

“The Way In—the Way Out”—1 Corinthians 10:11-13

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Way In—the Way Out”, is 1 Corinthians 10:11-13 → *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“God will not give you more than you can bear.” This adage has been used to express a conviction of the truth that God will carry you through difficult trials in your life. Sometimes it is also used as a reminder in an effort to find some kind of strength and hope for perseverance in the midst of those trials. Even though the statement talks about what God does, giving the impression that it is about God’s power, it actually puts the burden on you and limits God’s power. In other words, it implies that He will act in your life based upon your ability to endure rather than His power to act beyond your abilities.

This statement may be drawn from the promise given in verse 13 of

our text. However, this verse is not promoting the idea of just being able to endure in the midst of suffering and persevering under the stress of very trying times. Verse 13 of our text says: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* It's referring specifically to enduring temptation to sin. It's the promise of God's presence when you find your way into sin as He points you to His way out of sin **by His deliverance**.

Does it ever seem easy to find your way into sin and very difficult to find your way out of it? To *be tempted* happens when the devil uses the sinful ways of world around you as kind of a catalyst, in an effort to get your sinful heart to make the choice to disobey God's Word. James 1:13-15 describes it this way: *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is **lured and enticed by his own desire**. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death,* referring to the death of relationships. Thus, even with the outside influences involved with the way into it, you are responsible for your sin.

Have you ever wondered or said something like: "That would never happen to me! I wouldn't do such a thing!"? Such an attitude of "spiritual

arrogance” is very dangerous. It is thinking that you are spiritually “safe” and “immune” from falling into, at the least, various types of sin. Thus the warning in verse 12 of our text: *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.* Such spiritual arrogance can blind a person so that he doesn’t recognize the temptation to sin. In the context, many of the Corinthians Christians had come out of paganism, having been taught to worship and sacrifice to false gods from “day one.” Having repented of such idolatry and believed in Jesus as Lord, they now knew that “*an idol has no real existence,*” and that “*there is no God but one*” (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4).

However, they needed to be very careful with such new found knowledge while dealing with fellow believers who struggled with temptations to fall back into the idolatry which constituted so much of their upbringing. Such “backsliding” into idolatry can happen to people in the Church, as Paul’s many examples of the Old Testament Church’s falling into to idolatry can attest (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-10). Paul said that *these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did* (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:6). This is why such examples were written down for our instruction according to Romans 15:4 → *Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that **through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have hope.*

Falling into the sin of spiritual arrogance will breed the sin of idolatry, that is, allowing someone or something other than the LORD govern your life and actions in a given moment. Whether it's actual idol worship (i.e. the Corinthian Christians) or past sins, behaviors and wrong coping mechanisms (i.e. having lived abusive, addictive lives) or simply selfishness (i.e. worshiping the "unholy trinity" of me, myself and I"), they all constitute the sin of idolatry and forfeit living in love for God and love for others. All sin is connected to the sin of idolatry. This is why the meaning of commandments 2-10 in the catechism begin with the meaning of the first commandment: "We should fear and love God so that . . ." we do or do not do this or that in relationship with our neighbor (cf. Luther's Small Catechism, pages 321-322 in Luther Service Book)

Since *no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man*, no one can exempt himself from any kind of sin possible on earth. In fact, Jesus says in Matthew 26:41 → *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Since the Christian is under attack in temptation constantly, he watches with prayer in an effort to discern temptation. The promise of our text is that *God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.* He does this through the work of the Holy Spirit Who convicts you *concerning sin* (both during the temptation and/or in the sin) and brings *to your remembrance all that Jesus has said to you* in the Bible (cf. John

16:8; 14:26), pointing you to His Person & Work. Your *ability . . . to endure it* is provided by the Holy Spirit.

So, how do you find your way out of the temptation? The Holy Spirit will, *with the temptation . . . also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it*. While He will empower you to resist in various ways, He will always direct you to the One Who has provided *the way of escape* for you—Jesus Christ. Jesus withstood the devil’s temptations directly in the wilderness for forty days, following His anointing with the Holy Spirit in His baptism (cf. Matthew 3:16-4:11). He allowed satan to *strike His heel* (cf. Genesis 3:15) by suffering and dying on the cross for all your sins for all time! He rose from the dead to gain the victory over the power of sin, death and the devil **for you!** Your *way of escape* during temptation is trusting in the Person & Work of Jesus **for you**.

Thus, the way out of temptation happens only as you stand solely upon Jesus Christ Who, according to Hebrews 2:17-18, became human *in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted*. Likewise, the way out of sin when you fall into temptation is by trusting completely in the high priestly work of Jesus on your behalf. Hebrews 4:15-16 says: *We do not have a high priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one Who*

in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We pray for discernment every time we pray the Lord's Prayer when we say, "and lead us not into temptation." What does this mean? "God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, may not deceive us and lead us into false belief, despair and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory." We ask God to keep us from the way into sin.

We also pray for the way out when we fall into sin with the words, "but deliver us from evil." What does this mean? "We pray in this petition . . . that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven." (cf. Luther's Small Catechism, pages 324-325 in Luther Service Book) *Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57). Amen.

*The Lord is faithful. He will establish you
and guard you against the evil one . . .*

*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the steadfastness of Christ.*

(2 Thessalonians 3:3,5)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.