

1 Corinthians 10 (Part 2): 13 • Temptation and the Way of Escape

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This morning, we're going to take one single verse out of 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Probably take me about 5 minutes. You guys know better, don't you? Yeah, forget you, Paul. We've been here before. We're going to take this one verse out of 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and we're going to be looking at verse 13, which coincidentally is the very first verse that I ever committed to memory when I started getting serious with the Lord. It goes like this,

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.” (ESV)

There you go. Now, the reason that I want to cover this verse and this one verse alone this morning is, well, there's two reasons. The first is because there is so much that this verse has to say to us about how God works in our lives. But the other reason that I want to share this verse is because there has been so much misunderstanding related to it, and it's been misquoted so often, and so I think it's probably worth our time to look at it.

Whenever you're studying out a verse of the Bible or a passage of the Bible, by the way, have any of you ever been through an inductive Bible study course? Put up your hand if you've ever been through inductive Bible study. We probably need to do it again around here. We did it years ago. It's been, we do it every Sunday morning.

I mean, we use the inductive Bible study method every Sunday morning when we're teaching through the Word of God because this method employs a bunch of tools and principles and ideas to help us dig into the passage and figure out what it says. And one of the keys or one of the elements of the inductive Bible study method is to look at a passage and look for key words and write them down.

Now I'm going to help you with that a little bit this morning. I'm going to put this up on the screen and I've already highlighted what I believe to be the key

versus, or excuse me, the key words in this verse, and you'll notice it's pretty much the same word or a variation of it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

*No **temptation** has overtaken you that is not common to man God is faithful, and he will not let you be **tempted** beyond your ability. But with the **temptation**, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.*

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Notice that I've highlighted the word, temptation, twice, and then the word, tempted. You'll notice 3 times in this single verse, Paul gives us a key to help us to understand, which makes this verse less challenging to figure out in terms of, what is this all about?

And that's the question with an inductive Bible study method. We always look at a verse and we ask the question, what's he saying here? What's this verse all about?

Well, this verse isn't tough to figure out, because Paul has left us all these clues by this repetition of this particular word, and it's apparent that what he's writing about in this particular verse is dealing with temptation. That's not the context of the chapter, necessarily, but it is the focus of this particular verse. Dealing with temptation.

And the reason I emphasize that, is because regardless of how clear the focus appears to be to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13. Christians have still managed to misinterpret this verse and change the focus from temptation, even though it's repeated 3 times, to trials. People put trials in there instead of temptations.

How many times have you heard someone say, well, God will never give you more than you can handle? Has anybody ever heard that before? God will never give you more than you can handle. The only problem with that quote is that it's not found in the Bible. It's not there.

If you were to ask someone, where is that in the Bible? They probably say, well, gee let me think, and they might flip around for a while and look for a verse, and eventually they probably are going to land on this, because this is the closest you can get. And they're going to say, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

You say, yeah, great, let's look at it. Let's use the inductive Bible study method to find out what the focus of that verse is. Again, Paul says, "*no temptation has come upon you that is not common to man, and God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear.*" Or beyond what you can handle. He will not allow you to be tempted. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13 is talking about temptations, not trials and that is the big misunderstanding.

Now concerning trials, I hope this doesn't bum out your day, but God never gave us a promise that He would not give us more than we could bear as it relates to trials. He never said that. It's not in the Word. If He did, the apostle Paul has something to complain about, because the apostle Paul was given trials beyond his ability to endure. He even said so.

Now let me read a passage. I'm not going to have you look it up, but let me read something to you from 2nd Corinthians chapter 1. Are you ready for this? Listen carefully. He writes,

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships (read it, trials) that we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, (listen to this) far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, (he said), in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. (And then he went on to explain why it all took place. He says) but this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead."

I want you to notice something though about what I just read to you there from 2nd Corinthians chapter 1. Paul said, "*we suffered hardships there that were far beyond our ability to endure.*" What does that do to the statement people like to say that God will never give you more than you can endure or more than you can bear or more than you can handle, however you put it? What does that do to that? Blows it out of the water, doesn't it?

Because, and believe me, that's something that I want to believe. You know, I'd like to hang on to that one, but it's just not, it's not in the Word of God, at least not in the way that people say. Again, Paul tells us why God will allow things that are beyond our ability to endure, and that is that we might not rely on ourselves, but on Him, God, who raises the dead.

That's why. That's why He will allow circumstances, situations, trials, hardships, tribulations, I don't care what you want to call them, to be beyond your ability to endure. He will allow that. But He'll only do it so you come to Him because I got news for you, and this is the good news, they're not beyond

His ability, and He will strengthen, and He can strengthen and enable you to endure.

But let me just say this. It's far beyond your ability all right? Now that we've cleared up that little misunderstanding we can go on to look at 1 Corinthians 10:13 and ask the question, well then what does it mean? Well, it's really pretty simple. Let's read it again. At least the first part. Verse 13 again. "*No temptation has overtaken you. That is not common to mankind.*" And that's an important thing to take note of right there. There is nothing that has come upon you and or overtaken you as it relates to temptation that is not entirely common to mankind.

Now there are many of you who hear me say that, but you're still not convinced. Believe me, I've met people, all kinds of people who think that whatever they're going through or what's happening to them is somehow unique, and nobody has ever gone through it quite like I've gone through it. Right? And it doesn't matter what it is.

Whatever I'm happening is worse than whatever has ever happened to you, and you don't know my children. You don't know my worries. You don't know my tribulations and my trials. You think you've got it bad, you should live in my shoes for a day. Hey, there are, there might even be some of you right here today, who have taken that sort of a position in the past.

But Paul makes it clear here that when it comes to temptations we are all standing shoulder to shoulder, and there is nothing that you are being tempted with that is not entirely common to the human race. And what that means is, I don't mean to disappoint you, but others have been tempted just like you, and by the grace of God, they overcame it. And so can you.

And the reason Paul is making this point is because of that human tendency to say, there's a situation, there's a sin issue in my life, and I just can't get a hold of it. It's just, it's too big, it's too, it looms too large, it's too strong. I just can't get it under control. And I've met Christians who have been so beleaguered by this onslaught of temptation and sin in their lives, and it's just this issue in their life that's so big, so strong, so bad, that they've come to the conclusion that there's just no victory.

There's no getting victory over this thing, and they eventually resign themselves to it and consider themselves a second class citizen in the kingdom of God. And they essentially come to a place of just saying, well, I'm not going to get victory over this, so I guess I'm just going to have to live with it. I'm going to have to

deal with it. And they find ways to excuse themselves related to that sin, or at least excuse themselves from continuing on in the battle.

I've tried it, I fought it, and I can't win, and that's why Paul goes on to say, as we keep reading this verse, and this is important, and if it's not underlined in your Bible, it probably should be, "*God is faithful.*" Those are the next words. I love those words. By the way, those words can't be taken out of context because anything that the Bible says about God doesn't need context to be true.

It's true regardless of context. If it says God is love, it means God is always love. If it says God is faithful, it means God is always faithful, regardless of the context. Okay? And particularly as it relates to temptation and the sin that comes right on the heels of it, usually, not always. You do know that temptation is not sin in of itself, right?

I know so many Christians just beat themselves up. Oh, I'm just so tempted. If I was a real, if I was a genuine Christian, I wouldn't be tempted so much. Really? My Bible says Jesus was tempted in all ways, yet was without sin, so temptation is not sin. Listen, we all deal with temptation. All of us. You're not unique in that place either.

But what Paul is telling us here is that, as it relates to the temptation that you experienced, God is faithful. And this is where he goes on to say, he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. Now, what you've just read here that God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability is either a wonderful promise, or it's a serious indictment.

And you're going to probably look at it one way or the other, depending on how you feel about this thing. But Paul is telling us, based on God's faithfulness, there will never be a temptation. No that's wrong. There will never be a sin that is inevitable. The temptation is inevitable, but the sin is not. That's what he's saying. God is faithful and He will not allow that temptation to mandate a sin response in your life.

In other words, it is not inevitable that you're going to fall into sin related to that temptation. It's not inevitable. Like I said, that's either a promise or an indictment. If you're one of those people who has given in to the idea that I'm never going to get a handle on this area of sin in my life, it's an indictment because you've been believing a lie.

If you're struggling with an area of sin and you're concerned that you'll never, ever get a place of victory, then this is a wonderful promise to you, that God is

faithful, and that He is able to strengthen you in the midst of that thing. But I like how this verse takes us away from the place of just giving excuses. I've just got this temptation coming at me all the time, man. It's just hammering me lately, and I just, I'm just not strong enough, as if you ever were.

As if we ever deluded ourselves with the idea that we were strong enough, which, oh man, I'm just not strong enough, this temptation just can't, listen, the only thing that's going to give you the strength is God's grace. Those of you that have been worried about temptations, you can be encouraged. God has and will provide the power to stand up under it so you don't have to give in to sin and stuff.

Now please understand, God is not saying that you are strong enough to stand against temptation. He's inferring that those who are in Christ will be strengthened sufficiently, and only in Christ can you endure.

Let me, can I just tell you one of the things that makes us sloppy about how we view temptation in our lives? One of the things that causes a problem is the fact that some things to us just aren't tempting. We see other people tempted in areas to sin, and they're not temptations to us, therefore we assume, well I'm obviously strong enough not to be tempted in that area.

If I just grit my teeth hard enough, or buck up, maybe I can be strong enough in this area too, you see. But that's a delusion, that there's, the fact of the matter is, you're just, there are some things you're just not tempted to do, and it's not because you're strong, you're just not tempted.

I found out when I was a teenager, I was about 18, 19 years old, I was working at a convenience store, and when we would get done at the end of the day, by the way that's a fancy way of saying I was pumping gas back then. Anyway, we would get to the end of the day and we would take the money out of the till and we'd go into a back room after we had the place all locked up, and whoever was closing with me, would count the money, put it in bags and then prepare it for the manager to come in the next day and put the money into the bank. And we were dealing here with a couple of 18, 19 year old kids, and we're dealing with hundreds of dollars, sitting here counting the money and writing things down, counting and stuff.

And some of the people that I would close with would often make remarks about, oh, I'd love to get my hands on this much money, and they'd even talk about the temptation to just take a 20 or so and pocket it. Who's going to know

the difference sort of a thing. And I remember at the time thinking to myself, I'm just not tempted, and I wasn't really sure why, but it just wasn't a temptation.

Not because I'm virtuous. It's just not a temptation. It just wasn't. My natural conclusion based on the fact that I'm not tempted to take this money, is, well, see, I can be strong, right? Yeah! I'm not tempted. Some of you have never tasted alcohol in your life, and you might delude yourselves into thinking, hey, I'm not tempted, to drink.

Obviously, I've got some strengths going on here. Why don't I just apply those strengths to this area of weakness, because even if alcohol isn't a temptation in your life, something else is, right? We all have temptations; we all have weak spots. Sometimes it doesn't have anything to do with things you can smell on your breath or that's going to impair your driving.

It might have, might be a temptation to be angry, or a temptation to be depressed, or a temptation to fear. That one's fairly universal, although there's a few people that didn't get that one. But there's huge temptations that cover so many areas of life, but you're thinking to yourself, well I'm not tempted in this area, so I'm just going to buck up and be strong in this other area. And that's such a dangerous attitude to have because it's not about your strength.

Being strong against temptation. It's about His. As believers we've got to recognize that any victory from temptation, keeping us from sin, is going to be because God is working in our lives to give us the victory. Such an important thing to remember. So how do I know from this verse that it's God's power in me to say no? How do I, what do I see in this verse that tells me that He's not just wanting me to get strong, but that He's wanting me to rely on Him.

Well, it's clear from the verse, look at it again with me look in your Bible, verse 13. I'm going to read here in the middle. Actually, this is the part we haven't read "*but with the temptation,*" what does it say? He wants you to be strong? No. It says, "*He will also provide the way of escape.*" Who's going to provide the way of escape according to this verse? It's not you. It's God, right? See, that tells you in that this verse is not about you being strong against temptation in and of yourself.

It's you relying on His strength to make you strong in the midst of that temptation. He's going to be the one who's going to empower you to endure that temptation and not give in, surrender, throw in the towel, and say, oh, I'm just going to do it. Which is often the way we go. Now at this point somebody might

say to themselves, hey, if God promises a way of escape, then why am I still falling in this area of sin?

I mean here, you're telling me pastor Paul, this is a promise from God's Word, that He will provide a way of escape. Then why am I still sinning? Why am I still falling in this area of sin? You've got to remember, dear saint, that God will never force His way of escape upon you. That's a difficult lesson to learn, but a very important one to learn. God is never going to take that way of escape, that He will make available to you, and force it upon you.

It must be your choice. He provides it. It's up to you to take it. Some of us might not even be expecting it, and I hope that after today and after looking at this verse, you will begin to expect a way of escape. You'll begin to actually look for a way of escape when that area of sin approaches, that old thing that wants to grab you by the jugular, and rule your life. I hope that after today you'll begin to actually look for that route of escape.

By the way, William Barclay, who's with the Lord now, who's an old Scottish, fairly liberal Bible scholar, he had some great things to say about the Word of God. One thing he said about this, he said that this word, escape, in the Greek gives the connotation of an army who is surrounded by their enemies and who, it looks as if are done for, and suddenly they notice it's a path of escape.

It's like, I'm in the midst of this very difficult circumstance and suddenly, oh wait, look, here's a way we can escape through like between these two mountains or these hills or the cleft of the rock. We can get the army through there. We can escape through there. That's the idea. That's the connotation behind this word escape in the Greek, which I think is an interesting illustrative sort of a thing.

But why do I continue to sin? It's because I choose to take the way of temptation and sin rather than the way of escape. God's given me the way of escape, but I'm just going no thank you. I'm going to go over here instead. I'm going to take the way of sin. I got two paths, right? I got two paths in front of me. I can, as a Christian, as a Christian, I've got a path in front of me where I can choose to go and sin, or I can choose the way of escape.

The question is, what are you going to choose? Right? So many times when we fall into sin, it's because we choose not to take God's way of escape, and simply, we simply choose to go the way of sin, and that is an indictment on us as Christians when we sin. You guys know, don't you, as believers we're not bound to sin anymore. As an unbeliever, we were. You didn't have any choice.

When sin presented itself, I mean the sinful nature of being in charge, and I mean, as a believer it's a completely different sort of an arrangement. You now have the freedom to look at sin and say no. No, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to say no. Doesn't mean you're always going to do it and many times we don't. And this is what, boy, when I got a hold of this truth, when the Lord began to show me that my sin was not this overpowering, overwhelming monster in my life, it was a choice on my part.

I've got to tell you, that was very sobering. That was a very sobering reality, because the Lord was basically saying to me in no uncertain terms, Paul when you fall into sin it's because you chose to do it. My Bible says that God has given us everything we need for life and Godliness. Does that mean I take everything He gives me and use it all the time? Heavens no.

Often, often I say to him, no thank you, I choose the sin over that place of getting out. Listen, if you're sitting around waiting for God to come and stop you from sinning, you said God provides a way out, where is it? I think sometimes people are thinking that way. It's like, well, he didn't come and stop me. Reminds me of Kevin on Home Alone, remember? He's all alone, so he goes into his brother's room. Remember that? Hey, buzz, I'm in your room going through your stuff, you better come stop me!

And he's sitting there eating this ice cream with all this stuff on it. Hey, Mom, I'm eating junk and watching trash on TV, you better come and stop! It's like, some people I think are waiting for the Holy Spirit to do that in their lives. It's like, hey God, I'm getting ready to sin, you better come stop me! And God is saying, I've given you the way out. I've given you the path to not go into this area of sin. Are you willing to take it?

God promises to provide a way out, an option that doesn't include sin, but you and I have to first seek that way of escape. I would say expect that way of escape, and then choose that way of escape. Isn't it interesting that it comes down to faith? Have you noticed that? It comes down to faith. Choosing not to sin anymore. It comes down, it comes down to faith. Choosing not to give in to those temptations.

I'm going to put my faith in God that He is there to help me, and He is giving me another option. Something we need to pray about. Here's 1 Corinthians 10:13. You now know what it doesn't mean, and now you know what it does mean. But the most important thing now that we understand this verse is to apply it in our lives, to say Lord now, I need to pray this through because I see that I've been operating on a different level than what Your Word tells me.