

A WAY OF ESCAPE

1Cor 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

In Greek, the word for temptation is *peirasmos* and includes a whole raft of meanings such as trials, temptation to sin, test, afflictions and troubles etc. Now the first thing to note is that the scripture in I Cor 10:13 states, “such as is common to man”. *Peirasmos* (pronounced *peirasmas*) is common to humankind. If you are a human being, then God will permit such trials to affect us now and then. The question is not if but when, and, more importantly, what to do when this strikes a Christian. Let me make one thing clear: there is a world of difference between trials and evil. Note the precise words of the Lord’s prayer: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matthew 6:13). Firstly, we are to pray that the Lord will not lead us into temptation (*Peirasmos*). If we pray this prayer, the Lord can deliver us from unnecessary trials that afflict the soul. However, it does not mean that he will never lead us into temptation. Some of us need trials to get serious with God and do his will. Just consider the example of Jonah! Having said that, deliver us from evil does not mean the Devil will not lead us into temptation. The Devil tried to tempt the Lord himself. It appears the Devil has been granted this power from God to tempt any and everyone. Thankfully, however, the Lord’s prayer states “deliver us from evil”. Evil is not the same as temptation and trials. Even the Greek word is different here *ponēros* (pronounced *paneraas*). No good thing can be associated with evil. It is wicked and destructive. Once we have understood the distinction between the two, let us consider some examples from the Bible to help concretize the above.

Gen 39:1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

Gen 39:5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

Joseph was the first Hebrew slave in Egypt. Abraham entered Egypt as a free man, but his great-grandson Joseph entered Egypt with chains as a slave. This is temptation. We don’t

know the workings of the Almighty but we are called to believe by faith that God is faithful and he will provide an escape that we may be able to bear it. He did not say that the temptation will disappear, but that we are to look for a miraculous way of escape to bear that will make the temptation bearable. Praise Jesus! This escape came in the form of favor with Potiphar. Joseph was promoted to the position of overseer and the Lord blessed Potiphar abundantly because of Joseph. This is the exit, the escape. Joseph would become busy being productive and enjoying prestige that no slave ever experienced before. God does not want you to sit and fret endlessly about our problems. Had Joseph sat idly, he would have agonized about his family back in the Land of Canaan. God gave him authority and responsibility among the Egyptians to keep him preoccupied. This was Joseph's miraculous escape – this was the divine exit that helped him bear his temptation. At night, Joseph must have been too tired to stay awake worrying about what he lost. God intends for us to look for our Potiphars in our temptations, not worry about Jacob. There will be a time to be reconciled with Jacob, but now is the time to embrace your Potiphar – he is God's escape from slavery. Next, let us consider the man whose name has become synonymous with patience, Job.

***James 5:11** Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

***Job 2:11** Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.*

This may come as a surprise to you but Job's escape from his trials were the company of three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Initially, they only intended to sit quietly beside him and share his grief and mourn with him. However, Job opened his mouth and began to justify himself and blame God. This provoked his friends who now began to confront and challenge Job. Job answered each one of them with more arrogance and self-justification. This went back and forth until God himself stepped in and confronted Job. So, Job was challenged by four people all in all – his three friends and God himself. This was his escape, his exit. Job's wife was not his escape; she told him to curse God and die, but thankfully he rejected and rebuked this suggestion. She was not his divine escape under the temptation, she was a trap door, a false exit. His three friends meant well. We are treated to some of the best thoughts and discourses about trials, sin, righteousness and the workings of God. We quote many of the scriptures from the Book of Job. The three friends of Job were not wrong in their

theology, but in the fact that they blamed Job for having sinned. Nevertheless, my point is that God kept Job very busy through these discourses and exchanges. We must know the name of names of our divine escape when we are under duress. God waited until the 38th chapter before he said something once his three friends had no more to say and fell silent. God sent his three friends to keep him company and engage him. This was the great escape although Job did not understand this at the time. Sometimes our escape may come disguised – we may not even know it is operating. We may be rude to our escape and keep disagreeing, but Job did not ask them to leave. As we talk with our friends, the escape the Lord provided, time will fly and our trials will become bearable. Often, we are not even aware that our trials have become lighter. Glory to God! The final example we shall consider is that of the Apostle Paul in chains on the way to Rome.

Act 28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

Act 28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

There is that beautiful word, escape, which is the subject of this Bible study. Certain Jews had bound themselves under an oath to kill the apostle. God arranged for Paul to be escorted as a prisoner to Rome because he had appealed to Caesar. God had other plans on the way to Rome. The Lord will not allow a man of the spiritual stature of Paul to sit idly in chains in a ship on a very long journey to Rome. For Paul, the worst trial was not the chains but the deprivation of his freedom to preach the Gospel of salvation in Jesus' name. Let us fear no other chain than this one! This must have caused Paul great pain. But God is the God of the storms and ships. He smashed and destroyed the ship – a fact that he already revealed to Paul beforehand. Paul and all the ships inhabitants arrived safely in Malta. The Lord had souls on the way to Rome – souls who may not have been reached any other way perhaps. This was Paul's escape – the chains, the ship and the storm – so he could preach the Gospel in Malta. What a beautiful escape. Paul knew that all suffering or trials he experienced for the Gospel were actually God's "escapes" to lighten his burden so he could fulfill the one mission he lived and breathed for: salvation of souls in Jesus' name.

What trial are you going through right now? Look for the escape in Jesus' name! It may be Potiphar, the three friends of Job or the storm which destroys the ship so you can land in Malta and propagate the Gospel. Remember: "but God is faithful, who will not suffer you

to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”.