy way through life. The loss will then be ours in eternity.

It was because Job was one of God's chosen servants that God allowed him to face such intense suffering. God won't allow that in everyone's life, for few have matured to the place where they can bear it. Very few are interested in such spiritual maturity, in any case. Jesus was taken by His Father through every possible temptation that we can ever face. It was thus that He became perfect. See Hebrews 4:15: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Look at Hebrews 5:7-9 as well: "In the days of His flesh, when He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation". That's how Jesus completed His education as a man and became perfect. There is no other way for us to be perfect either. The fact that God won't ever allow us to be tempted or tried beyond our ability is the reason why we can be sure that we can live in victory ALL THE TIME. If it were not for God's guarantee given to us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, we could not have had such confidence. God guarantees that every trial and temptation that comes our way is conquerable. Why then do we fall? Because we don't take the way of escape that God offers us in each trial and temptation.

What is that way of escape? It is to HUMBLE OURSELVES - even to the death of the cross, as Jesus did. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil.2:8) This is the narrow way to the abundant life, that few find. Pride is so deeply rooted in the flesh, that few find this glorious way of humility - or even understand what it means to humble oneself. This is indeed a mystery - but God will reveal it to all who are wholehearted. We may think that it is the pressures of life that make life unbearable for us. Actually, it is our pride - the high thoughts that we have about ourselves - that make life difficult. I have meditated on this at times, when I have had to travel in a crowded, unreserved compartment in a train. Not having a seat to sit on, I've had to sit on the floor in a corner, or at times to stand. The compartment is packed with people and luggage, right at the starting station. It gets worse at each station along the way, with more people and more luggage coming in. The pressure constantly increases. And then I've thought, "If only I could become the size of an ant here, there would be no more pressure on me." I find the pressure too much, because of my size as a human being. A fatter man would certainly find it worse! It all depends on our size. An ant however, would find that crowded compartment quite spacious, and wouldn't be complaining about the pressure at all. That anyway, is the answer spiritually. When the pressure increases from the outside, if I can become smaller and smaller in my own eyes, the pressure eases and gradually disappears. God desires to reduce us. He has to reduce us to NOTHING in our own estimation, before He can fulfil His purpose through us.

Why, for example, do we get offended with others? Isn't it because we have a high opinion about ourselves and about our rights? We feel that people are not giving us the respect that we deserve, or perhaps that they are taking away our rights. We feel hurt when people speak evil about us behind our backs. It is our bloated pride that causes us such suffering. Prick that balloon of pride and when we are truly deflated, we'll find that there is no pressure at all. That is the secret. May God open our eyes to see it. While people around us are complaining about a thousand-and-one things, we will have no complaints whatsoever - because we have taken the way of escape, of humbling ourselves.