

The Way Out

Have you ever just felt stuck in life? Sometimes you just feel pinned down and it looks like there is no way out. If you have ever watched wrestling you know that that is your opponent's goal...to pin you down to where you can't get up....that's how they defeat you!

In this life you have one opponent...satan, and as your opponent, he has one goal, to pin you down to where you can't get up....that's how he tries to defeat you.

Other times you may kind of defeat yourself. You get yourself in a position or situation where you feel stuck. You give your opponent an easy pin because of the position you let yourself get in...and you want to get out but you can't seem to find the way no matter how hard you look.

Today God wants you to know that if you are in Christ, there is always a way out. It doesn't matter how hard it is to see. It doesn't matter how many times you have looked. It doesn't matter how heavy the weight is that is on you. God provides the way out for you!

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

13 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.

You may be looking at this verse and saying, what does that have to do with being stuck, that's about temptation. And you are right. We tend to look at temptation and think sin. But temptation is not sin. Temptation is a trial, an experiment, to see how you will respond (that's where sin can come in)

Temptation is a trial, it's an enticement to sin, sometimes arising from your own desires and sometimes from outward circumstances.

But consider this... you can be stuck under your temptations, and when you are stuck it's often when you feel the desire to sin the most because you are in a weakened state and see no way out.

Paul says "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man" So there IS some temptation that has overtaken you. The temptation that is common to man, meaning temptation that which is human.

The temptation that has overtaken you, is the temptation that is upon all mankind. The temptation to do what is best for yourself at all times no matter the cost. THIS is our fallen human nature, the desire to sin..... We all have it. It's common to man!

How often do we look at our situation, what we are dealing with and we say that “*you just don’t understand, no one has it as bad as me!*” Listen up, whatever you are dealing with is common to man. Others have faced it, and others have made it through.

Whatever you struggle is, whatever problem is staring you in the face when you wake up in the morning, whatever you feel in response to those things.....you are not alone, everyone faces some sort of temptations and issues.

Temptation itself is not sinful. Jesus, Himself was tempted in every way.

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)

15 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.

Jesus faced it all, yet did not sin....not once.

What about YOU? When is the last time you were faced with temptation and did not sin? Do you count those as victories? Do you thank God when those happen?

We are not alone in facing temptation but we are alone in how we respond to it. Meaning it’s YOU and you alone that gets to choose how to respond. You have two choicesresist or submit. Temptation is common to man, but it’s unique to you in how you respond.

You and I can be faced with the same thing. But you and I may have different weaknesses and different levels of weakness within each area. God can be dealing with us both but we are growing at different rates.

Go to a ball game sometime and see how people respond to situations. You can have a bad call against your team and see two different people respond in two different ways, even Christians. There are games where I’m embarrassed for people. People act like a FOOL at ball games. And on the same play where someone stands up and yells at the refs, I’m fighting the temptation to join in.....praise God I do “most of the time”.

Two different people responding in two different ways.....

Something important to note about temptation, is this: God does not tempt you to sin. Last fall I preached an entire message about temptation, that’s not my primary focus here today. You can go online and listen to that, but know that it is not God who tempts.

James 1:13 (NKJV)

13 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.

God may allow us to be tempted, He may allow testing and trials which should ultimately strengthen our faith, but He doesn't cause it.

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We may get stuck. We may not see the way out. We may lose hope and even lose faith. But God is faithful.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NKJV)

11 This is a faithful saying:
For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.
12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.
If we deny Him, He also will deny us.
13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.

Aren't you glad that God's faithfulness is not dependant on yours? That's how human relationships tend to work.....if one cheats so does the other.....if one quits so does the other.....if one hates so does the other.....

Thank You God that You **always** remain faithful!

It is natural for us to NOT act in love (but in selfishness), but it is natural for God TO act in love. God can't help but love just like light can't help but enter the dark.

If you have a light on in one room and dark in the next with a door in between, the light will shine through the cracks if it can but once you open that door, the light doesn't decide whether or not it's going to invade the dark. It doesn't stop at the doorway and think "should I go in or not", it just goes, it can't help it.

So goes the love of God. God doesn't stop and consider whether He SHOULD love you, He just does. He can't help but do it.

This even applies in Him allowing us to have trials and temptation. He permits it not for our destruction but for the strengthening of our faith and character! It's good for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NKJV)

3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

The Lord is faithful!

God's faithfulness is not measured by our level of discomfort or trouble. His faithfulness is immeasurable.

but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able

This verse is often used to say "God won't give me more than I can handle".....and that's just not true.

I believe that God is certain to give you more than you can handle otherwise why would you need Jesus? You were born with more than you can handle (sinful nature), but thankfully because of the cross and an empty tomb, you can handle it with Jesus by your side and His Spirit inside of you!

What Paul said was God will not allow you to be tempted (He's not the temptor) beyond what you are able.

God knows your ability, He knows what you are ready for. It's like a teacher giving a test to her class. She knows what they have been prepared for and gives a test based on that. A good teacher doesn't give a test to make her students fail. But that doesn't mean the test will be easy! It doesn't mean the test will be short. But the test will be something that they are ABLE to pass.

You WILL be tempted. You WILL have troubles. It's not a matter of IF but WHEN. Will you be ready? How will you respond?

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God won't allow you to be tested on what you're not ready for (what He knows you are ready for, not what you THINK you are ready for), but then He also will make the way of escape! Jesus makes a way out!

What does this mean? If He has like a free pass why doesn't He just give that to us up front?

What our problem is, is that we have the wrong idea about the way out....

When I think about the way out, I think "God, can you take this trial or temptation away, take this problem away".....right? "Remove it from me"

I've prayed this many, many times in my life.....but if God allowed it, and God is good and faithful, and only would allow you to face something that will strengthen your faith and character.....is the best thing really for God to take it away?

Is that the way out? I don't believe it is.....

"The way of escape" in the Greek is the word ekbasis (ek-baa-sis) meaning **the end**. With the temptation God allows, He will make an end to it. Not a deflection. Not a way around it. But an end to it!

What do you want more, God to remove a trial or temptation that will just come back like a boomerang , or would you rather God to bring an end to it?

Temptation is rooted in our own evil desires.....God wants to bring an end to them.

Trials weigh on our mind, keep us up at night, consume our thoughts and at times hinder us from living a full, blessed life. God wants to bring an end to them.

When we are looking for the way out, we should not be looking for what God is going to do, but what He has already done. Jesus IS the way out. Jesus IS the end to your trial and your temptation. Even while you are already in it, the way out has already been made.....

In Daniel chapter 3 we see these three young men, refusing to worship the king instead of God even though the consequences were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Talk about trial and temptation.....

Daniel 3:19-27 (NKJV)

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

To me what is amazing about this situation is that they were already free when they were still in the fire....

There was a fourth man in the fire.....that Man was Jesus. Yes, Jesus thousands of years before the first Christmas.....He was in the fire with them, they were not alone. But I'm certain that they didn't see Him in there first.....but they knew He would provide the way out, and end to this trial, and end to this temptation to just bow to the king.

They had told the king a few verses earlier that they would not worship him and that the God that they serve would deliver them from the fiery furnace AND from the king's hand!

Oh church, if we could have the faith of these young men when trial and temptation is at our doorstep!

The moment you decide to trust God, He will strengthen you, the Holy Spirit will create a peace in your heart and even a song on your lips. He is faithful.....and He is the way out. You eyes upon Jesus.

Whatever you are facing today, will you trust Him for your way out? Not around the fire, but through it. Sanctification comes by trial, by fire. It refines us, it purifies us, it helps to shape us into the image of Jesus.....

Jude 24-25 (NKJV)

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless

Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

25 To God our Savior,

Who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty,

Dominion and power,

Both now and forever.

Amen.