

THE WAY OF ESCAPE IS THROUGH THE TRIAL

When you hear the term “a way of escape” what comes to your mind? Does it conjure up something like an easy way out of something? Is an easy way out what is meant when the apostle Paul uses the term over in 1 Corinthians 10? Tonight I would like to look at this verse and aim to demonstrate that the way of escape being referred to is not an escape from our trials but an escape through our trials.

Let's take a look at Paul's well-known verse over in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Paul here says: “No temptation has taken you but *what is* common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but with the temptation also will make a way to escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*.”

Many people assume that God allows trials to come upon us and when things get a little too tough God will take us out of the trial. Is this what it really says? Does He spare us the trial when the going gets rough? Notice the last part of the verse - but with the temptation also will make a way to escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*. Why should you have to bear it if God is going to bail you out of the trial?

The thrust of this verse is that God will always be faithful to us to give us the strength to bear any trial. With every temptation and testing that comes our way the way of escape He provides us the ability to bear or endure the test and stay faithful to Him and His way of life. We do not have to give in to sin. We can obey God in every circumstance. God's focus here is not on our comfort, it is on our character and overcoming the sins that we need to break free from.

One minister in an article about True Conversion wrote the following:

"People have occasionally written to ask us to pray that God would take away their desire for cigarettes. Now, it may be that God will perform a miracle and take away the craving for nicotine. But why should He take away your sense of smell and taste? If you really like the smell and taste of a cigarette, should God change all of that to where you hate it? Must all the laws of nature be changed to make it easy for us to overcome?"

"I hate to disillusion anyone, but if God had intended to make it easy for us to overcome sin, we would have been out of the woods long ago. Could it be that He is willing that it should be hard work to overcome sin? Could it be that the way God changes us into what He wants us to be is through the hard knocks of life?"

Let's take a look now at a classic Bible story that illustrates this principle of the way of escape being straight through the trial. It is found in the book of Daniel in chapter 3 and involves 3 young men called Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah or better known to us as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In verse 1 we read: "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits, and its breadth six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." 60 cubits is around 100 feet or 10 stories high. Nebuchadnezzar certainly had quite the ego.

Going down to verse 12 some Chaldees tell Nebuchadnezzar: "There are men, Jews, whom you have set over the business of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, do not heed you. They do not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in anger and wrath commanded them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do you not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you are ready, at the time you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, zither, the lyre, harp, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, fall down and

worship the image which I have made. But if you do not worship, in that moment you shall be thrown into the middle of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that god who shall deliver you out of my hand?

How would you respond in this situation? Would you reason that since I'd be killed if I don't bow down that God would understand if I did the outward action of bowing down to the image but still worshipped God in my heart. Would that be the easy way out that God would be happy with? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew better and were prepared to put their life on the line to obey God believing God could deliver them. In verse 17 they tell the king: "If it is so that our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, then He will deliver us out of your hand, O king."

They had faith God could deliver them as a way out of the trial but look what they say next in verse 18: "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up." They were so faithful to God that they would rather die than worship another god. They were prepared to go straight through the trial in complete obedience even if that cost them their lives.

God honours their obedience by delivering them from the trial. Nebuchadnezzar in his fury has them thrown into the fire and yet they are not harmed by the fire. Nebuchadnezzar says in verse 25: "Behold! I see four men loose, walking in the middle of the fire, and there is no harm among them. And the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods." God is there with them as they go straight through the trial. Their way of escape came as they went straight through the trial.

The moral of the story is much the same in the story of David and Goliath. David didn't chicken out like the other Israelites as he took on the giant Goliath. The way of escape from the oppression of the Philistines was straight through the trial. David had to take on that giant fully trusting God would guide his aim if he was obedient and did his part.

Jesus Himself was terrified of the extreme pain of His upcoming crucifixion when He prayed if possible, let this cup pass from Me. He did look for an easier way out of the problem IF there was a way that would fulfill the Father's purpose but there wasn't and Jesus obediently then went straight through the trial. We read of what help sustain Him through that trial over in Hebrews 12:2 where it says: "looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." Jesus focused on the end result – the joy that He would experience being able to bring salvation to all mankind and be a part of the God family.

Not only do we need to trust in God and seek His power to be with us through the trials that test our obedience we need to be supremely focused on the joy of the end result of being free of the besetting sins we battle or addictions such as alcohol, nicotine or porn. The way of escape from our besetting sins and addictions is going straight through the trial and building self control and discipline brick by brick until obedience becomes more automatic as we develop right habits and learn to be faithful.

Too often we love our sins too much to fight them or we don't value the end result of being free from those problems enough to endure the necessary pain to keep on fighting yet we have to keep on fighting especially with things like addictions. The way of escape is not to bail out when the internal pressure becomes too much but reject the temptations as soon as possible rather than entertaining them in our mind and hold onto God as hard as we can like an anchor or holding onto a rock in the midst of a terrible storm.

The way of escape God offers us in most cases is not an escape from our trials but an escape through our trials.