

A RESILIENCE STRONGER THAN ANY CHALLENGE

VIDEO TWO

The Bible's authors knew only too well that we can find ourselves in truly overwhelming circumstances. The early church leader Paul describes a situation that he and his companions found themselves in:

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.

Paul doesn't give exact details about the situation he faced. He simply says, "We despaired of life itself.... We felt we had received the sentence of death."

We felt so overwhelmed we were sure that it was the end.

Perhaps you've felt similarly overwhelmed at times.

Yet this wasn't the end of the story. Paul continues:

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Our pain wasn't pointless, says Paul. It caused us to rely on God, who raises the dead.

Paul's conviction is that it's human to rely on God. We're not designed to walk through the ups and downs of life alone. The suffering caused by feeling alone in our troubles isn't something we were ever supposed to know.

Furthermore, says Paul, we trust the God who raises the dead.

Paul's point isn't that we can always expect God to provide an immediate or miraculous way out of our hardship, though sometimes he does. What he is saying is that history is heading towards resurrection.

Most people today assume that we're simply people who will die on a planet that will die in a universe that will die. It makes it hard to face the future confidently when we have no certainty that our sufferings won't eventually win.

Not so for those trusting Jesus!

The universe is heading towards the eternal sunshine of a world made new, in which sin and all its effects are gone forever. No matter how hard life is now, there is a day coming when followers of Jesus will know eternal peace and healing. And this is guaranteed in human history, through Jesus' own death and resurrection from the dead.

Suffering may win the battle, but Jesus has won the war.

Paul and his friends would go on to suffer again. They must have been very grateful for each other, like we are for those who draw alongside us during hard times. They would have known the value of a good night's sleep and other everyday ways of boosting resilience.

But ultimately it was knowing Jesus and the hope of a resurrection in their sufferings that made them resilient. They never gave up.

Though they never knew the full reason, they trusted that their sufferings weren't pointless. And they knew their sufferings wouldn't win.

Perhaps that's what Paul had in his mind when he later wrote:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

And when *that's* your frame of mind, you can experience a resilience stronger than any challenge.