

Hardship Has No Hold on Jesus

Have you ever prayed for an aspect of your life to remain free from suffering? It's only natural for us to long for days that are free from turmoil and tears. In fact, God uses that innate desire to point us to eternity. If you believe in Jesus, there *will be* a day when life will be free from all the messiness.

But in the now, there is no avoiding the reality that life can be difficult. Maybe you've experienced a strained relationship with your parents, or perhaps you're living with shame that haunts you when you lie awake at night. Maybe you're anxious about being accepted at a new school. As you anticipate starting a new year, no one can say exactly what it will be like. We all learned from COVID that there are often twists and turns that produce disappointments.

I'm not writing, though, to simply have you sit in the inevitability of future struggle. In fact, I want to do just the opposite by encouraging you with one of the most beautiful promises from Jesus when you face hardship in this coming year. That promise comes from Romans 8:28-29:

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I pray that in this coming you will grow in surety of God's love for you. His love for you overcomes every trial that may be a part of the journey ahead. His love for you does not end, and it is not dependent on you always doing the right thing. His love for you is greater and more powerful than my feeble words can adequately portray, but know that as a child of God, there is no hardship you will face that can ever separate you from God's love for you in Christ Jesus.

God's Love Overcomes Our Fear of Dying

The death of someone you love cannot separate you from God's love. Yes, death is a part of our broken world, and Jesus grieves with us when we face loss. He shed tears as heavily over death as we do today (John 11:35). But not even this can separate us from the tangible love of God. In our grief, the love of Jesus is very present.

God's Love Overcomes Our Present Anxieties

Each of us can make a list of what causes us to worry in the here and now, and each person's list probably looks a little different. The promise from God is that even if all these hardships were compiled, that massive list of anxieties would not be greater than the love of God. Nothing that you are anxious about is strong enough to separate you from Jesus.

God's Love Overcomes our "What-ifs"

Sometimes, our worries are more about what is to come. "What if" I don't get into my top college? "What if" my relationship with my boyfriend ends? "What if" I can't pass a particular class? "What if" I won't be accepted by my peers? This promise reminds us that God's love has already overcome all that we will face in the future. In fact, he will give us *exactly* the strength and wisdom we need *exactly* when we need it. In this, God demonstrates His incomparable love.

God's Love Overcomes Every Possible Hardship

There is nothing *in all of creation* – no thing or person – that can separate you from God. Sometimes, the hardship in this life is a result of our own sin and wrongdoing. Have you ever heard someone say, “*God won't give you more than you can handle?*” The reality is that the trials that we face, and the sins that we struggle with, are often more than we can handle, but *none if is ever too much for God*. He will never give you anything that *He* can't handle. Because this is true, there is no sin or adversity that will cause your heavenly Father to become distant from you. We remain secure in Christ because of His great love.

What is the result of holding fast to this promise? You will never have a life free from hardship, but trusting God's love gives you security amid ever-changing mandates and rules. His love gives you hope when you're despairing or feeling uncertain about the future. And if you feel alone or afraid, the promise reminds you that you have a heavenly Father who loves you beyond comprehension and who will always and forever be with you.