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

The Danger of Overconfidence, Part 3
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13
Code: 1840

First Corinthians chapter 10, we're looking at verses 1 to 13 and considering what is a very important passage. And there's so much here, I kind of feel like I just don't know how to dive in because there's so much. And I want to tie it in with the other parts of 1 Corinthians, particularly this context, and yet there's so much in itself that I don't want to belabor that point. Basically we're going to center on verse 13. We've already covered the other verses pretty well in the last couple of weeks and verse 13 is the key. And the key word in verse 13 is the word "temptation."

Now when I mention the word "temptation," it doesn't leave a whole lot of mystery in anybody's mind. That is a very familiar word to the Christian and it's even a more familiar experience. We all understand the term "temptation." Whenever the word is used, you understand a certain thing and we all experience temptation, there's no question about that. But the Greek word, for you Greek students, peirasmos, the Greek word has no moral connotation at all. The Greek word isn't necessarily bad or good, it's strictly a neutral word and it means simply to test, or to try or to prove, or in the case of metal, to assay, a-s-s- a-y. To modern ears, you know, whenever you say the word "tempt" somebody automatically thinks of something bad, a seduction to evil, to seduce somebody into a sin. But the word itself in the Greek, the word that is used here has no moral connotation at all in itself, it simply means to test.

For example, in Matthew chapter 4 verse 1, it says, "And the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted," says the King James, "by the devil." Now if you take the word there simply to mean something bad, then you've got the Holy Spirit leading Jesus directly into something bad. What happened there was, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested. It was not to be a solicitation to evil, but it was to be a solicitation to good, to manifest the righteousness of Christ, to manifest the fact that He would not fall, that He would not sin and to give Him that confidence at the beginning of His ministry and to give the rest of the world that confidence that this was one who would not sin. The Holy Spirit used Satan to test Him, but the Holy Spirit did not want to seduce Him to evil but rather to test Him to prove His righteousness. You see the difference?

Now the Holy Spirit will bring into our lives tests to bring us to righteousness. Now watch...but Satan will want to turn those into temptations to solicit evil. And that's basically what we must understand about this word. For example, take the case of Job. God did not want Satan to make Job sin. God wanted Satan to test Job to prove Job's righteousness, right? So sometimes the test will even involve Satan. Sometimes God will even allow Satan to move in and to do things in our lives, but God's

design is always that we would come out righteous, not that we would be seduced into evil. The word simply means a test. For example, in Hebrews 11:17, it says "God...in effect it says...God tempted Abraham." That's the King James translation, but God didn't tempt Abraham. God didn't try to get Abraham to do something bad, God tested him and it refers to Genesis 22. God tested him by asking him to give his son Isaac on an altar and He was testing his faith, wasn't it? "Do you really believe Me? Do you really trust Me? Will you really obey Me at any price?"

Look at James 1:13 and we'll have to start there before we can back up because this is probably the most clear statement defining temptation. James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." Now here the word has a negative meaning and it is given a negative meaning only by the context. And you'll see that in a minute. The word peirasmosor the verb peirazogets its meaning from the context. If it's a negative context, then it is a negative or tempting meaning. If it's a positive context like God testing Abraham, it has a positive meaning toward righteousness. It depends on the source of it and the purpose of it. Now here, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God can't be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man." Now He does test us, doesn't He? God does test us because I just told you that it says in Hebrews 11:17 that God tested Abraham. And in the New Testament, Peter even says God will test us. But God does not solicit men to evil.

Now listen, but every man is tempted in the evil sense when he himself is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Now temptation to evil comes out of a man's lust, that's what James is saying, not from God. There's no contradiction here. Just because it says God tempted Abraham in Hebrews 11:17 and here it says God tempts no man, there isn't a contradiction, it's just two different uses of the term that's a neutral term. God solicited Abraham to righteousness, but your own lust solicits you to do evil, or tests you with a view toward falling, failure. It can have a bad or a good source, and consequently a bad or good view in mind and therefore it has a bad or a good connotation.

Now that you understand that is important. Back up in James and look at verse 2 of chapter 1. Here is the same comparison again...same term. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations," the old King James says. Now you say, "Wait a minute...count it all joy?" Oh yes, "Knowing this, the testing of your faith, or the tempting--same word--of your faith works patience and let patience have her...what?...perfect work." You say, "You mean there are some temptation that has perfection in mind?" That's right, same word exactly is used in verses 13 and 14, only in 13 and 14 it's used to bring about an evil result. In chapter 1 verse 2, 3 and 4, to bring about a righteous result. The word is neutral. Its meaning comes from its source. When you're tested by God, it's with righteousness in view. When you're tempted by your lust or by Satan, it's with unrighteousness in view. Now that's the meaning of the word.

In John 6 and verse 6, the very same word is used and it's referring to Jesus. In 6:6, "And this He said to test him, or tempt him," peirazoagain. And here again, it is not a solicitation to evil. In 2

Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5 it says, "Test yourselves, prove yourselves as Christians." And it doesn't mean draw yourselves into sin, it means draw yourselves into righteousness, examine yourselves, test yourselves, prove yourselves.

All right, to begin with then, whenever you see the word "temptation" in the Bible, realize this: it is a neutral word. It can be translated try, test, prove, assay or tempt. It gets its qualitative meaning, that is its moral value, from the context, from who is doing the testing and what the purpose of it is. Now that's just the beginning. That's an introduction. Now let's go back to 1 Corinthians and we'll see how this thing helps us to understand the thirteenth verse of the tenth chapter.

Now the Corinthians, remember, were enjoying their freedom in Christ. They had been set free from ceremonialism, in the Judaistic sense. They had been set free from the customs of pagan religion. They had been set free from the curse of the law. They had been set free from death, as it were, from sin's dominion, they had great liberty. As Paul called it, "The glorious liberty of the children of God." And in their freedom, they were really running their freedom to its limits. They were living it up. And so Paul writes 1 Corinthians 8, 9 and 10 in effect to say to them, "Look, I'm happy for your liberty, but there should be two things that govern your liberty. It's fine to exercise your freedom, but two things have to be kept in mind. There are two things that limit our liberty in Christ."

I have the freedom to do many things in the non-moral area, the neutral area as a Christian, but I limit those many things on two basis. Number one, don't offend somebody. If my liberty offends somebody else, then it's wrong. I may have the right to do certain things, but if that becomes an offense to somebody, I don't do it. Now that's his subject in chapter 9. You remember, Paul said, "I have a right to receive money from you, a right to ask for support from you, and even though that's my right, I don't ask it because I'm afraid it would offend some people so I set that right aside even though that's my liberty." And that's principle number one, I have liberty but I don't let my liberty offend somebody so I limit my liberty for the sake of love toward others.

Second principle, the second limiter on your liberty is will it disqualify you? If you continually indulge your liberty and you're free to do this and you're free to do that and all you're concerned about is your freedom, your freedom, your freedom and you run your freedom out to the very limits, you're liable to fall off into sin. You can say, "Well, I have the freedom to go and do a certain thing, the Bible doesn't forbid that. I have the freedom to..." But if you continually flirt around the edges of the system, running your liberty out as far as it will go, you're liable to fall off and fall into sin and be disqualified from usefulness. And chapter 10 illustrates that. Israel with all their assets, with all their liberties, set free from the bondage of Egypt, on their way to the promised land, they had everything going for them and because they lived too close to the edge of their liberty, they fell into sin. And you see where it lists their sin in verse 7, the sin of idolatry; in verse 8, the sin of immorality; in verse 9, the sin of testing God; in verse 10, the sin of complaining, griping and murmuring. And all of these sins disqualified them, they all died in the wilderness, as many as two million people died and only two of

the originals entered into the promised land. God says I can't use you to be a witnessing community for Me, I can't use you in the ministry of reaching the world as My witnessing nation, simply because you've fallen into sin...you are disqualified.

All right then, Israel was living too close to the edges. They kept longing for the former life. In chapter 9 the point is you can't offend your brother. In chapter 10 the point is you better be careful that you don't disqualify yourself by living so close to the edge of your liberty that you fall into sin and you can't be used in God's service. Now that's his illustration.

Now we're in that chapter 10 section. And Paul wants the Corinthians to see that they just can't continue to go to all the pagan festivals. I mean, they can do it. The Bible doesn't forbid it. But they just can't continue to expose themselves to these things, to constantly expose themselves to idolatry, to constantly...even though they're not involved, to constantly expose themselves to immorality that goes on without having it affect them sooner or later, without being eventually drawn into this thing. And so they have to be very careful.

Now having stated the illustration, he applies it. Let's look at the application in verses 11 to 13. I gave you the assets of liberty, the abuse of liberty, now here's the application. Verse 11, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples." Now stop there for a minute.

Everything that happened in Israel's life happened as an example to us, Paul says. So that you would learn that you could have all the blessings, you could be free, you could be in the unit of God's witnessing community under the headship of Christ as they were under the headship of Moses, you can be led by God, you can be guided by God, you can be fed by God and given water by God as they were. You can have all of those blessings and yet you can lose out by misuse of your liberty, you fall into sin. Even though you have freedom, you need to learn to temper that freedom and confine that freedom in order that you might really stay close to where God wants you to be and not get out on the fringes. All these things happened to Israel for an example to us, he says. Learn the lesson.

Listen, "They are written....back to verse 11...they are written for our admonition." Now we've talked about the word admonish, noutheteo, admonition, it simply means to counsel somebody to change their behavior in light of judgment. If you keep going the way you're going, you're going to get in trouble. You better change. So he says to the Corinthians, "All that I've been telling you about Israel is to help you to change. They're written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." That simply means the last dispensation. What happened to Israel is a model to those of us who live in this last day before Christ comes.

Learn your lesson, people. You can be blessed of God. You can be a part of the witnessing community and yet you can forfeit your usefulness to God, not your salvation--that's not the point

here. You can forfeit your usefulness to God, the prize of winning people to Christ. You can forfeit that by falling into sin because you've run your liberty too far.

And then he principle-izes the whole eleven verses. He takes that whole eleven verses and draws it into one principle, verse 12, "Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands take heed...what?...lest he fall." That's the principle. That's a timeless principle. It's in Proverbs, isn't it? Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. That's not anything new. And he's simply saying when you think you can handle it, like the Corinthians were so smug and so independent, they could pack up their liberty and take it anywhere and they wouldn't have to worry, he says you're in trouble. You better realize that just when you think you stand is just when you're ready to fall because you let your guard down.

I remember when I was in Israel and I was taken by the guide to see the Golan Heights on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. And the Golan Heights, G-o-l-a-n, are very famous because they are the sight where the Arabs originally were shooting down into the Galilean area and really causing havoc in the villages around Galilee. The Golan Heights are a cliff, like a mesa on the top and it overlooks the Sea of Galilee, like you the audience would be the entire Sea of Galilee area with all the villages and cities around, and the Golan Heights would be like up here, just like a sheer drop. And all the Arabs were on top of this thing just taking shots and hitting all these little villages night after night after night. This was part of the six-day war problem. And it even continued before and after.

And so the Israelis realized...and if they were ever going to get any security in the area of Galilee, they had to take over the Golan Heights. But how do you get up there? They couldn't seem to get their troops up there. It was very difficult. There wasn't any way to go. They had the whole thing guarded off and the places that weren't guarded were so sheer they couldn't get up. So they did a little strategy. They left a certain section unguarded...and they took us to that section, and you can still see the tracks there from what they did...a sheer area of the Golan Heights toward the south end of the Sea of Galilee, the Israelis at night took bulldozers and because the tanks couldn't get up the precipice, and the troops wouldn't go up there alone because they would be shot down, they had to have armament, and so the tanks couldn't get up there. So what they did was they begin to gouge the side of the hill out a little bit and then they took bulldozers and shoved the tanks up. And so they were just bulldozing tanks up the hill all during the night.

In the morning, there were tanks all over the place. And behind the tanks, troops. And in the morning, all of a sudden the Arabs awoke to find tanks overrunning the hill. The whole top of the Golan Heights was full of tanks and in came the Israeli Airforce and strafed the edge. And of course the Arabs all threw their guns in the air and took off for Damascus, you know, it was all over. I think I'll go see my mother-in-law, you know...off they went. And the Israelis pushed them back ten miles from the edge of the Golan Heights and said, "Now, that's fair, you can't shoot down on us anymore. We'll fight you on flat ground."

Well, what happened to the Arabs was they thought they were safe and they left a part unguarded. And that's precisely the principle. It's just when you think you're secure, you drop your guard, you're in trouble. Sardis in Revelation 3:3, Christ says to Sardis, "Watch or you're going to get overtaken," in effect. And they knew what He was talking about because in their history, Cyrus had attacked their city. They had an acropolis, a high place, all those cities had a high place, an acropolis, from where they defended their city. And it jetted out like a spur. And it seemed to be to Cyrus there was no way to take it. And so he offered a reward to any soldier in his army who could figure out a way to take the acropolis of Sardis.

And so one soldier stayed up all night watching and he noticed in a moonlit night that a soldier from Sardis had dropped his helmet inadvertantly. It fell off his head or was knocked off and it fell of the edge and tumbled down to the bottom of this spur. And so he watched how the soldier went down to get it. And as he watched, he knew that they knew a way down and a way back up. And he followed the path. And in the middle of the next night, he took of band of men and went right back up that path inside and opened the gate and the troops came in and conquered the city. Be on guard. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. That's the point.

You can be in the service of the Lord, just like Israel called to be a witnessing community, like the Corinthian church called to be a witnessing community, like you and I as Christians in this assembly called to be a witnessing community, but if we think we're secure, that's just when we're the most vulnerable because we stop leaning on the Lord. "Oh, I know so much, I've got so many Bible verses...and I know what I'm doing and I've got my theology straightened out and I've got control of things." That's just when you're vulnerable...when you stop leaning on Him, you stand in your own resources. My father always says, "You have to maintain that invisible means of support." You have to stay tied to the source of power.

Now let's look at verse 13 and see how it ties in. Now after all that warning, Paul closes with a very important...it's almost like a PS, or a footnote, it's somewhat disconnected and yet connected. The Corinthians are going to say, "Boy, Paul, you're telling us to cool it with our liberty, you're telling us to kind of wind things down and not get out on the fringes and kind of circumscribe our lives a little more and stay a little closer to the middle, and all of that, but listen, Paul, how we going to prevent being in temptation. You can't help it. No matter where you go or what you do, you're going to get into the thing. I mean, what's going to happen when we get out there and we're just trying to do what we ought to do and we get tempted, what's going to happen?"

So, he gives him a word of comfort here. "Hey," he says, "there's no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. God is faithful who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able but will with the temptation also make the way to escape that you may be able to bear it." You know why he says this? Not only to comfort them but, number two, to let them know that if they do fall into

sin, they can't blame their circumstances, right? There's two points in this verse. Number one, Corinthians, I know it isn't easy. Be comforted in the fact that you'll never get into something that you can't get out of. But, secondly, be aware of this, that if you get into something and you don't get out of it, whose fault is it? Your fault because God will always make the way out. So keep it in mind. Use your liberty, you're going to get into temptation, but God will provide a way out. But if you don't take that way, that's your fault.

Now let's look at verse 13 and take it apart and look at it in individual pieces. Now, "There hath no temptation taken you," stop right there. No temptation taken you. There's our key word again. How are we to understand its meaning? Well, let's just understand it in the broadest sense. There is no testing taken you, okay? Let's not give it an evil meaning right now, all right? Let's just take it as its..I mean, its neutral sense. There's no testing taken you. Maybe it's good, maybe it's bad. It could be either here.

Let me show you what I mean. I'll try to give you distinction that will help. To understand the word "temptation," as I said in the very beginning, you have to distinguish between a trial and a temptation in the sense of a good and an evil, okay? Now listen, external circumstances that you fall into provide a test. God will bring external circumstances into your life as tests. Right? Now think with me on this, I want you to stay with me. This isn't going to cover all the ground and this is going to introduce some thoughts that you won't be able to resolve this morning, you're going to have to think a little about it. I'm still thinking it through, so I'm giving...in fact, I'm thinking it through as I'm saying it, so, you know, love me in the process. External circumstances that we fall into provide a test. James 1:2, "Count it all joy when you peripipto, fall into many tests." They're external, they're not inside. We sort of fall into them. They're there.

For example, a financial shortage. That's a test, right? Too much month at the end of the money. Or maybe you've got a...you've got a three thousand dollar balloon payment on your house and you're balloon has busted and you don't know where your resources are. You've got a financial problem. Or you've got a medical bill that's desummated(?) all of your surplus and you're down to really living from hand to mouth. And you've got...that presents an external circumstance. That's not inside, that's outside.

Or on the other hand, a set back in plans. You've had great plans laid out for a certain thing and kablooie, the bottom fell out of your plans. That's an external...that's a test. And God allows those tests, doesn't He? Well, look at Job. Right, he had a financial shortage, didn't he? Lost everything. His plans all went awry. He got sick. All kinds of things. There's another one, disease or sickness, that's an external circumstance. Death, Job's family died, people have death in their families and their circle of friends and that's a test. A problem that doesn't have any solution. You have thought it out every way you can, there's no answer. That's a test, that's an external. Or maybe you're in a deal and you're in this particular deal and you've gotten involved in it and all of a sudden you find out

that somebody in this thing at the heart of the deal is a crook. Are you going to go through with it, a little shady thing? That's a test. Persecution...maybe you're maligned maliciously, gossiped against, murmured about, persecuted for your faith. That's an external test.

Or maybe you find yourself in a place where people are always sinning and you're always in a test. I always think of Joseph in the house of Potiphar. Do you know Joseph was under a test all the time he was there? It wasn't just when he got in the bedroom with Potiphar's wife and took off. That guy was in a test the whole time he was there, living in a pagan house. Or maybe you're in a situation like this, these are tests.

Now listen to me. When you take that external test and you internalize it, then it becomes a temptation when you internalize it and it kindles your lust and begins to entice you to do evil. For example, you say I'm in a financial shortage. First thought is, "Lord, this is great. What an exciting time for You to reveal Yourself. Terrific." However, I could...I could take a few more deductions on my income tax and help the Lord out a little bit, uh-huh. See, now your test has become a temptation. Why? Because instead of leaving it externally and giving it to the Lord, you have internalized it and it's kindled your lust. Or maybe you've had a set back in your plans and you say, "Lord, how glorious You're going to change my plans, what do You have for me." On the other hand, "Why me, God? Why is it my plans..oh no, what am I going to do?" You've internalized that thing, you've allowed it to become a solicitation to an evil thought and its become a temptation. See, that's what it's talking about.

When it talks about the difference between a test and a temptation in the Scripture, one is an external opportunity for you to grow but it easily can be translated into a internal solicitation for you to do evil. When you respond to a trial or a test with an internal solicitation to evil, it has become a temptation. Now listen, it isn't sin yet. Temptation isn't sin. Sin is sin. Right? Temptation isn't sin. But you can't go from a trial to a sin without going through a what? A temptation first. So if you can hang in there on the trial, you're going to be a lot better off. So God will bring a test, God will never bring a temptation. God will bring a test into your life, an external circumstance, putting some pressure on you to stretch your spiritual muscle, and God wants you to grow by it. But if you internalize that thing and let it become a solicitation to do evil, you know what's done that? Not God, James 1:14. a man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own what? Lusts and enticed. You've internalized God's test for your growth and turned it into solicitation for evil. Now there is still time to grab it and stop it and let it be a process of growth.

You see, that's why Paul says to Timothy, "Flee youthful lust." He doesn't say flee temptation because, you know, that would be all right, but he says flee lust because lust is the key that unlocks temptation.

Let me give you another thought. Look at Matthew 6:13 and maybe all this stuff will come together in your mind, too. Matthew 6, this is the Lord teaching His disciples how to pray. This is real practical stuff. But I want to just look at verse 13, one verse. And I used to wonder about this, "And lead us not into temptation." When I was younger, I used to think...that is a strange prayer because it assumes something. If I have to ask God not to lead me into temptation, what is it assuming? That God is going to lead me into temptation if I don't ask Him not to. "God, oh please, don't lead me into temptation." I used to think, "Well, what is it? Why would I ask Him to...He's not going to do that." James 1:13, "God tempts no man," right? He's not going to lead me into something evil. Oh, I know, it must mean testing here, right? It must...it must not mean an evil but, "God, do not lead me into testing to make me strong." That doesn't make it either. There's a strange problem with this verse. It can't mean either one.

You say, "What does it mean, John?" This is what it means, listen, the prayer is this, "Lord, stop me at the point where my trial is still a trial and don't ever let it become a temptation I can't handle." Did you get that? Stop me at the point where my trail is still a test and doesn't turn into a temptation that will lead me into sin. That's the idea. And that's proven by the next statement which is an equal statement, a parallel statement, "But, deliver us from tu(?) poneros, the evil one. Write that in if it doesn't say that. Deliver us from the evil one, Satan. Lord, don't let my test become an opportunity for Satan to wipe me out. That's the idea. Pray that God intervenes. Do you ever pray that? "Lord, I'm in a test...O God, I'm leaning on You, I'm defenseless and I want You to make sure this thing doesn't become a temptation I can't handle."

So, whether the flesh as James says is activated or whether Satan as Jesus emphasizes here is activated, the temptation is not the work of God in its evil sense. He allows the test to strengthen us, the temptation is when the test gets twisted into an internal solicitation to evil by Satan or our own flesh. You know what the idea in the Christian life is? Keep your tests tests, right? Paul DeKorte and I were talking about this, you didn't know I was going to use you in an illustration, Paul. We were talking about this and...the other night at dinner...and he said, "You know, the other day at work, he was leaving work and there was a stack of money on a desk. And he looked at that money and thought--what's that money doing on the desk?" Just cash, apparently, right? And he immediately picked that cash up and walked over to another office and said, "Here is some money that was left on the desk. I don't know why it was there but I better give it to you because somebody might take it. What was it doing there?" And he said, "Oh, I left it there to test you." Oh, nice guy.

Well, you know, what Paul said to me, he said, "You know what, it never became a temptation for me," he said. "I didn't even think about it, I just picked it up and took it and...it wasn't, it never got past..." And, you know, that's what it ought to be. If you're...if he stands there and says, "I should give that to the man, on the other hand, I am a little short...and Stephen does go through those tennis shoes, ha, fast. Oh no, I would never do that, I wouldn't want to do it. Oh well, I could take just half of it...Oh no, I wouldn't do that." Well, now his test has become a temptation because he's internalizing

the opportunity and his lust is activated. On the other hand, pick it up and say, "Hey that test just remained a test." Now that's a simple way to say that in the Christian's life you're a lot better off if you let your tests be tests and don't turn them into temptations cause then it gets tough. Then the war is on.

Now that's what he's saying. There are going to be tests, 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13, there are going to be tests. We might as well get ready for that. And the idea is not to let those tests become temptation. There...now watch what he says...there's no testing or temptation that takes you but such as is common to man. You ever heard the word "anthropology" the study of man, the Greek word anthropos?" This is anthropinos(?), human. Listen to this, there is no temptation take you but such as is human. The Corinthians may have been saying, "Oh, you know, our temptations are supernatural." Paul says baloney. You know you never had anything but a human temptation? You can't say, "Lord, I'm trying but I have these super human temptations. You know, you hear people today say, "Oh, I wouldn't have done it myself but the demons did it to me," as if they were totally helpless and they were oppressed by a super human being. Listen, you will never have any temptation or testing in your life that is anything other than human. That's all. Nothing super human. And you want to know something? You're not going to have anything different than I go through and I'm not going to go through anything different than you go...we're all in the same thing, aren't we? Human, common to man, characteristic of human kind.

You want to hear something kind of startling? Did you know that even the temptations of Jesus were never anything more than human? That's all. Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15 says, in a sense, "He was in all points tempted like...what?...we are." He never had a temptation above the human realm. You know why? You can't tempt God. He could only be tempted in his humanness. In James 1:13 it says, "God cannot be tempted with evil." So Jesus didn't have super human temptations. He had the very same ones you and I have and that's why He's a faithful high priest, able and willing to succor those that are tempted. Cover the same ground we have.

You know why it says in James 5:16, "Confess your sins one to another"? Because we're all in the same boat. And it's helpful to know that we have the same problems, according to Galatians 6:2, we can bear one another's burdens, right? People say, "Oh, I don't...I don't want to confess what I've done, it might shock you." I hear people say that to me. "I would never say what I've done, it might shock you." Shock me? What's to shock me? You've done something no one else has ever done? You've got a new one? You've got a different temptation? I've been there. Join the human race, there is no temptation that isn't just plain common to man. Even Jesus went through them, they're all the same, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life, and we've all got the same one. And that's what the life of the believers within the body means. We share with one another. We pour out our hearts to one another. We bear one another's burdens. We confess our sins to one another so that we can hold each other up...cause we're all the same thing.

So, he says to the Corinthians, number one, you'll never face anything superhuman so don't say, "Well, I couldn't help it, I got into a deal that was sort of super human and it was beyond me to handle." No, no, no. There never will be a temptation that isn't just a human thing. And listen to me, people, if it's a human temptation and you have a divine resource, you can always handle it, right? Because, "Greater is He that is...what?...in you than he that is in the world." So you never have to feel, "Well, I couldn't help it, I got into this thing and oh, it overwhelmed me." No. It's all human, just human.

On the other hand, there's another thought there and that is that you can't blame God. Temptation is inevitable and with our humanness it's going to come. But it's something that we can handle, we can't blame Him for letting us get tempted beyond the human capacity.

All right...now we've seen some things. No temptation takes us but what is just human. Now here comes the great transition and the great key to the whole verse, "But God is faithful. Oh what a super thought. You know what that means? God keeps HIs promise, right? God keeps His promise. Deuteronomy, read it, chapter 7 verses 9 and 10, it's all it says there, "The faithful God, He is called, who keeps His promise and His mercy." Lamentations 3:23, "Great is Thy faithfulness." Psalm 89, "Your faithfulness reaches the heavens." Psalm 36, "Your faithfulness reaches the clouds." The Bible just goes on and on about God's faithfulness. It's one of the great themes of the New Testament. First Corinthians talks about it. First Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful." First Thessalonians 5:24, again, "God is faithful." So many places. Job says in chapter 5 verse 19, "He shall deliver thee out of six troubles, yea out of seven," and that's the idea of completion in the Hebrew mind. He's going to take care of everything. He's faithful.

You say, "Well, what does that have to do with the verse?" Now watch. He is faithful, look at the verse, verse 13, "Who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are...what?...able." Do you know why...I'm glad God's faithful. You know what that means? He keeps His Word. God said I love you, does He mean it? Will He keep it? Yeah. God says I've saved you and I've prepared a place for you. Did He mean it? Yes. Will He keep His promise? Yes. God says you'll never be given a temptation you can't handle. Did He mean it? Yes. Will He keep His promise? Yes. Boy, that's exciting. Think about it.

You want to know something? First Corinthians 10:13 is the answer to the prayer in Matthew 6:13. "Lead us not into temptation," don't ever let us have trials that could turn into temptations we couldn't handle and here Paul says He never will. He never will. He will never let you get into a trial that could become a temptation you couldn't handle.

I'm going to illustrate that to you. Look at John 18. Now the disciples are standing around. They're...this time they're bewildered, they're confused. They don't understand what's going on.

Jesus keeps talking about death. Judas has betrayed Him. It's been a very sad night at the upper room. They're now in the garden of Gethsemane. And the soldiers and officers and chief priests and Pharisees come with lanterns and torches and weapons in verse 3 of John 18. And Jesus is ready. And they all arrive. And here's the chief guy out front and Jesus says, "Whom do you seek?" In verse 5, they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." And the implication is they read their orders...Jesus of Nazareth. All right, He says, "I am He."

Verse 7, after they got up off the ground, they fell over as a result of that. He says in verse 7, "Whom seek ye?" second time and they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." He answered, "I told you, I am He." Now what He was doing was having them two times state the boundaries of their orders. They had been sent to take one person and that was all. Then He says, "If therefore," verse 8, "you seek Me, let these go their way." Don't lay a hand on these, My followers, the eleven disciples.

Why did He not let them get captured, too? The next verse. "That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke of them whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none." Do you know something? Some of them would have totally lost their fate if they had been captured then. Some of them would have fallen down flat. They would have been spiritually defunct. They would have wiped out. So, Jesus says they aren't ready to handle this. You can't touch them. He never let those guys get into a trial that would bring out a temptation that they couldn't handle.

Do you want to know something interesting? Out of those eleven, as best we know from church history, ten of them died as martyrs. One of them in exile. All of them went through the persecution, the imprisonment, the martyrdom that Jesus kept them from but they didn't go through it until they were ready to handle it. Do you understand that? This is one of the great illustrations of the personal attention that Jesus gives His own. And when it says that He will never let you get into a trial that could turn into a temptation that would bring you into sin because you couldn't handle it, then that's exactly what it means. Boy, that's exciting, isn't it? He'll never let me get into a situation that I don't have the resources to handle.

You say, "Well what happens when we sin a lot?" It's because we don't take advantage of those resources, right?

Now notice...go back to 1 Corinthians and we're going to hurry a little bit, we've got to finish..."But will with the temptation also make...notice...THE WAY to escape." Now underline THE WAY. It's a definite article in the Greek. THE WAY to escape. You know what my Bible, when I was a kid, said, "a way of escape." And I used to think, "Boy, I wonder what the way out of this one is." And every different temptation must have a different way. Well, you want to know something? There is THE way. Did you know...and this might be a little revolutionary so stay with me...do you know that THE way out is the same with every temptation? Oh yeah...no matter what it is. Every single trial that has turned into a temptation has the same way out.

Now listen to me. Every single trial itself has the same way out. If I'm in a test, there's only one way out. If I'm in a temptation, there's only one way out. It's the same for every test and every temptation, whether it's a solicitation on God's part to good, or whether it's a solicitation on the part of the flesh and Satan to evil, it always has the same way out. Just the same...definite article, there's always the same way out. You know what it is? Are you ready for this? You ought to know this cause there's only one, the way out is through. Did you get that? Oh no, you say. Yes, tempt...you see, testing is a tunnel. The only way out is through. You know how you do it? You endure, right? That's all.

Just to illustrate. You know how we pray...we say, "O Lord, my dear friend's going through a trial. Lord, teach him what You want him to know. Lord, take him through until he learns what he needs to know and bring him out." That's good. But when it's us, we say, "Lord, get me out of this thing, now." Right? So it's a whole different ballgame. But there isn't any getting out of it now, a...trials are tunnels. And the only way out is through. That's all. Notice that's what it says. "He will with the temptation make THE way to escape that you may be able to...what?...endure it." That's the way to escape, enduring.

You know how Jesus escaped when the devil came to Him and really put the test on Him? What did He do? He took the full force of it right out to the end, right? He didn't say, "Father, I'm leaving," and start flying and fly to another hill. No. He stayed there and Satan unloaded all three of those things with the total force of all there was. The only way to escape is to go through, that's to endure. So when you get a trial, folks, just realize that at the beginning, will you? This is a test from God. And the only way to let the test have its perfect work is to go through the thing. Look at the word there that says "bear." It has a preposition connected with it, the verb part means to carry and hupothe preposition means under. You are under and you're going to have to go the whole way. It's like the word "endurance," hupomone, to remain under. The only way you can go through is to remain under the thing and let it have its work and let it strengthen. The way out is through.

You say, "All right, John, I understand that God's going to bring tests and Satan's going to try to turn them into temptations, solicitation to evil and my flesh will do that. And God will be faithful and He will never let me get into one that I can't handle. But I have to realize that the only way I'm going to be able to handle this thing is to realize I've got to go through it and that I've got to endure.

Now how do I endure? Now you get down to the nitty-gritty. How do you endure? I'm going to give you three keys. Number one, pray. "Watch and pray," Mark 14:38 says, "lest you enter into...what?...temptation." Your test can turn into a temptation if you don't pray. Boy, I tell you, the first thing that happens in a trial, what is it? What do you do? The first thing you do when you get a test or a trial? Pray...God, I'm defenseless, Lord, lead us not into temptation, don't get me into a situation I can't handle. Father, deliver me from the evil one. Lord, I lean on You. I must have Your strength." Watch and pray lest you enter into this thing.

All right, he says, let your trial be a trial. And let it continue to be a trial, don't let it turn into a temptation and a solicitation to sin. And to do that, you've got to pray, you've got to give it to God. Number two, you have to trust. You have to trust. You say, "What do I have to trust?" You have to trust that God has sent you the trial for a great purpose, right? To strengthen you. Like Peter says, after you have suffered a while, 1 Peter 5:10, God's going to make you perfect. And he says in verse 9 there, "Resist the devil, steadfast in faith." Faith in what? That God has a purpose. Boy, here comes the trial. Here comes the trouble. Here comes Satan and all of this thing and I'm believing God in His purpose. If you can just let that stay external and say God has a purpose in this, O God, I give You that trial, I ask You to take care of me in it and I trust Your purpose in it and I'm going through. That's the way out. And you get down, you look back and you say, "Whoo, I feel strong." A new lesson, strengthened, a perfect work is done. If you collapse in the middle, you've blown it.

The third point, pray, trust and focus on Christ. You know who was the greatest that ever lived in enduring temptation? And enduring trials? Who? Christ...the greatest. He could take these tests and endure them right to the limit. He was tested by Satan. Tested and tested and tested and tested and tested and tested and you know what I've always said? I've always said that He had the worst tests because He never fell at any point so He ran them all out to the end. In Hebrews 12:3 and 4, it says, "Hey, when you get weary and tired, remember Christ, will you? You haven't yet resisted striving unto blood." You're not dead yet. If you think you've got it rough, remember Him. Remember what He endured.

To sum it up, beloved, is simple. You're going to have tests. They're going to come in your life. Just keep them tests, will you, and don't let them become temptations. And to do that you have to endure. And to endure, you pray and you trust God's purposes and you lean on Jesus Christ and focus on what He went through.

Now let me give you an illustration to show how this works. Now I like Pilgrim's Progressand this has a great illustration of it. Paul Sailhamer and I were discussing it the other day. Christian and Hopeful are on their merry way to the Celestial City down the King's Highway. And they get diverted. And they're laying in a field sleeping. The only problem is the field is private ground, it belongs to the Giant of Despair. He's called Giant Despair. And he lives in Doubting Castle. And this great Doubting Castle and Giant Despair, Giant Despair comes out of his castle and finds Christian and Hopeful asleep and grabs them and throws them in a dungeon. So Christian and Hopeful are in a slimy smelly dungeon, locked behind a series of bars, a whole series of them.

And the giant comes down, and the giant's wife is always telling him what to do. The giant comes down and beats them up and beats them up. Doesn't kill them but beats them up so much they want to kill themselves. That's a great definition of despair, isn't it? And so they languish...this is a trial. And they're in despair and doubt. And Christian finally says, "What a fool I am to lie in this stinking

dungeon," says to Hopeful. "When I may as well walk at liberty. I have a key in my bosom that will open any lock in Doubting Castle." And he reaches in and he pulls out this key and it's got "promise" written on it. And he takes the key of promise and he unlocks the bars and he goes to the next and unlocks, the next, unlocks, all the way till he unlocks the final gate and walks out and the giant's running down this deal after him.

Now what is John Bunyan saying? John Bunyan is saying this, you're going to have trials in life and if you let those trials turn into temptation, you're going to end up in the Doubting Castle under the key...under the lock of Giant Despair. But you know what will get you out of that? The knowledge of God's...what? Promises...the knowledge of God's promises. To know that God has a purpose, that God is faithful, that God's going to bring you through, that God's going to do a perfect work, that God will never leave you alone, that there's no temptation taken you but will have a way out and that way is through. What those promises do is unlock doubt and despair.

So, when we abuse our liberty and our trials turn into temptations, none of them is ever more than we can handle. What a promise. But if we fall, nobody to blame but ourselves. Let that be a comfort and let it be a warning.

Father, thank You for our look at Your Word this morning. And we've really just introduced some thought in a very provocative area. Help us to realize that we can't always tell why things happen the way they do, but help us to realize, Father, that You're bringing things to pass in our life not to draw us into sin but to do the very opposite. And when we are drawn into sin, we have perverted that thing which You've brought in our lives to perfect us. We thank You for the lessons learned in that. Teach us, Father, further as we study and think on these things, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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