

What Every Christian Should Know About Temptation 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Marc Anthony was known as the silver-throated orator of Roma. He was a brilliant statesman, magnificent in battle, courageous, strong, and handsome. As far as personal qualities are concerned, he could have become a world ruler. But he had the very vulnerable and fatal flaw of moral weakness. So much so that on one occasion, his personal tutor shouted in his face, "O Marcus, O, colossal child!" Able to conquer the world, but unable to resist a temptation!"

I would wonder if that could be rightly said about you: "ABLE TO CONQUER THE WORLD, BUT UNABLE TO RESIST A TEMPTATION." I submit you that, if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus, you really are a conqueror. In fact, Romans 8:37 says: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." However, many of us are like OSCAR WILDE, the British playwright, who said: "I can resist anything except temptation." But if that's the position you find yourself, I have good news for you.

- **You don't have to be overcome by the flesh.**
- **You don't have to be conformed to the world.**
- **You don't have to be deceived by the devil.**
- **You don't have to be entangled in sin.**
- **And you don't have to be haunted with guilt.**

Mark it down: YOU CAN TRIUMPH OVER TEMPTATION! And 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 teaches three fundamental principles that you need to know in order to triumph over temptation.

I. A Word of Warning: Your Are Not Immune.

The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in order to teach the church at Corinth how to live out their faith in a pagan society. And in this tenth chapter, Paul addresses an issue that caused great confusion for the early Gentile Christians; namely, whether or not they should eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. You see, when animal was sacrificed to pagan God, its meat was usually sold in the city marketplace. And so any given meal, on any given day, in any given Gentile home, in any given pagan city, could consist of meat from an animal that had been sacrificed to an idol God. But the early Gentile Christians – including those in Corinth – struggled with the moral and ethical implications of eating food sacrificed to idols. So Paul addresses the issue here. And the point he makes in the first part of this chapter can be succinctly summarized with the words of 10:14: "*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*" But leading up to that conclusion, he makes his case telling the story of Israel. God was displeased with Israel, because they did not flee idolatry. Consequently, many of them perished in the wilderness.

10:12 says: "*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the end of the ages has come.*" The history of

Israel is recorded in the Old Testament for our benefit. It is an example that admonishes us to intentionally and diligently avoid anything that may compromise our commitment to God. Unfortunately we have a way of ignoring the examples God gives us from other peoples' lives. We say, "That was them; that's not me." And we especially do this when the example is given from the past. We say, "That as then; this is now." God the Holy Spirit knows that we have a tendency to write off the examples of others, so he moved Paul to write the warning of 10:13: *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."* And this simple warning teaches something you really need to know, if you are going to triumph over temptation. And here it is: You are not immune, excused, or exempt from temptation. So don't ever look at others who have fallen and say to yourself, "That could never happen to me." Proverbs 16:18 says: *"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."*

Mark it down:

- **The prod man tempts the devil to tempt him.**
- **Overconfidence is a prelude to sin.**
- **Those who think it cant happen to them had better be careful, because no one is immune to temptation.**

You may know the name Gordon MacDonald. He's the author of such Christian classics as "Ordering Your Private World" and "Renewing Your Spiritual Passion." Unfortunately he's also the author of "Rebuilding Your Broken World." It's a therapeutic book that he wrote as a part of the process of rebuilding his broken marriage and ministry after an adulterous affair. In this book, MacDonald shared an experience that took place several years before his adulterous relationship. While on a certain college campus to speak at its commencement, he struck up a conversation with a school board member. After some pleasantries the new acquaintance asked, "If Satan were to blow you out of the water, how do you think he would do it?" "I'm not sure I know," said MacDonald. "All sorts of ways, I suppose; but I know there's one way he wouldn't get me." "What's that?" "He'd never get me in the area of my personal relationship," answered MacDonald. "That's the one place where I have not doubt I'm as strong as you can get." Yet, that's the exact area in which he fell. *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."* You are not immune.

Now, the fact that no one is immune to the temptation brings us to a connected truth about temptation that we need to understand: **IT IS NOT SIN TO BE TEMPTED.** Temptation, though closely tied to sin, is not sin itself. It is one thing to be tempted, but another thing to fall. Yet, many Christians walk around with a burden of needless guilt, because they have equated temptation with sin. But the fact is that although temptation and sin are related, they are not synonymous. And we know that sin and temptation are not the same, because Jesus Christ himself was tempted. Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13 all record the original "DESERT STORM," where Jesus successfully overcame the temptations Satan attacked him with in the wilderness. And Hebrews 4:15 says: *"For we do not have a High Priest who*

cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Did you get that? Jesus was tempted, but he did not sin; which means that you are not in sin just because you are tempted.

HORATIO PALMER put it this way: “Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin.” And he was right. Yielding to temptation is sin. Temptation itself is not. But if you are going to triumph over temptation, you must never let your pride presume that you are immune to temptation. No matter how firm you’re standing today, you are prone to fall. And so you should never play in slippery places. Proverbs 6:27-28 says: “*Can a man come take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?*” Of course not! If you are going to keep from being burned you must stay away from the fire. That’s why, in Matthew 6:13, Jesus teaches us to pray: “*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*” That’s a warning. You are not immune to temptation.

II. **A Word of Encouragement: You Are Not Unique.**

The opening line of 10:13 says: “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.*” The word “*overtaken*” translates the Greek verb *lambano*, which means, “to grab, to seize, or to take hold of.” And it’s used here to speak of the power of temptation. Picture it. You’re on the Christian journey, minding your own business, trying to do right when – out of nowhere – temptation grabs you. I wonder if that has ever happened to you. You weren’t looking for sin. In fact, you were determined not to sin. But you found yourself overtaken, seized, and grabbed by temptation. The bad news is that there will be times when temptation overtakes you. But here’s the good news: “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.*”

The phrase “*Common to man*” translates the adjective *anthropinos*. *Anthropos* is the noun for man or humanity. *Anthropinos* refers the humanness of something or that which is a part of human nature. And Paul uses the term here to describe the kind of temptation that overtakes us. He says, “When temptation grabs you, know that it is never supernatural or superhuman. The only type of temptation that you face is the kind that every other human faces.” Here’s the point: You are not unique! You are not the only one that faces temptation. It’s common to all people. Temptation is a typical human experience. In order to triumph over temptation, you need to know that you are not unique. And that’s encouraging to know.

A. **The fact that you are not unique is encouragement to be honest with yourself.**

Many of us fail to triumph over temptation, because we are not honest with ourselves about our sin. Instead, we allow comparison, rationalization, isolation, regret, and bitterness lead us to think that we are unique – that we are the only one in the world who has or is facing what we’re dealing with. And this dishonesty allows us to blame other people for the sinful things we do. We got it honest. In the

Garden of Eden, when God confronted Adam and Eve about their sin, they both blamed someone else. And that was the beginning of the blame game. And we've been playing it every since then. In fact, we'll even go so far as to blame God. That's why James 1:13 says: *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone."* Did you get that? God is untemptable. And as such, temptation is never direct by God. He permits it, but he never directs it. God does not direct us into sin. James 1:14-15 teaches us the source and the course of temptation: *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desires have conceived, they give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."*

Here's the point: God does not tempt us. And ultimately, our temptations don't have anything to do with Satan or the world around us. The fact is that we are tempted when we are driven away and enticed by our own sinful desires that are just looking for the right opportunity. In other words, you are your own biggest enemy. And you will never be able to stop the deadly course of your circumstances for your sin. So you need to know that you are not unique. You need to be honest with yourself. You need to stop blaming other people for your actions. You need to learn how to sing, *"It's not my father nor my mother... It's not my sister or my brother... But it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer!"*

B. The fact that you are not unique is encouragement to be honest with others.

The context and content of this passage is a subtle reminder that there are some things we go through that are not about it, because of us, or even for us. Some things we go through are purely for the sake of others. That includes our troubles, trials, and tribulations, but also our temptations. Think about it. If no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man, then there will always be someone else who understands what you're going through. And when you recognize that your situation is not unique, it frees you to be honest with others, so that you can benefit from my story and someone else can benefit from your story. Let me bottom line this for you:

- **There are other Christians who have been hurt, betrayed or abused just like you, but they overcome temptation.**
- **There are other Christians who are single and lonely like you, but they have overcome temptation.**
- **There are other Christians whose marriage has been on the rocks like yours, but they overcome temptation.**
- **There are other Christians who been broke, in debt, or out of work just like you, but they overcome temptation.**
- **There are other Christians who are sick, grieving, or broken hearted just like you are, but they have overcome temptation.**

I declare that you are not unique. And so rather than isolating yourself, rather than throwing your own pity-party, rather than acting like you're in this world by yourself, your need to learn to be honest with others who can pray for you, encourage you, and hold you up.

Proverbs 27:27 – *“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion, but woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not easily broken.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25 – *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

III. A Word of Promise: You Are Not Alone

A man was carrying a heavy load of grain down a country road. Sweat dripped from his brow and soaked his worn shirt, while the dusty air and scorching sun burned his face. But a man in a passing wagon noticed his struggle and judging the sack to weigh at least fifty pounds he gently tugged on the reins and slowed his horses. “Mister, you need a ride,” he said. “Get up here with me, and I’ll take you.” Relieved, the tired man climbed up onto the seat and settled into the seat for the remainder of the trip to town. However, he did not remove the loaded sack from his shoulder. After a moment of silence, the compassionate driver said, “Why don’t you put that down and relax?” to his surprise, the man replied, “ Oh, no! Its enough to have you carry me without having to carry this load too.”

Is that how you respond to God in times of temptation? Have you trusted God to carry away the penalty of your past sin through the atoning blood of Jesus, but yet you won't trust him to help you carry the load of temptation burdens you with the power of sin? Well, let me challenge you today to take a load off. The God who picks you up and gives you another chance when you have fallen into sin is ready, willing, and able to help you stand your ground, so that you won't fall when temptation overtakes you. 10:13 puts it this way: *“But God is faithful.”* There may be times when you can't count on your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, doctor, lawyer, or even your pastor; but God is faithful. In order to triumph over temptation, you need to know that, when temptation overtakes you, you are never alone.

- **God is faithful.**
- **You can count on God.**

- **The Lord is worthy of your trust.**
- **God is the one, only, and ultimate promise-keeper.**
- **You can depend on God during times of temptation.**

1 Corinthians 1:9 – *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – *“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.”*

2 Timothy 2:13 – *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny himself.”*

I have good news for you: you don't ever have to face temptation all by yourself. That's the difference Jesus makes when you trust him as your Savior and Lord. Non-Christians often brag that they can do whatever they want to do. But the problem with that is that when they don't want to do what they do anymore, they don't have the power to stop. C.S. LEWIS said, “No man knows how bad he is until he tries to be good.” And that's exactly what happens to the person who does not have God on their side. When they try to change their ways, they discover that sin costs you more than you want to pay. Sin takes you further than you want to go. And sin keeps you, and then you want to stay. But when you put your trust in Jesus, God himself moves into your life and becomes personally involved in your struggle against sin. And I declare that temptation cannot inhibit you, if God inhabits you; because God is faithful. And there are two ways God demonstrates his faithfulness in temptation.

C. God overrules temptation.

God's faithfulness in temptation is described, first of all, in negative terms. The text says: *“But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”* The fact that you are Christian does not change the fact that you are human. And because you are still human, you are weak, finite, and limited. This is, you can only be able to bear a certain amount, intensity, or duration of temptation, before you give in. You can only endure a certain degree of temptation, before it literally becomes impossible for you to resist sin. But the good news is that God knows where that threshold of temptation is in your life. And God, in his faithfulness, will always overrule the power of temptation, so that when temptation overtakes you, it will never be more than what you are able to bear. In other words, as a Christian you can never use “I couldn't help myself” as an excuse for sin.

Psalm 103:13-14 says: *“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”* Because he remembers the weakness of your flesh, our Father in heaven promises that he will

never put more on you than what you are able to bear. So when you are tempted, don't ever buy into Satan's lie that says, "I just can't help it!" Mark it down: No matter how intense the temptation, the very fact of its presence means that you can overcome it. And you can overcome because any temptation that overtakes you must first go through divine inspection. And God is faithful to screen out, exclude, and forbid any and every temptation that is more than you are able to bear. ROBERTA MARTIN put it this way:

**WE ARE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S CHILDREN
AND WE ALL KNOW THAT HE LOVES US ONE AND ALL
YET THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE FIND WE ANSWER ANOTHER VOICE AND CALL
IF WE ARE WILLING, HE WILL TEACH US
HIS VOICE ONLY TO OBEY NO MATTER WHAT
FOR HE KNOWS, YES, HE KNOWS, JUST HOW MUCH WE CAN BEAR**

D. God undermines temptation.

Not only does God not overrule the power of temptation, but he also undermines the purpose of temptation. 10:13 puts it this way: *"But with the temptation (God) will also make the way of escape."* Be clear, the text is not saying that God will make a way for you to escape being tempted. God restricts the power of temptation, but he does not erase the reality of it. So when you say, "I'll be glad when I'm not tempted anymore," you are really saying, "I'll be glad when I'm dead." As long as you live, you will face temptation. You can't escape that. But you can escape the sin that temptation seeks to lead you to. Even if you live or work in an environment where there are many and constant temptations to sin, God is faithful even in those situations. He may not stop you from being tempted, but with every temptation you face, he will always provide a way to escape.

The phrase *"way of escape"* translates the Greek verb *ekbasis* (*ek* is the preposition that means, "out of"; *basis* means "to go out"). It means to exit or egress. It's the way out of some place or thing. It was used to refer to act or way of disembarking a ship. And the good news is that when temptation grabs you, God is always faithful to provide a way for you to get off the ship before your life is shipwrecked by sin. Likewise, *ekbasis* was used to refer to a mountain that would allow a trapped army to retreat. Again, the good news is that when you are tempted, God always provides a way for you to retreat from the battle so that the flesh, world, and the devil will not defeat you. The good news today is that every temptation has a God-installed escape hatch that you may be able to bear it. The word "bear," translates the verb *hupohero* (*hupo*, is the preposition that means "under"; *phero* means, "to carry"). Literally, it means, "to undergo or endure." The sad indictment is that we don't always take the way of escape that God provides for us. But God is faithful. And not only is he able to help you escape, but he is even able to help you endure. I declare that Jeremiah was right when he said (Lamentation 3:22-23), *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."*

A certain scientist set up an experiment to study the ways of ants. And as he monitored the ants in this controlled environment, his attention was arrested by a certain ant that was carrying a piece of straw. He knew that ants can carry many times more than their own weight, but he was still fascinated watching this ant struggle under the burden of that piece of straw. And as he watched, he saw the ant come to a crevice in the road he could not cross. And it was if the ant stood there thinking about what to do. Finally, the ant got under the straw until it spanned the crevice. Then the ant hopped onto the piece of straw and climbed to the other side. Then the ant got under the burden for the straw again and continued heading for the anthill. And the good news is that God is faithful to do that for you. If you trust him, God will take care of your burdens and turn them into bridges that will lead to spiritual victory.

**YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION, FOR YIELDING IS SIN
EACH VICTORY WILL HELP YOU SOME OTHER TO WIN
FIGHT MANFULLY ONWARD, DARK PASSIONS SUBDUED
LOOK EVER TO JESUS, HE'LL CARRY YOU THROUGH**

**SHUN EVIL COMPANIONS, BAD LANGUAGE DISDAIN
GOD'S NAME HOLD IN REVERENCE, NOR TAKE IT IN VAIN
BE THOUGHTFUL AND EARNEST KIND-HEARTED AND TRUE
LOOK EVER TO JESUS, HE'LL CARRY YOU THROUGH**

**TO HIM THAT OVERCOMES, GOD GIVES A CROWN
THROUGH FAITH WE WILL CONQUER, THOUGH OFTEN CAST DOWN
HE WHO IS OUR SAVIOR, OUR STRENGTH WILL RENEW
LOOK EVER TO JESUS, HE'LL CARRY YOU THROUGH**

**ASK THE SAVIOR TO HELP YOU, COMFORT, STRENGTHEN AND KEEP YOU
HE IS WILLING TO AID YOU, HE WILL CARRY YOU THROUGH**