**Sacred Cows**

**Part 2 of 6**

**“Unbearable Pressure”**

**2 Corinthians 1:8-9**

When you hear the title *Sacred Cows*, your first question may be, ‘*What makes me think I’m qualified to make the judgment on what constitutes a sacred cow?’* My main qualification is that I taught all of these traditions myself – before I began to experience a radical paradigm shift as I began to learn more and more about the meaning of grace. After 20 years of full-time ministry, I’ve come to know with certainty that I’m not alone in having taught the traditions addressed in this series.

The sacred cows I address in this series are traditions I taught as a pastor at a time when I was passionate about the truth. I believe that the overwhelming majority of pastors are sincere believers who love God, the Scriptures, and the church. I’ve often said of myself that my heart was in the right place. It was my head that was wrong. I think that many people are in that same condition.

Frankly, I’ve been so wrong about so much for so long that I don’t have any rocks in my pocket to throw at anybody. On the other hand, my concern and love for the church causes me to teach plainly and clearly. I’m not here to blame, I’m here to train. Every week in this series, I intend to make a “shake ‘em up to wake ‘em up” statement. I’m calling a sacred cow out to make the point that there’s been a widespread – though admittedly unintentional – dilution of the truth. I was taught as a child that a half-truth is a whole lie. I think that applies here. When it comes to the gospel, diluted truth is polluted truth, and polluted truth is no gospel at all.

Some people will say that I’m making a big deal over nothing, arguing that my observations are nothing more than a matter of semantics. My response is that it’s “only semantics” to those who don’t see a difference between what I’m saying and the way it’s commonly said. Words do mean something, and when ideas are put into words in such a way that they lead to or reinforce erroneous notions, it’s appropriate to challenge the use of those words. Too much is at stake to risk faulty communication about the truth. *John 8, verse 32 says it’s the truth you know* that will make you free.

So, what’s the ultimate goal of this series? My desire is that all of us would embrace and express the pure grace of God. Pure grace points to Him, not us. It declares that whatever good may come to us is all because of His goodness, not because of anything we do or don’t do. It gives Him all the credit, and us none. With that viewpoint in mind, we will embark on a 6-week series in the hope that it will cause your perception and appreciation of God’s grace to grow bigger than they’ve ever been.

So, on that note, another one of the most dangerous sacred cows in the body of Christ today is the belief that God won’t put more on you than you can bear.

Perhaps nothing that one Christian says to another has been spoken with greater heartfelt sincerity than this statement: *“God won’t put more on you than you can bear.”* From the time I was a child, I’ve heard this said in and outside of church. It’s one of those sayings that seems like a self-evident truth because we’ve heard it so many times. Given the fact that our God is a loving Father, it seems to make perfect sense.

Many Christians would immediately suggest that the belief that God won’t put more on you than you can bear is in the Bible, but actually the Bible teaches something very different. Generally, when people think this idea is biblical, their minds go to 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13. That verse says, *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*

That verse is a great one because it tells us that God won’t allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure. In other words, when you’re tempted to cheat, steal, commit adultery, worry, or murder, you can never say, “Sorry, God, that temptation was just more than I could endure.” God always makes a way to escape temptation. The sacred cow I’m addressing isn’t about temptation to sin. It’s about the idea that God won’t allow us to have burdens beyond our ability to endure. It’s important to make the distinction between temptation to sin, and trials. So, 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13 simply means God won’t allow us to be tempted to sin beyond what we can bear, based on the strength of His grace – Christ who lives in us.

Troubles and trials in life are another matter. Will God allow life’s circumstances to be more than our human strength and ability can handle? If I were to tell you He would, you may doubt or even deny my view, but would you agree that the apostle Paul is a trustworthy source of authority on the matter? Let’s consider what he says on the subject, three truths that will put this sacred cow down:

***I. THE BURDEN OF UNBEARABLE PRESSURE.***

2 Corinthians 1:8: *“For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.”*

***2. THE BENEFIT OF UNBEARABLE PRESSURE.***

2 Corinthians 1:9: *“Indeed, we had the sentence of death with ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”*

***3. THE BREAKTHROUGH OF UNBEARABLE PRESSURE.***

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: *“Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn’t get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan’s angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first, I didn’t think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me, ‘My grace is enough; it’s all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.’ Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ’s strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so, the weaker I get, the stronger I become.”*