

## PREFACE

The longer I look at this passage, especially v13, the more convinced I am that Paul is combining both *temptation*—an enticement to do that which is wrong in God’s eyes—and *testing* or trials—difficult, even painful situations that arise in our lives. As we will see in a moment, the word translated “temptation” can cover both.

## Read 1 Corinthians 10:11-14.

## v13

*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man;*

Let me offer just a bit more on this opening statement of v13.

**temptation** = *peirasmos* (noun)= from <G3985> (peirazo); **a putting to proof** (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, **discipline** or provocation); by implication **adversity** :- **temptation**, × **try**.

We see how the two aspects of this word can coexist—temptation and testing—in the temptation of Christ Jesus in the wilderness.

## Read Matthew 4:1-4.

**tempted** = *peirazo* (verb) = from <G3984> (peira); **to test** (object), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, **entice**, discipline :- assay, examine, go about, **prove**, tempt (-er), **try**.

Jesus was not just “tried” (tested, refined) in this experience, he was also “tempted” by Satan to do the wrong thing. And so it often is for us—and, as we will see, for the Corinthians.

*and God is faithful,...*

In v12 Paul warned that we should “take heed that [we do] not fall.” Now, in v13, he reassures us that we need not fall. But, first of all, we must be careful how we interpret the word “faithful” in this verse. Don’t read this, “We can trust that God will always be there to bail us out of every challenging situation.” The testing, the temptation, can move in two directions: some in the Corinthian church were not *being* tested, but were testing *God*. *I’m going to see how close I can get to this idolatrous society to retain my status and contacts in the community while still being a Christian, because I’m smart and can tell the difference between the two.* God is first faithful to Himself; He must be who He is. And he probably will not come to our rescue when we have arrogantly created the situation ourselves, thus putting *Him* to the test.

The almighty Creator of the universe is not a lap dog who comes bounding to our side every time we get ourselves into a sticky situation—and even if He does, there is no guarantee He will respond in a way to our liking. As He is faithful to us—and He certainly is—He must, first, be faithful to Himself.

As evidence for this I would point to the egregious sins committed by King David. God was faithful to David in that He did not kill him on the spot, and he even removed the sin(s) from David's account. But the Lord also had to be faithful to Himself; He is holy, and a price must be paid for such vile disobedience in the one man He had selected to establish the eternal throne that would be assumed by Christ. Through Nathan God said to David "Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon" (2 Samuel 12:9). Was there a "way of escape," a "way out"? Of course! Before any of this had transpired, the moment he caught sight of the bathing woman he could have turned away—he could have fled from the temptation. God had provided the answer to the temptation, but David chose another path. Hence,

“...the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household: I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight’” (2 Samuel 12:10-11).

In this tragic yet avoidable situation, God was faithful to King David; but He also was faithful to His own holiness.

*who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,*

Here again we need to interpret this by heavenly terms, not by the soft indulgence of a fallen society. Most of us haven't a clue how much temptation or trial we are able to withstand, for we invariably give in during the earliest moments—as the writer to the Hebrews puts it.

**Read Hebrews 12:3-4.**

The writer goes on to put this in the context of learning through discipline: God's fatherly discipline. As Paul puts it to the Corinthians, we “endure” such trials and temptation, and thereby gain maturity.

**Read Hebrews 12:5-7.**

[Back to our text.](#)

Paul expresses two ways that God is faithful in such situations; that is, in the common trials and temptations of life—*not* those situations in which we are intentionally trying the Lord’s patience, as were those in Corinth dining in idol’s temples.

### **Breaking Point**

The first way is that He will not allow us “to be tempted beyond what [we] are able.” There is nothing wrong with the word “able” here; the KJVs, NASB, ESV (“ability”), and even YLT so translate the Greek *dynamai*. But I wonder if it doesn’t make it too easy for the well-meaning believer to say, “Oh, I can’t do that,” or “Oh, I can’t take it anymore!” where it comes to withstanding temptation, or enduring trials.

Read that again: “...**God** is faithful; **He** will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear,” (emphasis added) as the NIVs have it. Who is making the decision about our level of endurance? Certainly not us.

The late, venerable theologian Hans Conzelmann notes, “The measure of the bearable cannot be theoretically determined. It shows itself on each occasion in the measure God appoints.” So what is our responsibility? What should be our response when faced with temptation and trials? “A long obedience in the same direction.”

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

### **The Exit**

The second way in which God is faithful in these situations is in providing the means of “escape.”

**the/a way of/to escape**<sup>nasb, kjvs, esv</sup>, **a way out**<sup>nivs</sup>, **the outlet**<sup>ylt</sup> = *ekbasis* = from a compound of <G1537> (ek) and the base of <G939> (basis) (meaning to go out); **an exit** (literal or figurative) :- end, **way to escape**.

Let us first note the importance of the definite article “the” instead of the indefinite article “an.” That is (as in the Greek), with each specific temptation or trial, God is supplying the specific—i.e., appropriate to that moment—way out. Each—temptation and way out—is individualized. But there is another possible interpretation of the definite article.

Earlier, in the example of King David spying the bathing Bathsheba, I said that there was indeed a “way out”—i.e., turning away from the sight and going back inside his palace. But there is a better way to understand what is meant by *ekbasis*. Note what Paul is really saying here: “[God] will provide the way of escape also, *so that you will be able to endure it*” (emphasis added). Here is what David Guzik has to say about this:

*Guzik:* The way of escape does not lead us to a place where we escape all temptation (that is heaven alone); the way of escape leads us to the place where we may be able to bear it.

And John MacArthur concurs, who interprets the definite article to mean not a specific way of escape for each different situation, but that there is only one way out of any of them.

*MacArthur:* In other words, there is only one way. The “way of escape” from every temptation, no matter what it is, is the same: it is *through*. Whether we have a test by God to prove our righteousness or a test by Satan to induce sin, there is only one way we can pass the test. We “escape” temptation not by getting out of it, but by passing through it. God does not take us out; He sees us through by making us “able to endure it.”

We see this being played out in Christ’s temptation/testing in the wilderness. His Father could have, at any moment, lifted the Son out of the unpleasant situation. The Father could have flicked Satan away with a snap of His fingers. But He didn’t. Instead, the Father gave the Son the ability to *endure* all that He had to pass through. [Let’s return to the letter written by James.](#)

**Read James 1:2-4.** (*peirasmos* = trials or temptation)

In the next verse Paul will tell the Corinthians to “flee idolatry.” They have been tested through temptation, and they are failing the test. There is nothing new here: the situation is as familiar to us as it was to those in first-century Corinth, and it was as familiar to them as it was in the earliest days of Israel’s departure from Egypt. Notice how the word of the Lord to Israel in Deuteronomy fits so perfectly to the situation in Corinth—as well as today.

**Read Deuteronomy 13:1-3.**

Many members of the Corinthian church were listening to the wrong voices, and as a result, their faith—whether they realized it or not—was being eroded. Verse 13 does not speak of a magical “Get out of Jail Free” card that grants us the ability to avoid any and all temptations or tests—a secret doorway offering escape from any insistent temptation, or unpleasant trial.

Rather, the take-away from this verse for believers is that we have an extra blessing, a grace, from God that unbelievers do not. For both the saved and the unregenerate, temptation does not *cause* us to sin; we sin because of what is inside us. The temptation is only that—something tempting, enticing us to sin, but not *forcing* us to sin. The Christian, however, has something the unbeliever does not: God at his side. It is from Him—and Him alone—that we gain the ability to endure *through* the temptation or testing, which is something the unregenerate do not have.

As always, it is all of God.

v14

*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

Our examination of vv12-13 has caused us to dig into ourselves, our personal history of failures against temptation and trials. But v14 not only begins a new paragraph, it snaps us back to the present for the apostle: the context of first-century Corinth.

Why has Paul been saying all this? Because two things have been happening in the Christian community in Corinth:

1. They have been giving into the temptation to mix freely with the pagan society, even dining on meat sacrificed to idols *in their temples*.
2. They have been arrogantly (or, at least, ignorantly) tempting/testing God Himself, playing fast and loose with His grace, by seeing just how far they can go back into the pagan society and still call themselves “Christians.”

His command? *Stop it! Get out of those idol temples!*

Here is where we will begin in our next session.