Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Temptation and the Sovereignty of God
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10
Code: BQ81511

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, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

A Christian should recognize that victory is always available, because a believer can never get into temptation that he cannot get out of. For one thing, Paul explains, **No temptation has overtaken you but such as is Common to man**.

The basic meaning of **temptation** (*peirasmos*) is simply to test or prove, and has no negative connotation. Whether it becomes a proof of righteousness or an inducement to evil depends on our response. If we resist it in God's power, it is a test that proves our faithfulness. If we do not resist, it becomes a solicitation to sin. The Bible uses the term in both ways, and I believe that Paul has both meanings in mind here.

God's tests are never a solicitation to evil, and James strongly corrects those who suggest such a thing. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone" (James 1:13). "By evil" is the key to the difference between the two types of temptation. In the wilderness God tested Jesus by righteousness, whereas Satan tested Him by evil. A temptation becomes an inducement to evil only when a person "is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin" (James 1:14–15).

Earlier in his letter James wrote, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (1:2). The nouns *trials* (see also verse 12) and *testing* (v. 3) are from the same Greek root as the verb *tempted* in verses 13–14. The context indicates which sense is meant.

God often brings circumstances into our lives to test us. Like Job we usually do not at the time recognize them as tests, certainly not from God. But our response to them proves our faithfulness or unfaithfulness. How we react to financial difficulty, school problems, health trouble, or business setbacks will always test our faith, our reliance on our heavenly Father. If we do not turn to Him, however, the same circumstances can make us bitter, resentful, and angry. Rather than thanking God for the test, as James advises, we may even accuse Him. An opportunity to cheat on our income tax or take unfair advantage in a business deal will either prove our righteousness or prove our

weakness. The circumstance or the opportunity is only a test, neither good nor evil in itself. Whether it results in good or evil, spiritual growth or spiritual decline, depends entirely on our response.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus says that we should ask God not to "lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). "Evil" is better translated "the evil one," referring to Satan. In other words we should pray that God will not allow tests to become temptations, in the sense of inducement to evil. The idea is, "Lord, stop us before Satan can turn your test into his temptation."

Common to man is one word (*anthropinos*) in Greek and simply means "that which is human, characteristic of or belonging to mankind." In other words, Paul says there is no such thing as a superhuman or supernatural temptation. Temptations are human experiences. The term also carries the idea of usual or typical, as indicated by **common**. Temptations are never unique experiences to us. We can never have a temptation that has not been experienced by millions of other people. Circumstances differ but basic temptations do not. Even the Son of God was "tempted in all things as we are" (Heb. 4:15), and because of that "He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (2:18). And because temptations are common to us all we are able to "confess [our] sins to one another" (James 5:16) and to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). We are all in the same boat.

Not only are temptations common to men but **God is faithful**, **who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**. No believer can claim that he was overwhelmed by temptation or that "the devil made me do it." No one, not even Satan, can make us sin. He cannot even make an unbeliever sin. No temptation is inherently stronger than our spiritual resources. People sin because they willingly sin.

The Christian, however, has his heavenly Father's help in resisting temptation. **God is faithful**. He remains true to His own. "From six troubles He will deliver you, even in seven evil will not touch you" (Job 5:19). When our faithfulness is tested we have God's own faithfulness as our resource. We can be absolutely certain that He **will not allow** [us] **to be tempted beyond what** [we] **are able**. That is God's response when we pray, "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). He will not let us experience any test we are not able to meet.

But with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. The phrase **the way** is formed by the definite article and a singular noun. 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 to 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**.

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