

God's Provision for Our Temptation
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1 Corinthians 10:1-13
January 19, 2014

I would like you now to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10 this morning. We are going to be reading the first 13 verses. The last several weeks, the approach of looking at the Old Testament has been to look at very large chunks of the Old Testament, taking sometimes multiple books at a time, and looking at the larger message that God had through those books.

Today we are going to be looking at the Old Testament, but in a different way. Instead we are going to be starting with a New Testament passage that makes specific reference to really about 40 years in the history of Israel from the time they came out of Egypt, crossed over the Red Sea, and through the period that they were doing their wilderness wanderings. So if you have your Bibles you can look with me. I'm going to read starting in Verse 1 of Chapter 10. Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 ~ I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 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.

Have you ever had a time in your life where you realized that you were having a false sense of security about something? That is, when you were in a position where you thought that the grass was all green, that everything was at peace, and completely and totally under control, and that nothing could surprise you? If you'll consider with me a historical example, back in the time between the first World War and the second World War, the nation of France, I'm not trying to pick on any nation, but the nation of France, having suffered tremendously during the first World War, decided that they were going to take a defensive measure, and that they were going to build a line of defense all along the border of Germany, to keep the Germans out, from ever coming in and invading them again. This is known in history as *'The Maginot Line'*, and for ten years they worked diligently on this line, and they had fortifications, and they had concrete walls, and they had barriers, and they also had another area where there was a border along one of these along their border with Italy. The idea here was: *We learned our lesson from the first World War. We don't want to be invaded. We are going to build this wall and it is going to keep the invaders out.* Well what happened when Hitler decided to invade France, is he just went around the wall, and within about six weeks was able to sweep into France, and to take over and get control of the country.

So I use this illustration as one where it is possible for us to have this sense of security that there isn't anything that can take us down. Today as we dive into 1 Corinthians 10, and look at the message that God has for us today, I think we are going to see that instead we need to take a different position, and that is one of tremendous humility, and recognition that no matter how much we have in the way of spiritual blessings before us, the temptation is a reality in our lives. And that sin is not a small thing, it is not like a domesticated pet that may bark, and may nip at us, but ultimately we have that feeling of control over it, but that sin instead is more like a raging lion and beast, that if we toy around and play with it, can turn around and can strike us with tremendous consequences.

Today as we look at 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, I want us to look at God's provision for our temptation. That is the title of the sermon, 'God's Provision for Our Temptation'. I'd like to break the passage down into three sections. The first point would be: Spiritual nourishment, looking at Verses 1-5. It is looking back in the Old Testament at how God had nourished and provided for His people. The second point: Examples of sin's consequences. Examples of sin's consequences, looking at Verses 6-11. And then looking finally at the third point, at a warning and a promise, in Verses 12-13.

This morning some of you may be painfully aware of temptations that are besetting you. You may be aware as well of the struggle that you have with sin. In the degree of victory that you have attained, or not attained, or hoped to have attained, there may be others of you here today that feel that in your spiritual life you are enjoying a sense of relative success and strength in this area. This could be simply a period of ease, and less spiritual struggle, or possibly a period of oblivion where you are not aware of where you are walking and going. Today I believe that God's word addresses both of these cases, and provides hope for those in struggle, and a warning for those who may be enjoying a sense of false security.

1) Spiritual Nourishment:

So let's start by looking at the first point, *Spiritual Nourishment*, in Verses 1-5. In the Scripture-reading earlier today, we read out of Exodus, and Verses 1-5 really look back into the history of Israel, and they provide a picture of what God was doing with His people at the beginning of their exodus from Egypt. So you can look here at Verse 1, we read Paul writing:

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 ~ I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

This is referring back to the section of Exodus we just read, this picture of how when God was leading and guiding His people, that He was going to give them a cloud, and a pillar of fire, which was going to guide and direct them. This was a symbol of His presence, with His people, a visible symbol that they could look at and follow. And of course, the struggle in the passage we read before was that He was leading them somewhere, and there was the sea before them, and then here was the armies of Pharaoh, and so what was going to happen? So God provided for them by parting the sea, and allowing them to walk over in dry land, and at the same time to bring defeat upon the armies of Pharaoh.

So when we look at this, he is using terminology in a way that is very interesting for he describes their relationship to the events happening then as being baptized into Moses. Now that is a little bit of a strange conception when you first think about it, because in the New Testament we are baptized into Christ. You can think of Romans 6 about that spiritual baptism, the inclusion into Christ, the union with Christ in His death, and ultimately in His resurrection that we have. But the picture here is Paul is making some kind of analogy here for these believers. He is saying, "I want you to look back in time at a people so long ago, and I want you to see an

analogy between your situation and their situation,” for he is saying, of course they weren’t technically baptized, but in a sense God was using this procedure, or this process of having them be led by the cloud, crossing through the Red Sea. It was a symbol of their separation and parting from Egypt. God was calling His people out of slavery, redeeming them from their slavery, providing redemption, bringing them out, and separating them out as a people. Moses was His servant, God’s servant for His people. The people were to follow him as he led and guided them.

So the people of the Old Testament, the children of Israel leaving, were baptized into Moses. Included in that, included in the cloud and the sea, they all experienced what was going on. In fact, when you look at Verses 1-5, there is a word that is repeated over, and over again, and it is this word ‘*all*’. For it says they were *all* under the cloud, *all* were baptized into Moses, and *all* ate the same spiritual food, and *all* drank the same spiritual drink. The focus here is to say, *all* of them had the same opportunities, the same blessings, and the same provision that God gave to them, *all* of them. It wasn’t something given to a select few. So for the believers at the church in Corinth, God was making the analogy to them, this is saying in the same way, *all* of you have experienced, at least externally, all of the blessings of the church, and of the word of God in preaching, and of hearing and understanding what God had called them to in salvation.

What we read further about, the experience of these people on the go, it says that they ate the same spiritual food, and they drank the same spiritual drinks. If we were to continue on in Exodus, past the passages we read, we would see that as they came out of Egypt, they began to struggle with the basic needs of life. “What about water to drink?” Well, there was a time there where the water had become very bitter, and God provided water for them. There were times where God provided water for them out of the rock. Then, of course, for their daily needs of food, He provided them the manna that came down from Heaven. So God was separating these people, He was blessing them, He was bringing them out, and He was providing nourishment for them.

Now we read an interesting statement here in Verse 4, and it says that they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Now when you go back and read the Old Testament, you are not going to find that statement anywhere. That is, it may seem strange to see that He is here putting back into that place, that there was a way that God was mediating Himself through the second person of the Trinity, who would one day come and incarnate Himself as Jesus Christ. The point of this is to show the believers, these New Testament believers, that these people had these blessings, they had the presence of God, the provision

of God, the separation out from slavery, and out of bondage into redemption, and He is trying to make the analogy to them to say, “And you have the same thing.” And in other places to read, “You have it in even more fuller, and clearer, and a greater sense,” what God had done to them.

Consider a little bit about the background of the church at Corinth. It is a very familiar book of the Bible. Many people, when you think of 1 Corinthians, think about many of the problems that they had. This was a group of people, when you read through 1 Corinthians, you find out that they struggled with divisions, they all had their leaders that they liked better. Some would say they followed Paul, some Apollos, and some followed Christ, different parties. They struggled morally, they didn’t want to cast out an immoral man who was doing a sinful deed, an act, that even the world outside thought was not appropriate. They were in lawsuits with each other, they struggled with sexual immorality, they struggled with worship, and worshipping God in an orderly way. Consider the statement that one writer wrote about Corinth. He said:

Corinth, thus, became a great commercial center. Luxuries from all over the world were available, and the vices of the world were also to be found there. These evils did not all have to be imported, however, for the temple of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, was nearby with 1,000 prostitutes who sold themselves in the name of religion. The Greeks had a proverb about the city which tells a great deal about its moral decay. “It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth.” (Apparently, it was so damaging.) Those who were worldly wise use the verb ‘Corinthianize’ to describe an act of immorality. ‘Corinthian girl’ was known to be a synonym for ‘prostitute’.

Now, can you imagine living in a place like this, starting a church in a place like this, and having your first church members, or many of them perhaps, that didn’t come from a Jewish background where they had the morality that God had provided through the Old Testament? That many of your members had come from these backgrounds, and that they lived in the context of this, in a place where people would go to the idols, the temples, and they would enjoy feasts, and get together, and have these kinds of celebrations. So it is as though immorality was surrounding them, all around them, and enticing them to sin. This is the context of 1 Corinthians and those to whom Paul is writing.

The point of looking at these first verses, and I think the point that Paul is making is that God had given these believers in the Old Testament, all of them, His provision, all of them His presence, and all of them His blessings. But then we

read, and find out, that in Verse 5, nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness. So all of them had the blessings, but with most of them, He was not pleased. Now let's talk about this word '*most*' here. In fact, we're going to kind of just throw out some numbers here. It was that generation, the older adult generation, were the ones who rebelled. Apparently there would have been maybe a million plus people at that time, in that first generation that would have been adults, the 20 and over. Now the question is, how many of that one million plus adults actually made it into the Promised Land, and didn't get overthrown in the wilderness? Two, yeah, I hear it out there now, right? So you hear it right now, don't you? So Joshua and Caleb. So you have a million plus over here, that is the '*all*', all of them, and then you have the million plus minus two was the *most*, and then you have the two that didn't.

Now that is a very profound thing to consider when you consider all that God was doing for them, providing for them, looking at their every need, and providing direction for them. The Israelites were baptized into Moses, the professing believers at Corinth were baptized into Christ. The Israelites all experienced God's gracious provision, so did the believers at Corinth. Most of the people of Israel rejected this gracious provision. The question Paul was directing towards them is would the believers at Corinth do the same? I ask you today, have you been a participant in God's gracious provision? Material and spiritual? Today will you follow after Christ, the spiritual rock, or instead will you stumble and fall?

2) Examples of Sin's Consequences:

Now let's go ahead and move on to our second point, *Examples of Sin's Consequences*, looking at Verses 6-11. Now the backdrop of Verses 1-5 set the stage. The five different examples that are given to us in Verses 6-11 begin to illustrate, and call out in specific terms, the failings of those in the past. We find out that the failings of those in the past is not just information, it is not just narrative, it is not just history, but it is something that was written down for us, for me, for you, something that we were called to pay attention to. We read in Verse 6, ***Now these things took place as an example for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.***

Sometimes it is easy for us to learn about the Bible. It is good to learn about the Bible, everything you can. How many books there are in the Bible, how the Bible is arranged, what parts of the Bible discuss different topics, and have different doctrinal emphases, to learn the different historical aspects of the Scriptures. But when you look at Verse 6, we've always got to keep before us, this isn't just

history class, where you read the history book, maybe some of you didn't. But you read the history book, and you knew you had a test coming, and you learned the facts, and the details, and the information, and maybe some of it got into your long-term memory. Some of it stayed in your short-term memory long enough to take the test, and then to move on to the next test because there is more information, and more to learn. But Verse 6 tells us that's not how we are supposed to look at these examples, that actually these examples, these things took place as examples for us for the purpose that we might not desire evil as they did. It is not just data, and information, and facts, but it is something rather that God has given to us, specifically for us, His people today to learn from.

One point in this section that we run into is the word translated here, in the ESV, is '*examples*'. It is the same word as the word '*type*' that is used. It is found twice in this section, and we often talk about typology. That has been a topic from the last several weeks in the sermons that have been preached. The picture here is not so much a list of types of Christ Himself, but rather of examples of events that are pointing toward making that analogy between the people of the Old Testament, God's people then, and God's people in the New Covenant, specifically those who were at Corinth. We need to pay attention as well where it says that these things are for us and for our instruction, that God was intending this for all of us. That when we read here, in one of these sections, about the fathers, going back to Verse 1, that when Paul writes our fathers were all under the cloud, Paul is a Jew but he is writing to a church full of Jews and Gentiles. That these fathers are our spiritual forefathers as well, whether you are a Jew or Gentile, not making a distinction of one or the other.

So let's look at five examples and try to make application of this to our lives so that we might not desire evil as they did. Now the first one is not quite as clear, that is in Verse 6, where it says that we might not desire evil as they did, apparently this was referring back to that time after Israel left Sinai, this is back in Numbers 11. I'm not going to go back and read this section, but there was a time where they had been at Sinai for a period of time, and they left Sinai, and apparently there was a group of people that had been going around with Israel, that are referred to as '*The Rabble*'. It is a group of non-Israelites that kind of joined the party when they were coming out of Egypt, and what happens is this group begins to kind of stir things up about the way things are. So they themselves are doing wrong, but worse, they are stirring up the Israelites against God.

The specific issue at that point is this issue of food. Now we live in a time where we have access to so much good food. We have these grocery stores, and we have these international markets, and you can get just about anything you want, and most of us have disposable income that we can eat a lot of different foods, and it is very interesting, and we have that opportunity. Now what they had been eating for a while is manna, and it came down six days a week, enough on the sixth day to last through the seventh. They had manna every day and it provided for their needs, and it nourished them, but it wasn't very exciting or tasteful. So what happens is the Rabble begins to stir the people up, and they begin to cry out, and you know what they are crying out? They are crying out, "Oh, if we had meat to eat," and they say, "You know when we were in Egypt, we had fish for free," is what they said. "Not only that, we had cucumbers, and leeks, and onions, and garlic." That is, things to make that food savory, and to taste good.

Now what was going on was they were coveting and desiring what they didn't have, and what God did not plan for them to have at that time in their spiritual pilgrimage. It can seem a little harsh the way that God responded because we think, "I don't want to just go home and have manna for lunch, and for breakfast, and for dinner, and then have it the next day, and the next day, and the next day after that." But the point here was that in God's plan it was evil for them to be wrongly crying out, and grumbling, and complaining because that wasn't in God's plan for them at that time. The people quickly forgot the cruel taskmasters in Egypt who were forcing them not only to make bricks, but then bricks without straw, and all of the sudden were longingly, in a sentimental fashion, looking back to the good life that they had at that point.

Today I ask you, are you looking this morning at what God has provided for you, or are you desiring that which you cannot have? Now that is a very simplistic and general question to ask, but I think it hits us all from time to time, that we have the choice, even if all that we have is this little bit, when we look at other people and we say, "Why is it Lord, that I have this, and that other person seems to have this in every aspect of life?" But the question is, are you going to look at this little bit and say, "Thank You, Lord," or are you going to turn from that, and look and go, "Lord, why won't You give me this? You don't love me. You don't know what is good for me. My life would be so much better if You granted what is over here."

Let's move to the second illustration in Verses 6-11, and we read this in Verse 7:

1 Corinthians 10:7 ~ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."

This points, most clearly perhaps, to the issue with the golden calf, Exodus 24. Moses goes up on the mountain. It says he was up there 40 days and 40 nights. Well, the people are down below for 40 days and for 40 nights, and they say, “We don’t know where this Moses, who led us out of Egypt, we don’t know where he is, and so what we now need is some replacement gods for us to follow.” So the golden calf is made and so they worship the golden calf. God is very displeased with them because they have rejected Him, rejected His provision, His timetable, and have rushed ahead into this.

It’s interesting here that Paul quotes just in these little snippets what he chooses to quote out of that incident, which is this last part where it says, “*The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.*” It’s kind of a little odd sounding when you first read it, but it’s very likely that he was trying to come at the Corinthians, because one of their temptations were these temples that were around them that had idols, and while a church member and believer might not have been tempted to actually go and make a sacrifice to an idol, they might say to themselves, “Well, I hear over at the temple Friday they’re having a fellowship meal after the sacrifice. It’s a feast. Let’s go over and join the feast,” and so as it might have taken place, that the people would have sat down and had a meal, and it was common at that time that they might have gotten up and played games. Well, we’re not talking about Monopoly. We’re talking about people that were probably eating, and drinking, and becoming inebriated and drunk, and had no moral compass to guide what they were doing, and something that could have turned into some kind of orgy or other form of immorality.

So he quotes here this point here from worshiping the golden calf, to show that the people then, not only had they turned from the Lord, from worshiping Him and serving Him only, to make false Gods that they could worship, but also the implication here is that they also had lost their moral compass and guide, and had turned to displease the Lord.

Today, we don’t face the lure of idol temples that were found in ancient Corinth, but we must constantly wrestle with the idolatry of our hearts. We are constantly tempted today to remake God into our image and into our likeness, and to serve our carnal desires. Today I would say that perhaps no one would be so bold as to take a Bible and to actually go in there in the parts that talk about God’s nature and character and His direction for your life, that you would not be so bold as to actually take a pair of scissors and cut it out and just say, “I’m done with it. I don’t want this. I won’t tolerate this,” but when we in our minds formulate God in a way separate and opposite, taking away some of what has been revealed about Him, and

perhaps adding some more that would meet our fleshly desires and seem pleasing to us, we are committing idolatry, and we are worshiping and serving a different God. Even though it may be close to what's here, it is not the God of the Bible, that He calls us to submit ourselves under Him, and as for His character, His dealings with us that we don't understand and are hard for us, that that's a point that we need to grow, and we need to wrestle, and struggle, and to cry out, and say, "I don't understand. I don't like it. Lord, change me. I'm not going to turn and try to change You."

Let's move on to the third example, sexual immorality and the daughter of Moab, in Verse 8. For he writes:

1 Corinthians 10:8 ~ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

Now, you may remember back in Numbers where Balaam is trying to deceive the people of Israel and he keeps getting thwarted, and you have that long account, all that goes on and how his purposes are thwarted. Well, eventually in Numbers 25, the people of God get the hook, and the hook that they get is the hook of immorality that leads to idolatry. Consider this part of Numbers 25:

Numbers 25:1-2 ~ While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore after the daughters of Moab. 2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

And then later you find out that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and there's this great response of the Lord in anger destroying so many thousands of them. So we've seen in these examples that there's coveting and desiring evil. There is an example of what I would say is more direct idolatry with the golden calf, and now we have hit upon the Corinthians and sexual immorality, and being led astray. I've already made reference to the kind of culture they lived in, the temptations, something where pagan religious worship could be combined with sexual immorality. The two go together, that for a person to go to a temple might very well have far more implication than just some sort of worship, but something that would meet the desires of the flesh. Temptations to sexual immorality have existed since the beginning of time. They exist today, and in fact, they tempt not only people who live out in the world and never darken the door of a church. They don't actually only tempt people who attend liberal churches that don't teach from the Bible.

Sexual immorality actually tempts people who go to Bible-believing churches, who listen to expository preaching, attend Bible studies, have Christian books in their home, listen to messages on their iPod, and do service in the church, and sometimes even teach, and even lead in the church, believe it or not. The warning Paul has here and gives to us for our example is don't be like this. Don't follow their example. Today what has made the temptation to sexual immorality even greater has been the proliferation of media and its access, so that people now can pursue it in the privacy of their own home, their own car, their own office, with a computer, with an iPad, with an iPod, with a smart phone, you name it. The opportunity to view images, to chat with people, to text with people, to have illicit relationships, to view pornography, it's everywhere and it's rampant, and you can do it and no one knows what's going on.

Today, if you're flirting with these things, even an emotional relationship with someone of the opposite sex that you don't need to have, you need to flee from it. You need to be like Joseph when he was in Potiphar's house running away from Potiphar's wife, because if this gets ahold of you, it can be a destructive force in your life and in your family, and in every aspect that you touch in your life. I would call you today to turn from this temptation to sexual immorality, for it is a path to destruction and ruin in your life.

Let's move on to the fourth example that is given us. If it weren't enough that God were going to give us examples of coveting, and desiring evil, and direct idolatry, and sexual immorality, we move on and find out now that there's an example here about testing God in Verse 9 of Chapter 10:

1 Corinthians 10:9 ~ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,...

Looking back in Numbers to that account of the people of Israel, what had happened is they had gone through and been victorious against the Canaanite king, and then what happened is they came to a point and God told them, "You need to go around Edom." They wanted to go through Edom. They had just had military success, "So why do we have to go the long way around Edom when we can just go the short way and go through it?" So they begin to complain before the Lord and to begin to test Him, not wanting to accept His direction for their lives. So God responded in this mighty way where He sends upon them these fiery serpents, and so this is the point where the brazen or bronze serpent is made and it's lifted high up on a pole, and whoever it was that would look to the serpent would turn and be healed.

Of course, we know in John 3 that this points to Christ, that it's a type of Christ, that those who look to Christ will be healed. But it's a reminder to us, as well, that God doesn't look favorably upon our testing of His direction and resisting Him in what He is calling us to do. It seems so easy sometimes that we resist God's direction. It could be His direction through Scripture where He set boundaries and He said, "You may not go here, and you may not do this, and you may not act like this, think like this, talk like this." It could be other times where in your life a given circumstance comes your way and you want to go a different way. We must not resist God's direction and His timing, or His dominion and sovereignty over every aspect of our lives, and His righteous rules and guidance that guide us. Let's now look at the last of the five examples that are mentioned here in Verse 10:

1 Corinthians 10:10 ~ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

Now, this particular verse could point to several events in the life of Israel's history. Most likely it's referring either to Numbers 14 or 16. That's either the time where the ten spies gave the bad report and the people rebelled against Moses and against God, or perhaps more likely it refers to the time of Korah's rebellion, referring back to Numbers 16. Now, in Korah's rebellion, you had Korah and some other men, and 250 leaders of Israel, and they rose up and they came together, and they basically said, "You know, everyone who's here is holy. We're leaders. We're holy, right? So why do we have to keep following Moses? And why do we have to use Your form of direction and guidance for our lives?" And so they grumbled against the Lord, against His leaders, and the Lord responded with a tremendous judgment upon them as He did in other places and in other times.

In our culture today, grumbling and complaining are what I would call respectable sins. In fact, I think at some point they're actually even applauded by some people. Grumbling about our circumstances, grumbling about our work, grumbling about our families, our husbands, our wives, our children, grumbling about the government, grumbling about taxes, grumbling about the weather, grumbling about our leaders, whether they be national or spiritual leaders. For many people this is a well-exercised sport in their life, that they start the week grumbling because they get in the car and it's traffic, and then it's work, and then you come home from work and it's family, and what's going on, and they watch the news and it's the government, and then maybe they go to their church, and why are they doing this, and why are they doing that? The temptation is always there for us to grumble and to complain.

When we grumble about our circumstances, grumble about our government, our family, our taxes, we are ultimately grumbling against the God who is sovereign over each one of these aspects in our lives. That doesn't mean, of course, that we can't go work for change in different areas in a right way with a righteous and holy perspective upon it. I'm not saying that, that we just passively sit by, but while we're doing it, we don't grumble, we don't complain, that if we want to shine like lights in this world (Philippians 2), that we're going to have to turn aside from grumbling and complaining, and follow after the Lord.

Well, that wraps up this second point and these five examples, and when you read through this and you ponder these, it's as if a fist is just pounding upon you, pounding upon you: *Do you need another example? Here it is. Do you need another example? Here it is. Here's another example of what happens when you give into the sin. Here are the consequences of sin.*

Now, we could be discouraged at this point and say, "You know, if out of the million plus, only two of them got out, those odds don't sound very good to me, so what am I supposed to take away from this? Is God going to work on my behalf? And how should I view all of these examples that have been given to us?" Well, let's look at that in our third point, *A Warning and a Promise*, looking at Verses 12 to 13.

3) A Warning and a Promise:

We read there:

1 Corinthians 10:12 ~ Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

When we read about standing, we know that we are called in our Christian lives to stand firm, and so that's a good thing. We know that we are called to strive for a holy and blameless life that is above reproach, and that's a great thing that we are to strive for, but we are to do it with the humility that always recognizes that we haven't arrived, to do it as in Philippians Chapter 3, that picture of pressing on to win the prize. It's the idea that the prize is out here, and I'm straining ahead. I'm not looking back but I'm straining and pressing forward, and that if I were to live to be 80 or 90, that on my 89th year, in my 364th day of that year, and if the last day was coming, that I would still in my old age be straining and pressing forward, and not saying, "I've arrived. I'm free. Temptation cannot touch me at this point."

We read here that we need to take heed lest we fall, for:

1 Corinthians 10:13 ~ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

That's both a blessing and a warning, because it encourages us that there isn't anything that's going to happen to us temptation-wise that isn't common to all of mankind, but there's also a warning to us that reminds us of the fact that we aren't free from any kind of temptation. We are not inoculated. We can't pull out an immunization card that says: *Well, I can go and travel to this country where they have this disease, because I've been inoculated against encephalitis, and here it is. I'm free. I have no fear of it.* There's no aspect, no realm of sin, that cannot reach out with its tentacles and grab hold of you. Now, you say, "Surely we aren't that bad," or "It's not that easy to be ensnared" but I ask you today that if King David, the man after God's own heart could be enticed to commit adultery and then to cover himself up to murder the husband of the woman with whom he committed adultery, who was one of his mighty men that served him, that if he can do that, and if Solomon who was the wisest man on earth, that people would come from nations around to bring him gold and riches, and to learn from his wisdom, can be led astray by his adulterous wives, and if Peter the great disciple and later apostle could deny Christ three times after recognizing that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, then how far and how hard do you think that you could fall if you only ignore these warnings and toy with sin in your life?

This warning that is part of this is very interesting to me with these verses, for two decades ago I remember learning 1 Corinthians 10:13 in a discipleship group, and it was a great encouragement that there was no temptation except what is common to man, that God was faithful and that He was going to provide a way out, but when I learned it, I learned it without Verse 12, and Verse 12 is the balance of that. The reason you need Verse 13 is because of Verse 12. The reason you need to know and have that hope is because there isn't anything that you can be sure that will not come your way to tempt you. The promise of God's help in temptation is greatly magnified by the stark reality of failing. Do you think that you are standing firm this morning? Are you playing with sin a little this morning? I would encourage you today to consider its greatness and its magnitude in your life. But here's the promise, and this is where we end today, both in the context of the passage, but also today as we go forth. We have this great hope. It says here that:

...God is faithful, ...

That is one of His attributes. Period. Apart from our issues, and our needs, and our temptations, He is faithful. We read in one part of Scripture that even if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. He is not going to change. We are unfaithful constantly—in small ways sometimes, in big ways sometimes. Partly because of our own will, we are unfaithful, partly because of our own inability as fallen human beings. Today if you are feeling hopeless in this realm of fighting sin in your life, take courage. You have a God who is powerful and who is faithful. At no point in time is He going to let you down. At no point in time is He going to lose the power to help you in the midst of temptation.

You may have some people in your life—family members, friends—some people that are like rocks for you, people that seemingly are always there, are always consistent, but even those people are going to fail at some point. But God never will. The God who has saved you and loved you, who has given His own Son and given Him up for you, who continues His work through the Holy Spirit indwelling you, guaranteeing the inheritance that is to come, He is faithful and will continue to work with you and help you. For it says here that He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

Sometimes in life we can face situations that seem like an impossible scenario, and sometimes in the real world, they are. No matter how efficient and good at something you are, I can load up enough work and give you a time limit, and you can't do it. Now, some of you may question that, but really it's true. There is a limit where you're going to fail. There are impossible scenarios that are out there, but the encouragement we have from the Scriptures here is that when it comes to temptation, there is no impossible scenario. You may say, "But you don't know what it's like for me. You don't know what I'm undergoing right now. You don't know what it's like to live in the family I do, to have the husband I have, to have the wife I have, to have the job I have, to have this specific set of physical circumstances and issues that I have in my life. You don't know. How can you say this?" I'm going to rest on the Scriptures and what it says here, which is that there is nothing—you will not be tempted beyond your ability.

...and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability,...

So what that means is you can have great hope, that if you rely on the Holy Spirit, apply yourself to the word of God in your spiritual growth, and to learn and grow, that you can face temptation in the power of God, not on your own strength, and you can *not* give in, as the people long ago did.

There's also a word here that says if you have thrown your hands up and said, "I can't do it. It's too difficult," and not only, "I can't do it," but, "I won't do it. I won't try anymore in this area of my life," that you don't have anything to stand on, then you have to go back and trust God that He is going to give you the ability to stand firm. We also have the specific encouragement that with that temptation, He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it:

...but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

You know, the devil, it says in Ephesians 6, has schemes that he is working out in this realm of spiritual warfare. Think about that. How discouraging it is that there's an enemy out there that is actually scheming against you, a spiritual enemy with tremendous power in this life? But take courage as well that there is a God who has loved you and saved you, and is sustaining you even now, who has schemes as well, and His schemes are more powerful than the devil's. And part of that is whatever temptation is coming your way today, this week, that He has a way of escape that you can follow. I ask you today, which way will you choose? Will you, in God's power, fight and resist the temptation, or will you give in, throw up your hands as an enemy might do in battle, and say, "We just can't hold this piece of ground over here. Take it away. I won't fight, and I won't go after it"?

Well, today we've seen how God has called us and separated us in the same way He did His people of old, that He has given us spiritual blessings, provision, that He has given us Christ, that He has continued to bless us and encourage us even in this passage with these bad examples, examples of failure, and to conclude today, I'd like to close with an illustration. This comes from *Pilgrim's Progress*, which perhaps a number of you have read at different times, and perhaps one of the more well-known examples from that. There's this time in *Pilgrim's Progress* where Pilgrim and his traveling companion, at this point it's a character named Hopeful, they're traveling along. Pilgrim's left the City of Destruction in this allegory, and he's on his way to the Celestial City, and Pilgrim and Hopeful have come out of a terrible place called Vanity Fair. It's a place where all sorts of vices are there where he's imprisoned, and they've come out of there and they're walking along the path. So picture yourself a pilgrim walking on a path, and there's only one path that goes to the Celestial City. There's not many. They come to a place where it gets to be hard and difficult along the path, and they see over here to the side of a way there's a fence, but there's a stile, some steps that lead over the fence, and it appears now that there's a meadow that looks very pleasant to walk on.

In fact, they see that there's a path along the meadow that is parallel with the path they're supposed to be on. Well, there's only one path to the Celestial City, and this meadow is known as Bypass Meadow. So they decide to get off of the hard path and to get on this other path, and it goes along parallel, but then it starts to go off. And then later it gets dark and they get lost, and all of a sudden they get attacked by Giant Despair who comes and who grabs them and accuses them of being on his land and his territory, and he takes them off to this castle which is called Doubting Castle, and he throws them in the dungeon, and they're beaten mercilessly and treated horribly almost to the point of death. And when you're reading in the story, things seem very grim at this point and you wonder how they're going to get out of this. They're in the dungeon despairing of life, and Pilgrim says the following:


What a fool am I thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk in liberty, because I have a key in my bosom called Promise.

He takes the key out and he sticks the key into the dungeon door, and it turns, and it allows them to walk out of Doubting Castle and to get out and to make their way back to the path to the Celestial City. Today, do you recognize the great promise that you have? Will you trust in that promise that no matter how much that temptation falls upon you—the world, the flesh, and the devil acting upon you—that God has given you a key that you carry with you, and to the worst situation, the most grim time, the time where you feel the weakest, and it is this promise that God has given that He is faithful, that He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. Today I would encourage you and exhort you to hold onto that promise, to not throw your hands up, to not give up ground, and to press forward toward the goal.

Let's close in prayer...

Heavenly Father, we rejoice today that we do not need to live our lives in a dungeon, being beaten up by the enemy, pummeled at every side. Father, we rejoice that You have given us a promise. We rejoice that You as well even today have implanted the Holy Spirit in us, that we are indwelt by the Spirit, that we have through the Spirit Your resources, that we may be strengthened in our inner beings so that Christ may dwell in our hearts in faith. Oh Father, we pray that You would enable us by Your grace and what You have done in our lives, to not follow the bad examples of our spiritual forefathers, but rather to follow after Christ, to follow after His perfect victory over temptation, His perfect submission to the Father, and to glory in Him, and I pray this in Christ's Name, Amen.

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