

Weekly Reflection – Esther part 8 – “More Than You Can Handle”

Probably most of us have heard the statement, “God will not ask you to do more than you can handle.” But that’s not actually in the Bible. The reality is that obedience to God lands you in situations that are more than you can handle. And often just life itself lands you in situations that are more than you can handle. Sometimes because of decisions you make, sometimes because of decisions others make, and sometimes nature and other forces place you in situations you can’t handle. So, how do we respond, how should we respond? Do we just give up, throw in the towel? Do we just resign to the fact that life is just that way? Or is there hope, even joy, in those times when things are definitely more than we can handle on our own?

We see in Esther that this whole ordeal is way more than Esther can handle. Esther is in a situation that is out of her control. One Jewish woman living in a foreign land, separated from her family, called to save thousands of Jews who are sentenced to be mass murdered on one day across 127 provinces because of an irreversible law in one of the most powerful empires in the world which is being led by an unstable king who likes his juice. Esther is in over her head. Esther is not in control of this situation.

Focus on what you know.

- Too often when we’re in situations that are more than we can handle we are filled with fear and questions like, “*Why this? Why now? Why me?*” But while we think about everything we don’t know we don’t get anywhere.
- ***“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4 ESV***
- The primary meaning behind trials here is the idea of a testing of faith. These trials that are testing our faith. So, James is teaching us that our faith will be tested, not might be tested.
- The apostle James, writing to Christians going through trials, calls them to remain faithful, don’t give up because of what they know: ***“Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know...”***
- Rejoice, James says, because you know something about trials, you know something about these situations you can’t handle that are testing your faith. And what did they know?
- They did not know many of the specific good things God was working in their trials. They did not know why these trials should be happening now. Nor did they know how long their trials would last.
- But they did know a simple promise, filled with power: “. . . ***for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness***”. Testing produces steadfastness. And the full effect of steadfastness is that we will be perfect and complete, lacking and in want of nothing.
- In other words, these times of trial, times God has allowed or given us more than we can handle, when our faith is being tested; know that it is producing steadfastness which is making us more and more like Jesus until one day we will be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Rely on God

- ***“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.” 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 ESV***

- Another reason we don't need to panic and be filled with fear is because these situations can teach us to rely on God and not on ourselves. If we are never in situations we can't handle it's not likely we will rely on God.
- Maybe you're thinking, "Why is relying on God better than relying on myself, especially when relying on God means I'm not in control?"
- Relying on ourselves *seems* safer, easier, and more comfortable than relying on God. Our own ideas, emotions, opinions, and effort are all things we can control.
- Self-reliance is limited because humans are limited; there are some things we just cannot do.
- Whose strength would you rather rely on, yours or God's?
- Whose wisdom would you rather rely on, yours or God's?
- Whose justice, patience, goodness would you rather rely on, yours or God's?
- "Trials can prove a wonderful work of God in us. "I have looked back to times of trial with a kind of longing, not to have them return, but to feel the strength of God as I have felt it then, to feel the power of faith, as I have felt it then, to hang upon God's powerful arm as I hung upon it then, and to see God at work as I saw him then." (Spurgeon)
- So how do we rely on God?
- ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV***
- The broad answer is we trust and obey God (who He is, what He has done, what He has said, and what He has commanded) and stop trusting our own understanding, we give up control and give God control.
- The way we will live God glorifying lives that rely on God is by being in situations where we cannot rely on ourselves, and we trust and obey God.

Esther

This whole ordeal is way more than Esther can handle. Esther does not stand a chance on her own. So, what fueled Esther's bold obedience? What did Esther know? ***"For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, Esther 4:14 ESV*** I believe that is the truth that fueled Esther's boldness and obedience. She stopped focusing on what she didn't know, like if she would live or die, how long it would take, how God would use her in His plan; and she started focusing on what she knew, that God would save His people. And she wanted to be part of it even though it was way more than she could handle. Esther knew that God was going to deliver the Jews so she made the decision to join in on what she knew even though she did not know most of the details of how it would happen.

Jesus said something similar to us. ***"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18 ESV*** Jesus is going to build His church and all of hell won't stop Him. That is something we know. We don't know if that means we will die as martyrs, or how long this will take, or how God will use us in His purpose. But we do know He will build His church, and nothing will stop Him. The building of His church, the expansion of the Kingdom of God is more than you or I can handle but it is not more than God can handle.

In John 15:5 Jesus says, ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*** The fact we can do nothing without Christ is not all I want you to see here. The fact He never asks us to do anything without Him is what I do not want you to miss. Christ does not expect us to obey a single command of His in our own strength. God desires for us to join Him in what He is doing and what God is doing is definitely bigger

than what we can handle. So, the only way we can ever join God in what He is doing is by being in situations we can't handle.

God will allow or give you more than you can handle; but never more than He can handle.

- ❖ I realize that for most of us this statement wasn't a new revelation. But the question each of us should ask is, "Has this truth changed the way I live, the way I act, the way I respond to situations?"
- ❖ It is one thing to believe this statement and another thing to live this statement out.
- ❖ An awful lot of people who believe in God are as fearful, nervous, and hopeless as everybody else. Why?
- ❖ Because beliefs don't automatically create changed character. You have to turn beliefs into character with something in the middle. Between beliefs and character come spiritual disciplines or Christian practices. Unless you understand what those practices are and unless you participate in them, you will not actually change your character.
- ❖ Stop, drop, and roll.
- ❖ Stop obsessing about what you do not know, it's ok that you can't handle it. And remember what you know (the Word of God).
- ❖ Drop to your knees (Prayer), humble yourself and trust God, don't rely on your own understanding. Rely on God because He can handle it.
- ❖ Roll into action, obey God, take action according to His promises. Faith without works is dead.