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He permits the trials to come.

- There are ten basic words for suffering in the Greek language, and Paul used five of them in this letter. The most frequently used word is *thlipsis*, which means “narrow, confined, under pressure,” and in this letter is translated *affliction* (2 Cor. 2:4; 4:17), *tribulation* (2 Cor. 1:4), and *trouble* (2 Cor. 1:4, 8).
- In 2 Corinthians 1:5-6, Paul used the word *pathema*, “suffering,” which was also used for the sufferings of our Savior (1 Peter 1:11; 5:1). There are some sufferings that we endure simply because we are human and subject to pain; but there are other sufferings that come because we are God’s people and want to serve Him.
- We must never think that trouble is an accident. For the believer, everything is a divine appointment. There are only three possible outlooks a person can take when it comes to the trials of life.
 1. If our trials are the products of “fate” or “chance,” then our only recourse is to give up. Nobody can control fate or chance.
 2. If we have to control everything ourselves, then the situation is equally as hopeless.
 3. But if God is in control, and we trust Him, then we can overcome circumstances with His help.

God encourages us in all our tribulations by teaching us from His Word that it is He who permits trials to come.

He is in control of trials (v. 8).

(1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Paul may have despaired of life, but God did not despair of Paul.

2 Corinthians 1:8 (NLT)

⁸We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.

God enables us to bear our trials (v. 9).

- *The first thing He must do is show us how weak we are in ourselves. Paul was a gifted and experienced servant of God, who had been through many different kinds of trials (see 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 11:23). Surely all of this experience would be sufficient for him to face these new difficulties and overcome them.*
- *But God wants us to trust Him—not our gifts or abilities, our experience, or our “spiritual reserves.” Just about the time we feel self-confident and able to meet the enemy, we fail miserably. “For when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).*

When you and I die to self, then God’s resurrection power can go to work. It was when Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead physically that God’s resurrection power enabled them to have the promised son (Rom. 4:16-25). However, “dying to self” does not mean idle complacency, doing nothing and expecting God to do everything.

You can be sure that Paul prayed, searched the Scriptures, consulted with his associates, and trusted God to work. The God who raises the dead is sufficient for *any* difficulty of life! **He is able, but we must be available.** Paul did not deny the way he felt, nor does God want us to deny our emotions. “We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Cor. 7:5). The phrase “sentence of death” in 2 Corinthians 1:9 could refer to an official verdict, perhaps an order for Paul’s arrest and execution. Keep in mind that the unbelieving Jews hounded Paul’s trail and wanted to eliminate him (Acts 20:19). “Perils by my own countrymen” must not be overlooked in the list of dangers (2 Cor. 11:26).