

The Way of Escape
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Before every flight takes off, the flight attendants point out the location of the exit doors so you'll know the way of escape if there's an emergency landing. Posted on the back of every hotel room door is the fire escape plan, so in case of an emergency, you will know the quickest way of escape. And there are situations in life where we need to know the way of escape – so I'm preaching a message entitled A Way of Escape.

In my sermon last week I spoke about God parting the Jordan River so that the Children of Israel could enter the Promised Land. After living in the bondage of Egypt for 400 years, the Israelites were miraculously delivered and set out on a journey to the Promised Land. But the adults who left Egypt never made it in. They were on their way to the land flowing with milk and honey - yet God tells them they are not going in.

Do you ever feel that way? You get so close. Success seems just with in your reach but in the end things don't work out the way you expected. Something is keeping you out of Canaan – out of your promised land – out of your destiny. 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 reveals what keep the Israelites out of Canaan.

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. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from lusting after evil things as they also lusted. 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." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did — and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did — and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel.

So – we see here five things keep the Children of Israel out of Canaan: Lust – Idolatry - Sexual immorality - Testing God - Grumbling
 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 says:

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

So – first Paul reminded us that the Children of Israel experienced the miraculous

deliverance of God from Egypt – the miracle of crossing through the Red Sea – the miraculous provision of food and water in the desert – and the powerful presence of God. Yet! In spite of all of that – they continually sinned against God. They continually gave in to temptation. And it cost them the ability to enter their destiny in the Promised Land.

So Paul warns us – take their example to heart! Don't think you are beyond temptation. Don't think you are above falling into sin. In fact – if you think you can stand on your own – watch out – because in your own strength you will always fall. And there will be consequences!

Here's the part of the text I want to concentrate on today. 1 Corinthians 10:13-14 says:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

The word “overtaken” is very strong in the Greek language. It's the word *peirasmos*, and some Bible versions translate it as seizing you and holding on to you. It speaks of times when we feel seized and squeezed by external or internal forces that are designed to take us down. Designed to get us to sin. Remember – temptation is not sin. Hebrews 4:15 says this about Jesus.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.

So Jesus was tempted – but He never sinned! That means temptation is not sin. Stop beating yourself up for being tempted because the Bible says:

1- Temptation is common to us all

Paul described temptation as being “common to man.” The phrase “common to man” describes things that are normally experienced by human beings and are therefore not out of the ordinary. Rather than blow these temptations out of proportion, Paul downplayed them as being commonplace.

There are many different temptations that people struggle with, such as overeating, substance abuse, illicit sex, or some other destructive behavior. Or you can be tempted with negative attitudes like anger, worry or hopelessness or discouragement. But as we will soon see – there are only really three types of temptation. And Paul tells us that no matter how overwhelming or insurmountable your temptation might seem, it is merely a common human problem that has already been faced and overcome by countless believers in the past.

Every human being has the same basic needs and faces the same type of problems and temptations in life. However, it is an insidious trick of the devil to plant the false belief in your mind that your temptation is a special case.

If he succeeds in doing this, it will be vastly more difficult for you to overcome your temptation, since you'll view it as a one-of-a-kind problem that you alone have to face. You'll assume that none of God's principles apply to your situation because it is so huge, unique, and special. And when someone gives you an answer for your situation from God's Word, you'll just nod and say, "Yes, I know that's what the Bible says, but my case is an exception. It has all kinds of unique complications that make it especially hard to deal with." This is wrong thinking! Stop looking at the temptation you face as something that no one else has ever experienced.

How you look at the problem will determine how quickly you get out of it! If you look at it like it's huge, unique, and special, you'll have a very hard time getting over it. So how should you look at your problem?

You must tell yourself, "This is not a special problem. In the history of mankind, I'm not the first person to face this type of challenge, and I won't be the last. There are countless other people facing problems far more difficult than mine, yet they smile and maintain their joy in the midst of the challenge and end up victorious on the other side! This is just a common problem that many people have conquered before me — and I'm going to be the next to do it!" When you adopt this attitude, you position yourself to quickly escape the trap you're in by reducing the size of your problem in your mind into something conquerable!

The enemy will lie to you and try to get you to think that you're worse than everyone else or tempted with things that no one else is. But you have no temptation that is not common to the rest of us. It may take different forms in each of us, but it's really the same.

We all have the same three enemies and the same three temptations. There are only three enemies - The world - The flesh - The devil. The manifestation of these enemies is different in all our lives – but the enemies are the same.

We also have the same 3 temptations. We find them in 1 John 2:16.

For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.

Every single temptation that any has ever faced or will ever face is in one of these three categories. The lust of the flesh is a craving for physical gratification. That includes every temptation that appeals to our flesh. Everything from drugs to donuts!

The lust of the eyes is a greedy longing for everything we see.

You can lust after a person or a car or a certain position in life.

The pride of life is an inflated ego that puts its faith in itself rather than God. And it wants all the glory for self – rather than for God or other people.

Every temptation is boiled down to one of these three things. The devil is not creative and these are the only three things he tempts you with. But he wants you to think that the particular way in which you are tempted is unique to you. You are the only one who deals with these thoughts. And because of that, you believe you cannot overcome this temptation.

But Paul says, “No, this is nothing new. This is nothing unique. This is actually common. Satan didn't just make up a whole new temptation for you. You're really not that special.” It's the same temptation people have faced since the beginning of time. And people have been overcoming it for centuries and so can you! Not only is temptation common to man, but

2- God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear

Notice that God allows temptation – but God is not the tempter. God never tempts us to sin. James 1:13-14 says:

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

There are several truths I want you to see about temptation: Temptation is not from God. I remember counseling a couple after the man had an affair. In our session, he blamed God for allowing him to be tempted. But James clearly shows us that we should never blame God for temptation because God will not tempt any person to sin.

The Bible clearly says that God does not cause people to do evil. God is not the tempter. God is not the author of evil. There is an evil one who tempts us to sin, but it is not God. When people give in to temptation and sin – it's their own decision.

By the way, not all temptation is from the devil. Yes, Satan is the tempter, but James says that sometimes we are tempted by our own lustful desires that lead us astray. And when we give into sin it sets into motion consequences in our lives that we have brought upon ourselves. Let's not blame God.

James attacks this common misbelief in James 1:16.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.

James warns us to avoid the common deception that God is not good. He points out that every good thing in our lives comes from God.

God will not tempt you and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond that which you can bear. Literally, the text says God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able...

That means it will not be above the power to resist. But that power is not from within us, it is from God. In your own power, you cannot do it. But through Christ, you can do all things! Paul is saying that not temptation is beyond what you are able to resist *with God's help!* Thinking you can do it on your own is the pride of life at work!

The verse goes on to say but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

3- God always provides a way of escape

When the text says God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able – the Greek word for able is *dunamai* = power. And the same word is used when it says God makes a way of escape that you may be able – have the power – to bear it.

It is very important that you understand this - *but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

The way of escape is not always an escape *from* temptation! When the text says you will have the power to bear temptation, it means to bear from underneath – to bear up under – to endure.

You will never get to the place where you are beyond temptation. That's why this passage says to take heed lest you fall! If you think you are beyond temptation, beware! Remember the Children of Israel. They experienced God's miraculous presence, power and provision. Yet, when tempted, they chose to sin over and over.

The way of escape that God makes is the power to bear temptation. That word "escape" comes from a Greek word which literally means to walk out, as to walk out of a difficult place; to walk out of a trap; or to walk out of a place that isn't good for you.

So this is what you can know: In every situation where you face the temptation, you are the only one who can make the choice to jump through that escape hatch. The moment you make that decision, your journey to freedom has begun! If you'll say yes to the Lord, He will show you how to get out of your mess! Or He will give you the power to endure the temptation.

James 1:12 says:

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James says, Blessed are those who endure temptation, not those who are never tempted. Temptation is one of the various trials James said we all face.

And James shows us the purpose of temptation: God's purpose is to approve us – to test us to show our faith is real and strong.

God is faithful to make a way of escape for you. He will show you how to get out of any trap you might find yourself. There is a way out, and God has given you His Word and His Spirit to guide you every step of the way.

Make the decision today to align your thoughts, words, and attitudes with God's Word about any problem you are currently facing. Then, step by step, begin walking out of that trap — until that glorious moment when you arrive on the other side, free and victorious!

The fact that God provides a way of escape from temptation shows us that no temptation has the power to overpower us. If these temptations were truly overpowering, they would be inescapable. However, Paul clearly stated that we can escape them. In other words, you can walk away from or step out of a temptation just as easily as you walked into one. It's all a matter of what you believe.

The devil will always try to convince you that you are a powerless person with no authority to withstand his lies. If you take his bait, you'll have a very difficult time walking away from the temptations that attack your mind.

Instead, you can choose to think like Paul and say, "These temptations are nothing special that human beings haven't faced many times. There is nothing powerful or special about them, and I will walk away from them in Jesus' name!"

Decide beforehand how you're going to respond to negative thoughts! You have to make the decision to believe that you and the Holy Spirit are bigger and stronger than any problem that will ever come your way.

And you must know that God will always make a way of escape. Either to get out of the temptation or to endure the temptation. That's up to His sovereign will. But He always has a way of escape.

When God flooded the earth – He gave Noah an escape called an ark. But Noah had to believe God, obey God and work for years to build it. Don't be surprised if God's way of escape for you requires time, work and obedience!

When Israel was trapped between an army and the Red Sea – God provided a way of escape by miraculously parting the Sea.

Sometimes God's way of escape will require you to stand still and see the deliverance of God and then – move forward into what looks dangerous to you!

David had to escape from King Saul many times. Saul wanted to kill him and David had the opportunity to kill Saul. But the way of escape – the thing that ended the chase – was David dying to himself and showing Saul mercy rather than killing him. Sometimes the way of escape will require you to die to yourself!

After Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph – they received a word from God to flee to Egypt because Herod was going to kill all the babies. Sometimes the way for escape requires you to put on running shoes!

Our text says to flee from idolatry.

1 Timothy 6:10-11 says to flee from the love of money.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says to flee from sexual immorality.

Sometimes you need to do like Joseph when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife –
RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

When Paul and Silas were in prison – God provided a way of escape when they began to pray and praise. And your way of escape will always require prayer and praise.

When Jonah was trapped in a whale – the way of escape was repentance. And your way of escape will require repentance – and change of heart that leads to a change of mind that results in a change of lifestyle.

And lastly – when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness – he was tempted by the same three temptations we face: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life! And the way of escape from all those temptations was the Word of God. For every one, He had a Bible verse memorized and He said, It is written.

Your way of escape will require the armor of God and the sword of the Spirit. You escape by saying "It is Written."

You overcome by saying It is written!

Thank God for the way of escape!