

Jason Upchurch - 1 Cor. 10:13 - You Don't Have to Sin

We come to one of the most well known verses in the whole book of 1 Corinthians this morning. One that many of you have memorized at some point or know well. If you haven't memorized this verse I highly encourage you to do so.

Because my hope today as we look at this one verse in detail is that you will be encouraged in your struggle against sin. That you will be comforted by the grace of God and renewed in your battle to follow the Lord Jesus

And the bottom line is this: As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't have to sin.

There is never a situation you will be in where the only option for you is to sin. From the moment you are saved, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and God has given every grace you need to go through every situation in life in a manner that pleases him.

I don't know about you but I need encouragement in the battle against sin. I get really tired of my sin. I get tired of battling the same old flesh day after day. I can't stand temptations to sin because I am often weak.

Rom. 7 rings true: All the things I want to do, I don't do and all the things I don't want to do, I do. So there's this war that rages.

I get tired of making resolves to change forever only to fall into the same sin again. And just when I think I've made progress I stumble and fall: there are sins that I used to struggle with and it occurs to me that I haven't struggled with that for a while and I'm think "man, this is great! I'm doing really well!" And then...not so much.

This is really the life of every believer from the cross to the return of Jesus. The moment the Lord saves us and we are freed from the punishment of sin. But what we look forward to is glory where we are freed from the presence of sin.

I'm looking forward to being freed from the presence of sin in glory with Jesus forever.

But in the meantime we live our lives struggling to put sin to death. And we need warnings against the dangers of sin, but we also need encouragements to keep going when we get weary in the battle. And that's what I hope to give you this morning: encouragement in your struggle against sin.

Now remember, from last week we saw this big warning against idolatry and sexual immorality and grumbling. In the OT those who claimed to be the people of God but were caught up in those sins were put to death by God. And Paul warned us of the same fate in **Vs. 12**. Here in **Vs. 13** Paul softens up a little and gives us some hope.

So we're break this one verse up into 2 parts. The first part of the verse is about sin and the second part is about God. And we need to understand both parts in order to be encouraged.

1) The Common Threat of Sin. Read 13

So just like anything, we need to understand what we're battling if we're going to have victory. When football coaches are getting their team ready for the next game they go over game film of the other team. When armies are preparing to do battle they do recon to determine what they're up against.

We need to understand sin to know how to battle it. The first thing Paul says here is that we understand is that sin is going to try to get you. He uses a very graphic phrase: "No temptation has **overtaken** you."

It's almost like he is personifying sin. Like sin itself has an agenda and that agenda is to seize us and snatch us and do harm to us. And that's true.

Gen. 4:7: God says to Cain right before he murders his brother Abel: sin is crouching at the door. It's desire is for you but you must rule over it.

That's an interesting phrase. It's like a shop owner closing up for the night and there's some thugs right outside waiting to rob the shop owner as soon as he comes out. And God is saying "You've got thugs right outside. You better come out with a baseball bat or taser or sidearm or something. You better master them or it'll master you."

This is what temptation is. It's no joke; it will try to overtake you.

Now, just to be clear, just because we are tempted to sin doesn't mean we have sinned. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet without what? Sin.

So just because the temptation comes along - the proverbial sin thugs come along - doesn't mean we've actually lost the battle.

So just because your friend comes to start telling you some juicy morsel of gossip doesn't mean you've sinned just yet, you can stop it.

Just because someone offers you a third helping of cookies doesn't mean you're glutton just yet.

Just because the internet link pops up, doesn't mean you've sinned just yet.

When the temptation comes we have a choice. We can choose to sin or we can choose to obey the Lord. We actually have choice because **Rom. 6** tells us we are no longer slaves of sin to do its bidding, we are slaves of righteousness and we are to do what our master tells us.

So the sin comes along and we have a choice.

By the way, temptations come from a variety of places and we need to be very aware of what **we** are most prone to fall into.

I think it was Tim Challies who once asked, "If you were Satan, how would you tempt you today?" What would it be? Where are you weak? And that's the exact area you need to shore up and defend against.

Temptations usually come from either within or from without.

Temptations from within are those things we basically do to ourselves. We stop by a store we know we have no business shopping in. "You can't afford that, what are you doing in here?"

I'll be honest, one of my worst temptations to sin is having make believe conversations with people. And how it happens is that I'm driving somewhere and my mind starts to wander and I remember someone who hurt me or wronged me. And I start having this mental make believe conversation with them. You ever do that? And before long I'm chewing them out, and saying things I would never actually say. And then I snap to and realize **this is fiction!** This doesn't exist, I'm making all of this up and I'm sinning in fairy tale land.

These kinds of temptations are internal. They are of the flesh, they are our own making. We have to be very careful what we set our minds on because often times it will lead us into sin. We actually have to master our hearts and our minds.

Temptations are also external. You're just minding your own business when - boom - sin comes knocking. Someone asks you about a situation you were involved in and you're tempted to lie about it. Or you're minding your own business and your dad tells you to go do something and your first response isn't "Why, yes, Father, I would be delighted to instantly stop playing my game and do that ridiculous chore you just told me to do." And maybe fathers you're tempted to yell when said child doesn't oblige instantaneously.

These are external temptations. There's internal, there's external and we need to be on guard for both. And we need to be brutally honest with where we are the weakest or we're gonna get slaughtered.

One thing we do know is that the source of temptation is often the devil. He is called the Tempter. That's just what he does.

1 Pet. 5:8 says he prowls around looking to devour us. The devil and his demons are not sitting back watching things unfold. They are actively trying to devour us - to eat us alive.

So these temptations are trying to overtake us. They're trying to master us.

Here's the deal though: it's the same old playbook. **Read 13**

There is absolutely nothing new under the sun. All of our temptations are common. Paul actually says it in a double negative: no temptation is not common to man. Reverse that and it's: Every temptation is common. Even all the cultural sinful madness, it's nothing new.

CRT! What are we going to do about that? Well, CRT is just the sin of partiality based on skin color. It's the sin of racism repackaged. Nothing new. We know how to fight that. Everyone is made in the image of God so we treat everyone with respect and gentleness.

Well, what about LGBTQI+?? It's just the same sin of homosexuality and denial of God's making us male and female that it's always been.

See, we don't need to fear these sins. This is the same old stuff that's always been around. And you know what the solution to it all is? The gospel. That Christ who has been raised from the dead will judge the entire universe and the only hope anyone has of escaping that judgment is to turn from their sin and trust that he alone - as Lord of heaven and earth - will forgive them based on his shed blood.

And more to the point here, there's nothing new with the sins we struggle with.

Paul specifically has in mind idolatry, sexual immorality, and grumbling. Those were all the examples he just gave us.

We are always prone to become idolatrous. To make something else in our life our functional god. Maybe here we don't bow down to a little metal trinket. But Bible says covetousness is idolatry. So anything that we are coveting is our functional god.

Do you covet your neighbors house or ox or lawnmower or television his phone? That plasticity thing made in China has just become your functional god. The Israelites struggled with idolatry and wonder of wonders - so do we.

This is common. That's not to say it's okay, but it is to say we need to be on guard. What's the one thing in life you really, really want? A wife? That fancy car? Peace and quiet? We need to know our own hearts and where we are tempted into idolatry. That fill in the blank, or maybe several fill in the blanks, is our functional idol.

What about sexual immorality? Can I tell you something? Christians struggle with sexual immorality. My friend Jim Moore once said that 90% of Christian men struggle with sexual temptation. The other 10% are liars. You guys, nothing - no thing - has overtaken you that is not common to man.

And I'm guessing the same is true with the ladies. It might be more of an emotional connection you desire than physical, but it's still a temptation to long for someone other than your spouse.

We were watching watching a romantic comedy last week that shall remain nameless, but Tom Hanks did a good job playing a guy who was kind and sincere and caring at every turn. And Meg Ryan, of course looked regal in every scene she was in. Can I tell you something? That is pure fiction. It does not exist in real life.

That's the allure, especially of sexual temptation: that you can have an unreal fantasy life that your spouse - or lack of spouse - isn't providing. This struggle is common. I'll bet if we all just had an honesty session about marriage sometime we'd all realize we're all struggling more than we admit. But this is common.

So is grumbling and complaining. Humanity has always been tempted to be a bunch of whiners, completely ungrateful for anything God has given us. I mean in the Garden of Eden right after Adam sins, what's he do? "The woman **your gave to me.**" He just tossed Eve under the bus and implicated God. Then Eve does the same thing to the serpent. We grumble and complain and blame shift.

There are other sins we struggle with too. Did you know that Christians struggle with depression? Deep, long depression?

People struggle with swearing and gossip and slander.

People struggle with lying and coveting and drunkenness. With homosexuality. With hatred and murder of the heart.

This is all common. God's not up in heaven like, "Woah, that's a new one. Hey, Michael, come check this out." One of the battles we face is keeping our sin secret because we're ashamed of it. And there's a sense in which sin is shameful. But we don't tell anyone and therefore don't get any help or prayer or accountability because we don't want anyone to know.

Confessing our sins, one to another, is a topic for a different time. But what if we were all just gracious and prayerful and encouraging when someone did finally confess their sin? And what if we were assured of the same acceptance when we confessed our sin? Maybe we'd be encouraged to fight all the more knowing that we're in this together.

The nature of our sin is that it's the same old stuff that relentlessly attacks us.

What about the nature of our God? Take a look. **Read 13**

We learn 4 things about God here that help us in our struggle.

1) God is faithful. Really the idea here more precisely is that God is trustworthy. We can trust him in the midst of our trials.

When little kids are learning to climb on play equipment they're usually scared. They're nervous because they know they could fall and falling could be really bad. So what parents and grandparents do is reassure them. "Hey, I'm right here. I've got you. I won't let you fall, I'll keep you safe even though it's scary." Now, the question is whether or not the kid believes that. If the kid believes it they just keep climbing and work through the fear. If they doubt, it's going to be a rough go. But no matter what, the parent is trustworthy - they will keep the child safe.

That's the idea here. God is trustworthy in the midst of our trials. He's not unaware of our situation. "Oh man, I didn't realize Jason was going through that trial." I hope he doesn't slip and fall, cause that could be really bad." God never says that. He says, "I'm trustworthy."

Even if we fail and sin he's trustworthy.

2 Tim. 2:11: If we have died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains what? Faithful.

Outright rejection of God results in him outright rejecting us. But when we are faithless - when we sin - God remains faithful. He is trustworthy in the midst of our trials.

2) The second thing we learn about God is that he is sovereign over our trials. **Read 13**

So God is trustworthy and specifically he is trustworthy to know what you can and cannot handle. Whatever trial comes your way has been pre-approved by God for you. Specifically tailored for your sanctification.

God is not a far off God just hoping his kids don't get in too much trouble while he's away. He is intimately and sovereignly engaged in our trials for our good and for his glory. **Turn** over to **James 1** for a moment.

So if you remember from the book of Job there's just this tension we have to be comfortable with when it comes to talking about trials. Who orchestrated the trials in Job's life? God did. Who carried out the trials in Job's life? Satan did. So who tried Job? In one sense, God did. He's the one who brought up Job, "Have you considered my servant Job?" And he's the one who set the limits of the trials.

On the other hand Satan alone is responsible for attempting to get Job to sin. We see the same truths here. **Read 1:2-4**

So what should our attitude be when trials come our way? It's to rejoice. Count it all joy. Why? Well, if you connect all the dots James makes here, it's to perfect us. Well, who's trying to perfect us? God or Satan? God is. But **look** down at **Vs. 12-15. Read**

So at the very end of all these trials that God's children go through, we get the crown of life. We receive our inheritance and reward.

But, and this is big, we can never say that God himself is tempting us. Our holy God would never try to get us to sin. His goal in orchestrating trials - even sovereignly using Satan in his plan - is to perfect us and mature us. If we sin it's because of our own desires.

By the way: you might have noticed that sometimes the word trial is used and sometimes the word temptation is used. What's the difference? Well, they're actually the same base word in the original language. But a temptation is specifically an enticement to sin. A trial is just a tough time we're going through where we could sin if we're not careful. Either way, any time we're about to sin we need to keep these things in mind.

So how do we understand God's role in all of this? I don't know except to say that God is sovereign, but will never try to get us to sin. That is never his goal. But he does use the tempter to accomplish his good purposes in our life.

But **look** back at **1 Cor. 10**. Whatever else we can say about the sovereignty of God in the midst of our trials is this: he will never, ever allow us to be tempted beyond our ability.

I'd never take my 3 year old to the gym and have him try to bench press 225lbs. That's beyond his ability. If I did that he'd be set up for catastrophic failure. It wouldn't be his fault, it would be my fault. Didn't I know he couldn't handle that?

If we went to the gym I'd give him the 2lb dumbbell. It might get heavy after a while, it might get hard. But I know he can hold 2lbs.

In the same way, when we go through a trial, we have a trustworthy God. He's not going to drop a dump truck on us. It might feel like a dump truck. But it's probably more like a 2lb weight we just don't want to carry anymore. "Well, Jason, my trial seems more like 100lbs all the time."

Well, that might be. But you know what? If this is the trial, you can be assured by God almighty that it's not too much for you. Because he would never give you too much. You might be at the max, but never one ounce more.

His purpose isn't to crush you, it's to prepare you. And you can do that with joy knowing you're faithfulness will bring him praise.

2 Cor. 4:17: For this light and momentary affliction - our afflictions are light and momentary - is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

However heavy your trial feels, know that the glory that awaits will make it pale in comparison.

So God is trustworthy. God is sovereign in our trials.

3) God always makes a way out. **Read 13**

So again, God is very near to us in the midst of our temptations and our trials. Remember, you never have to sin. There is always a way of escape.

One commentator said that the wording that is used here is like an army that's trapped in a valley and the enemy is pressing in. And what God is saying is that there's always a secret passage. There's always route out of the valley.

Have you ever seen those escape rooms that people do? You pay money to get trapped in a room and you have 1 hour to figure out how to get out. You have to use clues and logic to win.

That's the idea here. There's always a way out of temptation. It might not be obvious at first. We might have to try. But there's always always a way.

Can I just say something? We don't very often think through ways to get out of our sin. We're not looking for the escape route. Or if we do know what we need to do, we don't actually implement it.

God is sovereign in our hour of temptation, but as you might expect: there's a responsibility aspect here on our part.

How are you tempted to sin? Do you have a plan in place for avoiding that temptation? When you're around that person you end up gossiping. What's your plan to escape from that?

You find yourself on web pages you shouldn't be on when you're on your phone. What's your plan? How are you escaping?

Maybe you embellish your stories a little bit to make them sound more interesting. You know what that's called? Lying. What's your path of escape the next time you are telling a story?

Maybe you get really angry when the kids do something. Maybe your husband drives you crazy. What's the plan?

God provides the path of escape, but it's not always obvious. Or sometimes it is and we don't take it. I've told guys who struggle with porn on their phone to go get a old school flip phone. This isn't rocket science.

4) God will sustain us. **Read 13**

Sometimes the way of escape isn't that the temptation is completely removed. Sometimes it's that we are given the ability to endure. And endure for the long haul.

Are you tempted to complain about your spouse or work or your medical condition? The way of escape isn't always miraculous healing or finding out you just inherited a massive fortune. Sometimes it's just that God simply sustains you through it over years.

The word endure is the idea of bearing up under something. You've seen the Greek god Atlas? He's carrying the world on his shoulders. Some of you guys are carrying heavy burdens. And the way of escape for you is simply to carry that burden, work through that trial for the long, long haul.

And if you're like me you think "I just can't bear up under this any more. I'm going to collapse." Sure you can. In fact, God promises that you can. He gives you the ability to endure it. If you're going through it, he will provide what you need to make it through.

The issue is never ability - you have the ability. The issue is willingness. We don't want to endure it. We want all our trials to go away and temptations to go away and burdens to go away.

They will. One day. When we see Jesus face to face. And when we do, we will look back on all our trials like Christian looked back on his life in Pilgrim's Progress. And we'll be able to say "I made it because of God. I made it because he gave me strength."

All to him be the glory. Press on in your fight against temptation. God is trustworthy.

Pray