

PP Twisted Scriptures: A Way of Escape

Text 1 Corinthians 10:13 *God won't give you more than you can handle*

7/16-17/2016

Follow along with me as I read the following paragraph on the screen behind me?

PP *"A seashore is a better place than the street because you need lots of room. At first it is better to run than to walk. You may have to try several times. It takes some skill, but it is easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it. Birds seldom get too close. If there are no snags it can be very peaceful. But if it breaks loose, you won't get another chance."*

At first, this seems like it makes no sense, but let me give you the one-word context...Kite

Now when we read it again, the paragraph makes perfect sense

Popular scripture verses must be read in context, or their sense will not be clear, and it's what we are doing in this summer series called 'Twisted Scriptures'

The verse we are looking to untwist today is found in **1 Corinthians 10:13** and goes like this:

"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."

Somehow, it has been reduced to this popular statement: 'God will never give you more than you can handle'

But Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 1:8**, ***"we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself."***

But let's find the context and see what the verse is really saying

PP 1-The Christian must learn self-control

Let's notice verse 12 where Paul wrote, ***"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."*** **10:12**

And here we go on our hunt for context as '**Therefore**' is a connector word, tying Paul's thoughts together like beads on a necklace

Do you see in verse 11, ***"Now these things happened..."***?

It's another bead, so let's follow his thoughts backward in the text

There's another bead in verse 6, ***"Now these things took place..."***

This is more fun than walking around the neighborhood looking for Charmanders and Digletts...

We're getting close to learning the context, but we have another bead in verse 1, ***"For..."***

Some of you will like what Paul wrote at the end of chapter 9, because he's talking sports

"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." **1 Corinthians 9:25-27**

Did you catch what he wrote in verse 25, ***"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things."***?

Self-control is so critical he underscored it in verse 27, ***"keep [my body] under control"***

PP ***"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."*** **Prov. 25:28**

Self-control is something the Holy Spirit is working to produce in our character and without it, we can make shipwreck of our faith

We exercise what the Holy Spirit is producing...self control, self-discipline

The reason we must exercise self-control is because 10:14 is coming... ***“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry”***

Idolatry is all about worshipping someone, something other than God to get what our heart desires
Adam and Eve ate that fruit, why...to be wise, like God, knowing good and evil

In all forms of idolatry, the self is at the center and the things we worship the means to satisfy us
There are some ways to test for it...

Do you worship beauty?? Try going a week without exercise and see how you feel mentally and emotionally

Go out in public periodically without makeup and gauge whether your sense of beauty is focused on your outer or inner self

Notice how often you compare your looks to others, how much you fantasize looking differently, how much you fearfully look for signs of aging

To see if you worship food, take a break from junk food for a week and observe just how often food is a reward and an escape for us

Idolatry takes hold of our thoughts and fills them until they consume us mentally

To see if you worship entertainment, start taking regular times to experience quiet and stillness

Do you find that you have to have music playing constantly crowding out redemptive silence?

When you are having a stressful day, are you longing for your Netflix binge-watching evening, or that new book or the live vicariously through others on FB?

To see if you have elevated your children above God, begin praying them over to Him and see if a battle of will and fear erupts

We can make an idol out of anything or anyone...hoarding, relationships, larger homes than we need, aggressively working for that next rung on the career ladder

Maybe you need to contact that realtor and begin downsizing

If you want to keep money and greed from becoming idols, then give more of it to God's work around the world

Examine your motives before you click *Buy it now* on eBay or *Place your order* on Amazon

Do you need it or want it and what exactly is motivating you?

Hold on to your cell phone long after the next generations of phones come out

Cash out some of that excess jewelry, sell some of those extra shoes, give the money to the poor

Take a pass on the latest fashions and be content with the clothes you have

Pass over that promotion that comes with a price and preserve your ability to spend time with your family

Leave your laptop at home and turn off your phone in the evenings, on vacation and see just how powerful is the pull to keep checking it...do you need to be needed at work!

Examine why you are so undone when someone is upset with you

How important is it that people respect you, are influenced by you?

Idolatry is pervasive to every human being and we must take constant vigil against it, learning self-control

But one enemy of self-control is overconfidence and that is where Paul turns next

PP 2-The Christian must not become over-confident

Have you ever seen a movie where they play back a video, maybe security footage, images blurring, and when they get it back far enough, they start it forward in real time?

That's what we are doing, with the aim of getting to the intended meaning of **verse 13**
 You watch the scriptural footage while I fast forward us through Paul's history lesson
"For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea" 1 Corinthians 10:1

Israel was privileged to see God perform some incredibly awesome exploits
 He led them by a cloud; He delivered them from Egypt through the Sea; He miraculously fed them for forty years with manna and quail and gave them water to drink from a rock
 But despite these privileged blessings, most died in the wilderness and in **verse 6** he tells them why: *they desired evil*

We presume on the blessings of God, His grace and kindness, we grow lax in our spiritual lives
 Grace wrongly understood can make us over-confident, so sure of forgiveness that sin loses its horror, believing that our gracious God won't be too bothered, He'll forgive us
 Over confidence can create in the Christian a license to sin just as it did for Israel
 In **verse 7**, he says they were **'idolaters'**, who **'sat down to eat and drink and rose to play'**

PP The word **'play'** here is a word used for sensual immorality

Remember that Paul is writing the church of Corinth, and it's eerily similar to our modern church
 It was a church surrounded by idols, in a city immersed in pagan revelry and immorality
 Everywhere around them was moral decay, yet the church believed themselves perfectly secure in their Christian lives, living without caution as they embraced their culture

They had been saved, baptized, well-taught, full of spiritual gifts, believed themselves mature

PP *"They thought they were strong enough to freely associate with pagans in their ceremonies and social activities and not be affected morally or spiritually, as long as they did not participate in outright idolatry or immorality."* MacArthur

This is the church, or Christian that believes that they are strong enough to enjoy what the world has to offer and not be harmed by it

So Paul warns, ***"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."*** **10:12**
 One of the surest ways to fall into sin is to become overconfident

Christian, if you and I live in this world running after it, our spiritual passion will grow cold

PP ***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*** **1 John 2:15**

PP **'world'** here does not mean God's creation, as if you must hate living life on this planet

No, it is the realm of Satan's influence, the system that opposes God and His will

So the music that we love and tell others' about should not be that which opposes God

The movies we watch, TV shows we make sure not to miss, should not be those which put forth ideologies straight from the agenda of Satan

How we give, how we dress, how we parent and work and rest and play ought to reflect God's kingdom and not this world's

Our views on politics, racism, terrorism, should be scripture-centered and distinct from the world

Despite all their amazing privileges, seeing miracle after miracle, experiencing God's love, providence and protection in such personal ways, they ran after idols, God-substitutes
 Paul gave this history lesson because it serves examples-**verse 6 and 11**-we must pay attention to the example of Israel, or we will become overconfident and fall as well
 And then he comes to our twisted scripture verse, and it explodes with meaning

PP 3-The Christian will always be given a way through temptation

We must develop self-control, walking with the Spirit of God and disciplining our bodies
 We cannot be overconfident thinking that we can walk in worldliness yet remain strong in Christ
 Yet for every believer, times of testing and temptation will come, and they serve to strengthen us
“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.” 10:13

Satan doesn't have a lot of different tricks in his bag...but he's extremely good at the ones he has
 People of faith since the beginning of the world have experienced the same temptations as us
 The temptations we face are not greater than any other Christian in any other era
 And that is oddly comforting because others have shown that we can endure these temptations

There is something interesting about that word, ***‘temptation’***

PP The basic meaning of ***‘temptation’*** is *test* or *prove* and by itself has no negative connotation
 Temptations are tests that and depending on whether they are administered by God or Satan, they have different goals

PP God administers and/or allows tests to come to us, to prove our faith genuine and true
“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.” Luke 22:31-32

PP ***“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.” James 1:13***

PP Satan never tests but instead tempts us, with the goal of making our faith fail
 But we have help in God, Who ‘is faithful’, and is why Jesus taught us to pray, ***“lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”***, which is better translated, the ***‘evil one’***

Paul tells us that in every testing of our faith, God is faithful to do two things:

PP First, He will not let temptation be beyond the ability that He gives us to endure it well
 No one can ever truly say that the devil made me sin

PP Why, because of the second thing that God is faithful to do: ***“He will also provide the way of escape”***

Notice something really important here...there is one way out, ***‘the way of escape’***

Every test that Satan uses to tempt us to sin, and fail, God will give us one way out

If we don't like the way that God provides, or not take it immediately, we will fail

But there is something else important with the phrase ***‘way of escape’***

God will not take us out of the temptation, but will take us through it safely

The reason why is for our endurance, our perseverance and steadfastness

Faith is the spiritual muscle of the redeemed, and like any muscle, it grows stronger through resistance and difficulty

PP I really like what Spurgeon says: ***“There is hardship in everything except eating pancakes.”***

The Christian who is being drawn down that Internet road to porn, and suddenly the computer freezes, there is your way through the temptation...turn it off, call an accountability partner, remember Scripture, pray and refocus on serving those you love
 Don't delay one moment...that way will close, your enemies will close about you

Your mouth opens to gossip, and that sharp mental warning comes up, that is your way that God has provided to get through the test, so confess it, and say something positive about that same person

Don't delay even one second...the way through will close up

That desire to just buy something you don't need, and Jeremy Camp's *There will Be a Day* comes on the radio, that's your way out, so get away from Amazon, turn the car around the store, direct that money to God's work around the globe

We must not delay when the way of escape comes...take it and your faith will grow

Christian, we must live with self-control, not overconfidently presuming on God's grace

Instead, depending daily on His inexhaustible strength, knowing that He promises to not let any temptation overcome the power He gives us, and to make sure, He will always provide a way of escape so we can endure it for His glory

This week, view that difficult moment as allowed by God, knowing that Satan wants you to fail, but you can endure by taking the way through it that God will faithfully give

Walk with the Holy Spirit, grow in self-control, discipline your body with its desires

Do not be overconfident, for the enemy is stronger than your own natural strength

But with God's help, we can endure faithfully and gain the victory

Amen?

Pray