

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Retired Pastor Dennis Pelley's Message of May 17, 2009
"A Way Out"**

[This is an expository sermon on 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. We have all heard verse 13 quoted many times, and often it's misinterpreted, taken way out of context and misapplied. This message explains the passage in context and suggests that often the "way out" of a temptation or trial is "through" it.]

[Topics: Testing; Trials; a Way Out; A way of Escape; Endure It; Stand up Under It]

Excerpt: When we experience excessive stress, a bodily reaction is triggered that psychologists call the "fight or flight" response. This response is hard-wired into our brains and corresponds to an area of our brain which – when stimulated – initiates a sequence of nerve cell firing and chemical release that prepares our body for running or fighting.

The natural human response to stress or a conflict is to fight or to run away from it. However, neither of these options is good when it comes to the area of relationships – whether that be our relationship with God, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers or whom ever. There's a third option – a better way.

In 1st Corinthians, Paul appealed to the church at Corinth to patch up their divisions. He reminded them they were united by Jesus Christ. Then he addressed specific issues of division – marriage, order in the church, competition over spiritual gifts, and whether they should eat food or not that had been previously offered to idols. He asked them to use their freedom carefully, to be considerate of others, and warned them not to go too close to the edge of the cliff or perhaps they would end up in idolatry, lest they worship something or someone other than the true God.

Corinth was a city where many worshipped idols. On a hill behind the city was the temple of Aphrodite (Venus) with 1,000 temple prostitutes, called priestesses. (What a blasphemy that is.) With such idolatry and sexual immorality in Corinth, Paul warned Christians not to be reckless in exercising their freedom to eat meat sold in butcher shops after it had been offered to some idol in pagan worship. Paul did not eat meat sacrificed to idols or do anything that might disappoint the Lord or offend other Christians or to cause himself to stumble.

And so this is the context of the today's passage, we're going to read – that some were obviously tempted to use their freedom in Christ to associate with pagan idolatry through eating temple foods, and in that way they were testing God, assuming that God would act graciously toward their carelessness.

Yes, God is full of grace. But he also wants us to grow in his grace and the knowledge of him and to know what is right and what is wrong. That's all part of us being transformed into Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 10: 1-5 (NIV), "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea."

“Under the cloud” means the Children of Israel were under God’s guidance and protection. They were under his grace during their wanderings.

2) "They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Israel was united to God and his servant Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Going through the parted Red Sea was a sort of baptism or burial of their old ways.

3) "They all ate the same spiritual food 4) and drank the same spiritual drink;" Remember their food – manna – came from heaven and water came from a rock. So both food and drink were spiritually provided for them.

"for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." Paul recognizes the triune God and writes about how Christ was with them on their journey.

5) "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert." Because of their rebellion, only two of the original multitude that left Egypt were allowed to enter the Promised Land. And that was Joshua and Caleb. Their faith was strong and they believed God’s promises.

So we know that ancient Israel had God’s covenant and blessings and were miraculously delivered from many difficulties. Yet they died in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience.

6) "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." So Paul is telling them that from reports he’s received they are getting too close to the edge. They were co-mingling with idols; they were about to fall into idolatry because of close relationships with non-believers. Paul was concerned about them.

7) "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.'" (This is a reference to **Exodus 32**): The people ate in the presence of the Golden Calf and then rose up in sexual play. For this rebellion 3,000 were slain, as the people were hit with a plague.

8) "We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did — and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died." (Reference to **Numbers 25**): This was the feast before Baal of Peor, also associated with sexual immorality and which led to the death of 23,000.

9) "We should not test the Lord, as some of them did — and were killed by snakes." (Reference to **Numbers 21**): This is the incident of the Fiery Serpents where Israel argued with Moses and God because they were tired of manna and wanted to go back to Egypt and eat that good-old pagan food. And so God disciplined them.

10 "And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel." (Reference to **Num. 14**) Now this chapter says that a large group of Israelites were killed by the Amalekites and Canaanites. There’s no mention of a destroying angel. Perhaps Paul was given some additional inspiration about this.

So you put these four points together and here they are:
Don’t worship false gods

Don't commit sexual immorality

Don't test the Lord

Don't grumble

So, how do these warnings relate to us today? We are all subject to some of these same problems, aren't we? 1) So, who or what do we put first before God; before Jesus? What are some of the temptations we face? (Members gave various answers). Money, power and prestige, drugs, ourselves! Other things we put before God are: the false gods of philosophy, human reasoning, greed, power, alcohol, pleasure, sports, shopping, gambling, etc.

2) Are we staying pure sexually? There is so much sexual immorality today. And it seems to go to a younger and younger age – where we hear about kids no longer being virgins in the upper elementary school. This just blows your mind. And of course the peer pressure of today is that people should live together before marriage, which is wrong! God lays out the right way to do it in Scripture.

There's also an avalanche of internet pornography. Prostitution abounds. The term "sexual freedom" isn't freedom but is really bondage, because what consumes you, what you obsess about, what you're addicted to becomes your master.

3) How do we test God? One way is to live as if He doesn't exist—to live as if we don't belong to Him. We test God when we don't trust Him; when we question and doubt Him. We test God when we put ourselves before His will. We test God when we neglect or abandon church and our church family and God's mission for our church. We test God when we lose contact with Him through prayer and studying of His Word. We test God when we stop loving and caring for others.

4) Do we grumble? At times, all of us grumble. So what do we grumble about? Sometimes we grumble about God's fairness. We tell God that we want Him to answer our prayer in the way we want it answered. We get impatient when God is silent or maybe has answered our prayer in a different way than we were expecting. Do we grumble about his calling and purpose for our lives? At times we do.

11) "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 12) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" We're reminded of the devil in **Revelation 12:9** who it says **"leads the whole world astray."**

13) "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man." Dennis recounted a story about a man, in another church area, who told Dennis that he felt his sex drive was unusually strong, which was causing him trouble. Dennis told him that his sex drive wasn't probably any different than all the other males, but that he had to manage it and control it with God's help. Most of us aren't unusual. Sometimes we rationalize that we are compulsive or addictive in a particular way.

Yes, sometimes we need help – sometimes we need the help of medication or the help of an accountability partner or the help of the church. That's what the church is for – people who will pray with you and for you and who are givers of grace. So temptations are common to all of us.

Now the last part of verse 13 is the controversial part. **"And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."**

Sometimes we quote this sentence far too glibly. Yes, it's encouraging that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. And then we think of all the "What abouts...."

For example, what about Gerald Sittser, whose book Dennis has read, "How the Soul Grows through Loss – A Grace Disguised". His minivan was hit head on by a drunk driver. He lost his wife of 20 years, his mother and his four-year old daughter instantly in one horrible moment. A couple of years later, he writes this book how to cope with loss and grief.

Or how about Horatio Spafford, a Christian lawyer, whose son died earlier, had all his real estate properties were destroyed by a fire in Chicago in 1871. Two years later Spafford lost his four daughters at sea. Shortly after this, as he sailed toward the place where they had drowned, he wrote the famous hymn, "When sorrows like sea billows roll... Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul."

So did God allow him to be tempt him beyond what he could bear? Probably, at first, yes! Most of the time when we are going through a temptation or a trial, we tell God that we can't bear up under it. And so we pray to God to help us. And that's ok. You read the Psalms and they are full of questions to God like this.

David wrote, "Why God have you forsaken me?" "God, why don't you answer me? Why are you silent?" "Why do you let the wicked persecute me and get away with it?" "Why do let the wicked prosper?" The Psalms are full of questions like that. It's ok to talk to God as our friend, because he is our God, our Creator, our Lord.

The First Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 was first worldwide conference of the Christian church. It was ordered by Emperor Constantine. The Nicene Creed, a statement of Christian beliefs, was adopted there and is still recited in many churches today.

Now it's interesting, that there were 318 delegates to the Council of Nicea. But there were only twelve delegates who were whole in body. All of the rest had been maimed or crippled as a result of being tortured for their faith. Some had lost an eye or a hand, others had suffered broken or dislocated limbs, and some had been scarred by branding irons.

In the early days of the Christian church, no one thought it was strange or unfair to suffer for Christ. Suffering was considered a normal and expected part of the Christian life. So times have changed for us living in the United States of America. But Christians in other countries around the world maybe crippled or maimed for their faith.

This is the NIV translation of **verse 13**. **"But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."**

(NKJ) 1 Corinthians 10:13, "but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NRSV), "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."

So let's do a little word study here. The English words "temptation" or "testing" can fit the original Greek. Now we know that sometimes God allows Satan to tempt us. And we also know that sometimes God divinely tests us for a purpose.

And then the NIV uses the phrase, "a way out." And the NKJ uses the phrase, "a way to escape."

Now the last part of the verse can be translated, "stand up under it" or "bear it" or "endure it." The Greek word here means, "to bear up under (a thing placed on one's shoulders)". But most of us would rather run from a test or a trial rather than bear up under it or endure it.

It often seems that "the way out" is "through" the trial or challenge. And "the way of escape" is "through" the trial. Now that's something that we don't necessarily want to hear. But the rest of verse 13 bears this out.

**(NIV) "...that you can stand up under it." (KJV) "... that ye may be able to bear it."
(NRSV) "... that you may be able to endure it."**

Now this reminded Dennis when he played football in High School. One of the most challenging exercises was running the gauntlet – running with the football through two lines of opposing football players who trying to strip the football from you. That was hard to do.

So when you going through a trial or temptation, you just have to run through it. But realizing that even though you are bearing it on your shoulders, there's someone bearing you on his shoulders. And that someone is Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the way of escape. Jesus is our way out.

One thing we know from **Hebrews 4** is that Jesus was tempted like any human being. **Heb. 4:14-16, "Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. 16) Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."** Jesus is our way out.

Dennis has a friend, in Colorado Springs who has cerebral palsy. His name is RT. He lives in a facility that takes care of people with various types of disabilities. Recently he was being persecuted by someone living in the same facility because RT's a Christian. This individual was following RT around the facility badgering him as he was witnessing to the other residents there.

So RT asked Dennis to pray for him, because he wanted to move out of this facility and into another one. Dennis asked RT if he wanted God's will to be done. He said, "Of course." RT was instrumental in bringing a lady in the facility to Jesus Christ. So, Dennis asked if he really wanted to move out of the facility since he was having such an impact there, or would he consider another alternative.

A week later, God had shown RT that he needed to stay there because God was using him there and the person was no longer following him around. God had taken care of that. So

you see, some times “the way out” is “through” as we are being supported by our Savior and Lord.

And then there’s Job, who lost all his children and all of possessions. The first two chapters of Job tell us that Job did NOT sin in this matter. Job was not being persecuted because of sin. We are struck that Job is a story of a dynamic relationship between two friends – God and Job. Now Satan tried to destroy this relationship between these two friends, but he couldn’t.

And at the end of 42 chapters, Job has not let go of God and God has not let go of Job. In fact, through the journey Job has learned to know God better and trust him more. This is what maybe happens when we go through a trial or temptation rather than escape from it.

Now in **Matthew 26:37-39**, we find that Jesus "**took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38) Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."**

Jesus was deeply troubled. Now was this Jesus’ point of temptation? We often read about the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. But he was also tempted here at the end of his ministry. Now what thoughts was he tempted with? We really don’t know. But perhaps Jesus was tempted to find another way besides the cup of suffering he was going to go through. Verse 39 may indicate this.

39) "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'" Jesus did the will of the Father.

Later, in **John 18**, after Peter had cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant, Jesus said, "**Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"**

We know that we don’t bear a trial or a temptation alone. We have a friend in the midst of it all. And as our Savior goes through this temptation or trial with us, we come to know and trust him more. Often, if not most often, our “way out” is “through.” And our Lord stays with us.

And the result is inexpressible joy. Maybe this is a fitting benediction. Let’s read, **1 Peter 1:8**, "**Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy..."**

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13, "**No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."**

General Group Question: Briefly describe how God has helped you through a trial or temptation that you first thought was impossible for you to deal with?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same

gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. What spiritual lessons can we learn from the Israelites in the wilderness?
2. So, who or what do we put first before God; before Jesus? (The first of Paul's points concerning the example of Israel.)
3. What can we do to protect ourselves and our children and teens to be sexually pure? (The second of Paul's points).
4. How does one test God? (The third of Paul's points).
5. What's so bad about grumbling? Who does it hurt the most -- God or ourselves? Briefly explain. (The fourth of Paul's points).
6. What lesson(s) can we take away from the horrible trial Job went through?
7. Why is it important for us to understand that in order for God to provide a way out of a temptation or trial, he often gives us the strength to bear up under it?
8. Why is also important to know that Jesus has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin (Heb. 4:14-16) in context of our own temptations?
9. How is God faithful in context of 1 Cor. 10:13?