

# God Will Never Give You More than You Can Handle: True or False?

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“Don’t worry. God will never give you more than you can handle.” This belief is so common that I’m sure you’ve heard it, and maybe you’ve even comforted other brethren with it. But is it true? Are we really helping others by repeating this idea, or are we spreading a heretical lie?

The concept that God will never give us more than we can handle seems to sound right initially. God loves His people, so He won’t give us more than we can handle. But, if we give it further thought, we find it is a notion that is in direct conflict with the Gospel.

## **“God Will Never Give You More than You Can Handle” Vs. the Gospel**

Why? Why would God’s not giving us more than we can handle be against the Gospel?

Let’s start by briefly stating the Gospel. The Gospel originates in eternity with God wanting to glorify His Son. God wants to make His Son the Savior of a people who will be His for eternity. By God’s will acting throughout history, these people both inherit sin and fall into their own sin. Because of sin, they can do nothing to save themselves. But God shows His love for them by making His Son the perfect sin offering. The Son, Jesus Christ, takes their sin upon Himself and suffers their punishment for them. God, through the Holy Spirit, causes these people to trust in His Son, and, by the finished work of Jesus Christ, He justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies them.

Notice that all of the activity in the Gospel is accomplished by God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. None of the activity is accomplished by the people. They are passive. By God’s decree, He elected them in eternity. By God’s will, they fell into sin. In sin, they were totally helpless. They couldn’t keep the law or do good works to handle their situation. There is absolutely nothing they could have done to save themselves. In other words, God gave them something they couldn’t handle.

So, can God give us something we can’t handle? Absolutely. The belief that God will never give us more than we can handle destroys the Gospel! The very

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foundation of the Gospel depends upon the truth that God gives us more than we can handle.

### **God Will Never Give You More than You Can Handle Vs. 1 Corinthians 10:13**

Now, wait a minute! Doesn't 1 Corinthians 10:13 directly say that God won't give us more than we can handle?

Let's look at the verse:

No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Is this saying that God will never give us more than we can handle? No. Let's look at the context.

Beginning in 1 Corinthians 10:1, Paul writes of the Israelites under Moses who all conformed to the same outward actions: They were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were all "baptized into Moses" in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink from the rock—Christ. But Paul explains:

However, with most of them, God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

1 Corinthians 10:5-6

These verses are central to the context. Paul wanted his readers to learn from the example of the Israelites and not lust after evil things. In verses 7-11, he lists some of the evil things that tempted the people and caused them to not please God.

Then, in verse 12, Paul warns, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands be careful that he doesn't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). What does he mean? He's saying that when we think we're strong and can withstand the temptation, that's when we'll fall. Think about it. Are we believers because we know that

we're spiritual super heroes or because we know that we're powerless and need Jesus Christ?

### **God Will Never Give You More than You Can Handle: Temptations or Trials?**

Now, let's see verse 13 again:

No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The temptation here is not, as is commonly taught, trials and tribulations. The context clearly shows that Paul is talking about the temptation or enticement to do what is not pleasing to God. We, as Christians, are not tempted beyond what anyone else is tempted.

Further, God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able. This is where many people make a mistake in understanding this passage. This can sound like it's saying that God won't give us more than we can handle. But Paul has just said that we have the same temptations as anyone else. Look around at the world. Are the people of the world handling these temptations? Are they consistently resisting and not sinning? Of course not! The world is full of sin. So, if God is giving us the same temptations, they ARE more than we can handle.

What, then, does Paul mean when he says that God won't allow us to be tempted above what we're able? He explains this when he says, "but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Who makes our way of escape? God! This is not talking about our power to stand against the temptation. Paul is saying that we, like every other human being, are tempted more than humans—including us—can handle, but God has given us a way to escape.

### **God Will Never Give You More than You Can Handle Vs. the Finished Work of Christ**

What is the way to escape? Jesus Christ. Jesus has fulfilled and ended the law, received our punishment, become our justification and our sanctification. He has completely conquered sin. What more do we need? As Romans 14:4 says, "Who are you who judge another's servant? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he will be made to stand, for God has power to make him stand."

Notice what Paul says in the verses that immediately follow verse 13: "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14). Why would he say this? We know from what we've just seen that he's certainly not saying to use our willpower to flee idolatry. And what does Paul mean by idolatry? We'll find the answer in the next verses.

"I speak as to wise men. Judge what I say" (1 Corinthians 10:15). Paul wants us to judge or discern the answer from what he says.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, isn't it a sharing of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, isn't it a sharing of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). What cup and bread are Paul talking about? Of course, he's talking about the cup of wine symbolizing the blood of Christ and the bread symbolizing the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper focuses on the death of Jesus Christ for our sins. It is the center, the very heart, of Christianity. If we are looking for the answer anywhere but in Jesus Christ, it is idolatry.

### **Corinthian Idolatry**

If we read further in 1 Corinthians 10, we see that Paul applies this specifically for the Corinthians to a problem some apparently still had. They were hanging onto the superstition they previously followed that meat sacrificed to idols had some power. This, of course, was blatant idolatry.

Paul tells them that they could not hold onto this idolatry and also eat the Lord's Supper, because the Lord's Supper should remind us of Christ's death and what He accomplished with it. What need is there for idols when Jesus has taken care of our salvation and holds all of the power in the universe? "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18b). Idols mean nothing.

So, even for those who knew this, and knew that eating meat offered to idols is lawful because idols are nothing, Paul teaches the Corinthians that if there was anyone in their fellowship who had a weakness in this direction, they were to refrain from eating the meat. They were to do this so as not to turn the person's focus from Christ. He was not to wonder whether his brethren were eating because they thought the meat had power from the idol.

### **Modern Idolatry**

So, how does this apply to us? What is idolatry? Whatever we're trusting in that's not Jesus Christ. Please examine yourselves over this (2 Corinthians

13:5). I don't think I have ever seen more people calling themselves Christians running to idolatry than I have this year, whether it be political parties or candidates or conspiracy theories or campaigns against the very ways that we can show love toward others or nationalism or patriotism or trendy social movements or—most commonly—themselves.

Remember, then, that it is wrong to tell people suffering trials that God won't give them more than they can handle, because 1) the verse this idea is based on is addressing temptations, not trials; 2) our sinfulness is more than we can humanly handle; and 3) that idea is contrary to the very heart of the Gospel, which is our complete inability and need for Jesus Christ.

### **But What Do I Tell People Who Are Suffering?**

Okay, so 1 Corinthians 10:13 doesn't address trials and tribulations. What, then, can I tell people who are suffering?

Referring to his own trials, Paul wrote,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound to us, even so our comfort also abounds through Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

No words are more comforting than the Gospel. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Jesus told us that we would have oppression (*thlipsis*—"pressure," "tribulation"). James wrote, "Is any amongst you suffering? Let him pray" (James 5:13a). James didn't say that if we prayed, God was bound to remove us from the suffering. He might remove the suffering, but He might not. We are to pray anyway. Our real hope of relief doesn't come in this life.

Scoffers criticize Christianity because it is otherworldly and doesn't focus on the nitty-gritty problems we face now. But we know that's not a valid criticism. Sure, we can do what we can to help others, but no one will ever fix this world. It's a broken shadow that's passing away. "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19); and, "For I

consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed towards us" (Romans 8:18).

Here are words with which to comfort others:

But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Yes, even our trials and tribulations can be more than we can handle. But Jesus has already taken care of everything and guaranteed our future glory. Nothing can be more comforting than that.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things have passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4