

Enduring Temptation

The problem in Corinth was idolatry. Some Christians in Corinth were attempting to have their feet in two different worlds. Yes, they had been baptized, and they participated in the Lord's Table, but they also participated in the social culture of idolatry. They were apparently at fellowship meals of idols, what Paul calls the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21). They had participated in God's benefits, but they compromised their loyalty in daily life.

Paul uses an analogy from the Exodus. God's people coming out of Egypt were "baptized" under the cloud and in the Red Sea. They ate the same spiritual food – manna, the bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4). They drank the same spiritual drink – water from the Rock. Yet, when they participated in idolatry, twenty-three thousand fell in a single day (1 Corinthians 10:8). They had participated in God's benefits, but they compromised their loyalty in daily life.

Paul cautions them not to put Christ to the test. Don't grumble against God. "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, *ESV*). The last phrase warns us that we can be presumptuous about our standing before God. Sin can lead us away from God, and our pride prevents us from recognizing it.

It is in this context of spiritual peril, that we receive a wonderful promise. Temptations are common to all. We are in no position for special pleading. We cannot say that my temptations are different and unique from everyone else's temptations. We will face temptations, but we will face them with a wonderful promise.

The wonderful promise is based on God's faithfulness. God won't let us be tempted beyond what we can bear, and He will provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). The promise is there so that the Christian can endure temptation. We are to bear up under it without giving in to it.

No, I won't do that perfectly. But I am cautioned about attempting to live with my feet in two different worlds with two different sets of loyalties. I shouldn't be presumptuous about grace. I can't rely on a "cheap grace" that leaves me as I am. Grace is to transform us.

When I endure, my character is strengthened. When I fail, I set myself up for other failures. When I fail, I must turn to the spiritual resources that God has given me – my spiritual armor – to fight the next battle. For there is a spiritual battle going on for my heart, my allegiance, and my life.

Paul's message is a challenge to our culture. Too many want to be spiritual and do as they please. Cheap grace is permissive; true grace is transforming. God wants me to learn how to endure temptations

by relying on His faithfulness. He has given His promise to help me endure.

– Russ Holden