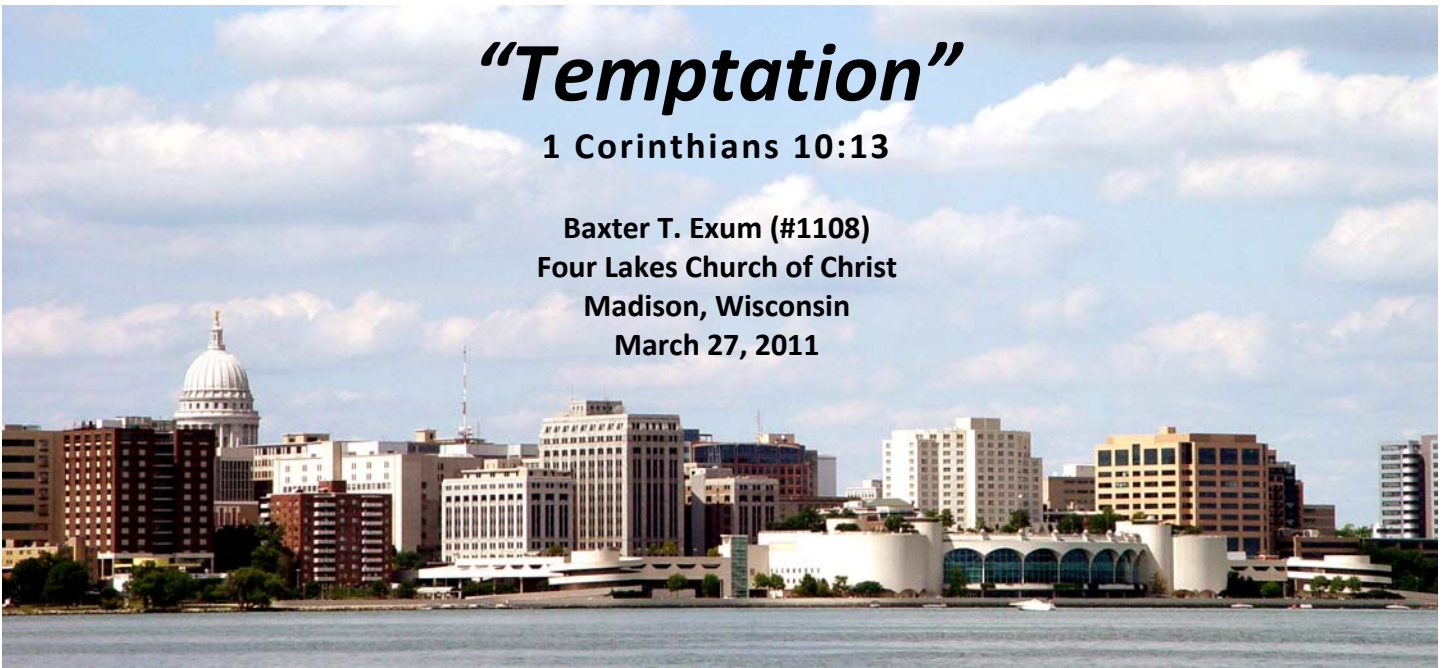


# ***“Temptation”***

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

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Have any of us been tempted at some point over this past week? We know that a temptation is simply a test, and so in that regard a temptation does not necessarily need to be bad. We may be tempted to go for the flavor of the day at Culver’s, for example, and that may not be a bad thing. But I am not, of course, referring to frozen custard. Over this past week, have we been tempted to do something that we know is wrong? Have we been enticed to sin? Have we been tempted to cross a line that God has told us not to cross?

This morning I would like for us to study a verse of the Bible that is regularly listed as a favorite verse by several members of this congregation. The passage is 1 Corinthians 10:13 (p. 1793). The verse comes right after a paragraph where the apostle Paul was telling the Christians in Corinth to be careful and to learn from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness. The Israelites grumbled and whined and complained and then they fell in the wilderness. They thought they were too strong to fall, but they fell. Paul, then, turned to the church in Corinth and had to remind them to be careful, ***“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall”*** (verse 12). And with that, we come to 1 Corinthians 10:13, the word of God through the apostle Paul. The Scripture says, ***“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, so that you will be able to endure it.”***

Wouldn’t that be an awesome verse to memorize? What an amazing promise! And so we are talking, this morning, about temptation. And as we study, I would like for us to carefully consider several very basic ideas from this verse that has been named as favorite by several of our members.

I. **And the first thing we notice in this passage is that when it comes to temptation, WE ARE NOT ALONE!**

As Paul said, ***“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man.”*** Of course, when we’re in the middle of it, sometimes we think to ourselves, “Well, nobody has ever been in this exact situation. I mean, the pressure is on, this is horrible.” Or maybe you say, “But you don’t know my boss! You don’t know my kids! You don’t understand how they can really push my buttons! If you only know how they behave once we get home, you would see why I get so angry. Oh, and you don’t know my wife! She’s a real piece of work! I mean, when we get into it, you cannot imagine the kind of person she turns in to. And you have no idea what

I'm going through!" Or maybe a teenager looks at her mother and says, "But you just don't understand!" And it is true that each of us has our own unique struggles. All of us have our own challenges. But what is the same is that all of us have problems. All of us face temptations. And if we're honest about it, we would realize that the temptations we are facing are really not that different from the temptations that everybody else is facing. We all have our own struggles, but I can guarantee you that no matter what sin you are tangled up in right now, you are not the only one to be there! Now, that does not give any of us a free pass, but it means that there is help and support available.

In fact, not only are we not alone in terms of our Christian family and even the rest of our friends and neighbors, but what we may sometimes forget is that the Lord Himself was tempted. In fact, as we learned in our Scripture reading this morning, the Bible says in Hebrews 4:15 that **"...we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."** So, not only are we not alone, but Jesus has also been tempted just as we are now being tempted.

But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, **"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man."** In fact, I think it would be pretty safe to say that all of the sins in existence today were in existence when Jesus was alive...in fact, even when King Solomon was alive. As Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10, **"That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, 'See this, it is new'? Already it has existed for ages which were before us."** I think we find from the Scriptures that sin has always been the same. The temptation of jealousy is the same today as it was 3,000 years ago when the book of Ecclesiastes was first written. The temptation of lust is the same today as it was when it conquered King David. The temptation of wanting what we do not have is the same today as it was way back in the Garden of Eden. The same can be said of anger, drunkenness, and adultery, because temptation has always been the same. There are no new sins. In other words, as we go through life, we cannot go around saying, "Well, my situation is unique, nobody has ever faced this before, I have a special circumstance here, so I have an excuse." But no! We cannot say that!

Or maybe we tell ourselves that we are the only ones, and one of the special dangers here is that we don't reach out for help from our brothers and sisters in the church. Maybe we think to ourselves, "Wow, I am really messed up! And probably nobody I know has ever had such an evil thought." And maybe those thoughts cause us to try to take care of the problem by ourselves, and maybe we try to go it alone.

However, if Satan can get us to think that we are all alone, that nobody understands, and that we are too bad to reach out for help, then he has us exactly where he wants us—he has cut us off from our only means of support—and then there is truly only a very slim chance of ever surviving that temptation. But Paul reminds us this morning that **"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man."** Or, as one of my preaching friends in Tennessee likes to say, "You are not a Lone Ranger facing sin!" We are not alone.

II. **There is a second basic idea in this verse that should be very encouraging to us (some really good news), and the good news is: WE HAVE A PROMISE FROM GOD THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW US TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT WE ARE ABLE TO BEAR.**

Or, as we might say, God knows our limits, and God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to withstand. God is on our side—not just when we are sitting in church thinking good thoughts on a Sunday morning—but God is on our side even when we are tempted to do what is wrong. God is on our side, and He is protecting us. He is shielding us from being tempted beyond what we are able to bear.

Some people, of course, have misunderstood God's promise here in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Some people have said, "Well, I just couldn't resist that temptation. I had to give in, and so apparently God has failed in some way." But no! That's not how it works! God has never said that He will step in and physically prevent us from doing anything wrong, but He has promised to be with us. He has promised that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. God has promised that no temptation is so great that we will be unable to turn it down. In fact, Peter specifically says in 2 Peter 2:9 that **"...the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation...."** Not only that, but in Hebrews 2:18, the Bible speaks of Jesus and says, **"For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."** So, as we find ourselves seemingly trapped in some situation where we are being tempted to do something that we know is wrong, let's remember the promise: God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. God knows our limits, and whatever our limit is, this is not it! Whatever we face, we have God's promise that it is within our power to handle it. Nothing we face is so big that we can't handle it (especially when we figure God into the equation).

In a slightly similar way, we as parents often know what our children are able to bear. And so if I go to Menard's with my 10-year old daughter, chances are I will not go pick up an 80 pound bag of concrete and toss it in her direction for her to catch. But I know that that would be beyond her limit. That is something that she might not be able to handle. However, I can have her help me lift a 40-pound bag, and I know that that is something that we can handle together. Now, the difference is that God is not the one sending temptations, but He is still able to protect us. God knows our limit, and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.

Unfortunately, even as Christians, sometimes we try to push that limit. And so perhaps we get right there to what we think might be the edge, and then we are surprised when we fall over the edge. I remember hearing about a little boy who asked his dad if he could go swimming. The dad said no, but as the young man walked out the door, the dad said, "Hey, why do you have your swim suit tucked under your arm?" And the young man said, "Well, I'm taking these with me in case I get tempted." But you see, that's not the way it works! We may not know our limit. We may not know the exact point where we may get in over our heads in some situation. God, however, does know our limit, and He has promised not to allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. As Paul says, **"God is faithful."** Let us thank God for that!

**III. As we look back at our text for this morning, there is at least one other very basic concept I would like for us to consider, and that is: GOD WILL ALWAYS PROVIDE A WAY OF ESCAPE.**

Not only are we not alone, and not only will God protect us from anything we can't handle, but here we have the rock-solid guarantee that God will always provide us with a way out. He will always provide us with a way of escape. God will not take us by the hand and show us that way of escape. The way of escape may not be very obvious. The way of escape may not even be very pleasant from our point of view. In fact, the way of escape may be difficult to find, there may even be some sacrifice involved, but God has promised that it will always be there.

It seems that history repeats itself. Back in the 50's and 60's, a number of children were suffocated when they accidentally locked themselves in abandoned refrigerators. You may remember those old refrigerators and how they used to actually latch. Eventually, congress passed a law requiring that refrigerators had to be escapable from the inside. And then you might remember several years ago how a number of children were playing in the trunks of cars and were getting trapped in there and dying from the heat. Eventually, some changes were made, and as far as I know, all new cars are now required to have an escape latch on the inside

of the trunk. The one in our car actually glows in the dark. Perhaps we can make a comparison here. As we are tempted, we are trapped in that trunk, but there is a way out! That escape latch is in there somewhere, and it is up to us to find it. The situation may seem hopeless, we may find ourselves in some very difficult situations, but there is always a way of escape.

Sometimes the way of escape may be rather simple: taking a different route home at night, changing the channel, turning off the TV. But other times the way of escape may be more drastic: changing careers, checking in with a doctor for help in breaking a habit, moving to a new city to avoid the same old group of friends that may be pulling us in the wrong direction. Remember Mr. Miagi's advice: The best block is not being there when the punch comes! So, there are times when we can take the way of escape even before the temptation hits.

If we have a weakness for alcohol, we probably should not walk into a bar and order a drink and then sit there at the bar wondering where the way of escape is! Sometimes the way of escape simply involves walking out the door. If you have your Bibles open to 1 Corinthians 10:13 (and I hope that you still do), let's just look at the very next verse. Yes, God will provide a way of escape, and then Paul says, ***"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."*** Sometimes the way of escape just involves running. If we are tempted, let's just get out of there. To avoid being tempted by that attractive woman at the office, don't spend time alone together. Don't talk about how stressful your marriage is. Don't even go there! Take the escape hatch! In those situations, let's do what Joseph did. In the book of Genesis (in Genesis 39), Joseph was mistreated and abused and sold into slavery hundreds of miles away from home in the land of Egypt. He was ultimately given a very important position in the Egyptian government. He was promoted and given the responsibility of serving as the personal assistant to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard (basically the head of the Secret Service, as we might say today). The account of Joseph is found in Genesis 39 (p. 65), a very important example of how to handle temptation. I would encourage you to turn with me there to consider a brief case study concerning how to find the way of escape. In Genesis 39, we pick up with verse 6, where we find that Potiphar...

***<sup>6</sup>...left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. <sup>7</sup> It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." <sup>8</sup> But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. <sup>9</sup> "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" <sup>10</sup> As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. <sup>11</sup> Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. <sup>12</sup> She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.***

What an amazing example! And yet if we were to read the next few verses and the next few chapters, we would find that Joseph was abused for making that decision. But you know what? He never sinned. Joseph made the difficult decision. He found that narrow way of escape. He found that latch in the trunk, and he took that way out that God has promised to all of us here this morning. Satan wants us to think that there is no way out, but we know better. We know that Satan is the father of lies. But the lesson in verse 13 is that no

matter what temptation we are facing, the way of escape will be provided. At no time are we ever forced to sin, but rather, sin is a choice. Sin is the result of not taking the way of escape that God has provided.

Ultimately, what we are talking about here this morning is a matter of faith, faith that God knows what is best for us. Several years ago, I talked to a friend of mine who got back from a trip to Africa (Kenya), and what impressed him on that trip was seeing the impala, which is apparently a kind of antelope. This man explained that in the wild, the impala can jump 10 feet high for a distance of 30 feet. They are some strong and amazing creatures. Well, you would think that it would be pretty difficult to contain an impala. However, zookeepers have learned that impalas will not jump where they cannot see. In other words, if they cannot see where they're going to land, that jump is not going to happen! Zookeepers, therefore, can contain an impala with nothing but a 3-foot fence! You see, impalas are only 3-feet tall, and if you just block their view, they will not jump. Aren't we as Christians just a little bit like that sometimes? If we do not clearly see what will happen as the result of our decision, we won't jump. But the promise is out there: God has told us that He will always provide a way of escape. We cannot see the long-term solution, but God can. And as our text this morning has promised, God will always give us a way out.

### **Conclusion:**

As we read in our Scripture reading this morning, yes, Jesus has been tempted as we are, but there is more to it than that. The Bible goes on to say, ***“Therefore [that is, because of this], let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*** And so we find that prayer is involved in finding the way of escape. Because Jesus knows what we are going through, we can go to Him in confidence, knowing that the Lord is able to help. This week, then, let us pray 1.) That we would be able to find the way of escape that God has provided, and 2.) That we would have the courage to take it. And then let's also pray this prayer for each other. As I've said many times, I have no idea the struggles that all of you are facing during the week. You may or may not know my struggles, but we can pray for each other. We can encourage each other. In just a moment, we plan on singing a song to one another as the Bible tells us to do, a song about temptation. And as we sing that song, I would encourage all of us to prayerfully think about the struggles we may be facing this week, let's think about God's promise, let's think about the changes we need to make in our own lives, let's think about how we can encourage each other, and above all, let us thank God for Jesus.

I am certainly thankful to those of you who asked for this lesson on one of your favorite verses. Thankfully, God understands our weakness, and through His amazing mercy, the Lord has provided a way for us to restore our relationship even after we've sinned. Even after we have turned away from God, even after we have ignored that way of escape, the Lord is still there, and He still invites us to come back. Based on the death of Jesus on the cross, we respond to God's love by changing the way we think about sin. We then make a commitment to always look for the way out. It's there! We just need to find it! And once we have made that decision, we faithfully obey the Lord by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our past sins. At that point, our sins are covered by the blood of Christ, and we start to live a fresh new life. If you have any interest in making things right with God, that is why all of us are here this morning—to encourage each other and to encourage you to obey the good news. If you have any questions, let us know. But if you are ready to make things right with God, you can let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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