

2016\_02\_28 Passion | Sermon  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
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**Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil**

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So she messed up and now she's looking for a way out. Bridget had been invited over to her friend's house for a party. She knew her friend's parents were out of town, but she wasn't about to tell her parents that. She also knew that her boyfriend and his friends were planning to come over, but she wasn't about to tell her parents that either. She simply asked if she could sleep over at her friend's house that Friday, and her parents could see no reason why not. "Just be sure to get to bed by a reasonable hour," dad said.

But soon enough after getting there, the guys showed up, beer in hand, and all reasonable thinking has been clouded by temptation. At first she feels uncomfortable. She knows this was wrong and she begins trying to think of an excuse to leave. But she doesn't want to be left out, so she stays and begins to drink. Pretty soon more a few more friends show up and things get a little wild. The later it got, the messier it got.

Somewhere in her head she knows that the guys need to go, and again she is looking for a way out, but there is no longer a sense of control; to call her parents now would mean she'd be in trouble for sure. Instead, she just gets more lost in the mess that the crowd is leaving behind. The night gets late, and the crowd begins to dwindle. But her boyfriend doesn't leave. Instead, he asks her to go upstairs.

She isn't sure about this. She should find a way out of this, but there was no one there to tell her what to do. And there was no one there to help her. And so she goes.

After spending half the next day helping her friend clean her hour, Bridget comes home. She feels sick; she feels guilty; she feels trapped. What if she got pregnant? What would they say if they found out? So her dad asked her how things went. All she could say was, "fine." She feels trapped, like there was no way out.

The word temptation means “a lure,” or “a trap.” To be tempted is to be lured into something evil by the false promise of something good. It is like the sweet candy placed into the cage that lures us closer and closer until we find ourselves with the sweet candy in our hand and the cage door locked behind us. We look for a way out. But it is too late. We’ve been caught by the temptation of the devil. And the real trap is not the sin, but the guilt and loss at where to turn.

For that reason we offer up a prayer today. A prayer against the devil. A prayer that God would protect us from the devil’s trap and that in a time of temptation, he would teach us to call on him and find the way out. And so we pray, O Lord, as we hear your word and receive your Holy Spirit, we pray that you would lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Israel was looking for a way out; but they were looking in all the wrong places. God was right there with them all the while and they did not know where to find him. They had all come out under God’s gracious care. He had saved them, brought them out of their slavery in Egypt and was leading them toward the promised land of Canaan. They had all been baptized into the leadership of Moses, passing through the Red Sea as they entered into God’s care and promise. They watched as his glory cloud went before them. When food was no where to be found, God brought manna from heaven. When the water supply was running out, God struck a Rock and they drank. It was there in the desert that Christ was right with them, and yet they did not know where to find him. And because of this unbelief, they would never see the promised land. As they wandered about, lost, hungry, thirsty, wanting, facing an seemingly insurmountable task, God would be their only way of escape, their only salvation, and they didn’t know where to find him. They had forgotten to how to pray.

In our text for today, Paul uses these Old Testament stories to provide an example for us, that we should not fall into the same fateful trap as they.

### **1 Corinthians 10:1–13**

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup> And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “*The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*” <sup>8</sup> Nor let us commit

sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup> nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup> nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

This Word of the Lord is spoken for you.

Paul here uses Israel's experience in the desert as an example of how dangerous and deceitful the lures of sin are. And these are the very same temptations that we face in our lives. He writes, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." He illustrates this with four examples. As we look at each of these four, may God the Holy Spirit teach us to pray that God would "Lead us not into temptation."

The first example comes from Exodus chapter 32. It had been over two weeks since they had come to foot of the mountain and watched as Moses disappeared into the crevices of Mount Sinai. He was gone from sight and they got tired of waiting for him. They wanted something to celebrate today, a god they could see. So they told Aaron the High Priest, "Make for us a young calf covered with gold. Then we can celebrate something we can see. Then we can praise the God who brought us out of Egypt."

So Aaron melted together the jewelry and golden belongings that they had taken from the Egyptians and made it into the shape of a young cow. When the people saw it they rejoiced and said, "this is the God who brought us out of Egypt!" And 'the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play' (v.7).

How long has it been for you? Have you been waiting for a long time? It has been over 2000 years since Jesus went up to God. When is he coming back? When will he come to make things right? So we begin to be lured. The bait is set. And it comes in the form of our own golden image. We don't like waiting; waiting around for God to show himself or do something worth celebrating. We turn to the golden image of our own impatience. The precious time and money which lures us in. There is so much going on in our lives and we become slaves to the clock. Can we find 10 minutes in our day to pray? Can we allow an extra 15 minutes to spend some time teaching our children about Jesus? Can we find an extra 45 minutes in our weeks to go to Bible

Class? It seems sometimes that our lives have become little more than an advertising slogan: “Eat, drink, play.”

So Paul writes, “Do not become idolaters as some of them were.” And so we pray, “O Lord, lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.”

In Paul’s second example he takes us to Numbers chapter 25 where the children of Israel become trapped in their own sinful lusts. They have made their way to the banks of the Jordan river, and the more time they spend there, the more and more familiar with the surrounding peoples and culture. As it says in Numbers 25,

*1 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. 2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. (Numbers 25:1–3)*

And because of this, God sent a plague and 23,000 fell.

It is easy for us as Christians to get lured into thinking that its ok to flirt. As long as you don’t indulge, a little taste here and there won’t matter. We have been just like that girl, going upstairs, even though we know it is wrong. How often haven’t we found ourselves influenced more by the world around us than by our fellow Christians. How often hasn’t a boyfriend and girlfriend moved in together for financial reasons? How often haven’t we gone to that party, or been at that computer screen, or watched that movie? Are we so different than Israel? Do we remember how dangerous it is when we forget to pray: Lead us not into temptation.

Thirdly, Paul brings up the example of the serpents in Numbers 21. There we find that the people want something better than what God has given them. They have grown tired of these circumstances. There is no food, there is little water, and soon their health will take a turn for the worst. They complain at Moses for bringing them up out of Egypt, which ultimately means they are complaining against God. They can’t see how these circumstances are turning out for anything good. And they begin to test God. Or more specifically, as Paul puts it, they tempted Christ. Christ is the Rock that followed them, the promise that sustained and provided for them, but they no longer recognized him. So in order to teach them to rely on Him for their every need, He sends serpents into the camp. They begin to bite and infect the people; many grow sick, and some die.

Have you ever looked to the present circumstances in your life and began to wonder when God will do any good for you? Times are tough. Your budget is slipping behind, month after month. You can't seem to find that better job or that promotion or that better living situation you wish you had. Then, you go to the doctor and are struck with more bad news. When are things going to get better? Haven't you been a good enough Christian? When will God do something good for you? The trap is set. The lure is inviting you. For as Paul writes, so many of them that tested the Lord never escaped the trap. Their physical health or poverty was not the issue. It was their spiritual need, and they had forgotten to pray. And we pray: "Lord, Lead us not into temptation"

Finally Paul mentions the example given in Numbers 14, most dire example yet. God has led them to the brink of the land that he has promised to give them, to show them what awaits them. Spies have been dispatched to scout out the land. When they return they enter the camp with heads hung low. They say how the people there are like giants and their cities like castles. Their report promises nothing but trouble and death for such a small people. So the congregation of Israel began criticizing Moses and God. "Oh that we had died in Egypt! Let us select a new leader and return to Egypt." They were not just rejecting Moses, but God. And not just God, but also the promise; that is to say, they were rejecting Christ.

For us, this is the worst temptation. To be trapped in our own complaints and hopelessness is to be in the devil's cage. We listen to the news, we watch the presidential campaigns, we follow the polls, and we become bitter. How many people are choosing to vote for a certain candidate just because they are angry and want to make a point. How many other people get angry at the people who would vote in such a way. We complain against our own president, and we get angry about congress and the federal courts and the policies and the lack of conviction in Washington. This is the devil's work. He sets the trap to lure us into disbelief. Will God still be God? Does he still tell us to respect our superiors and government? Is he still going to lead us to his good purpose, to guide and protect his church no matter what judgments come upon this nation? Let us never forget to pray: "lead us not into temptation."

And in that prayer we find a way out. You messed up. You know you should have done differently. And now you feel sick; you feel guilty; you feel trapped. But there is a way out, and God is revealing it to you as he teaches you to pray. As we pray this prayer today, the way out appears. Even when in the midst of temptation, even after falling to temptation, even after being caught by the devil, in sin and shame – "God will provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it."

And He does so in these few words: "God is faithful." What that means, is that as much as you stumble, struggle, and succumb, God will never turn away from his efforts to save you. He is faithful. He is faithful to call to you; to cry out to you; to find you, so that you might find him in a time of trouble. He is faithful to show you where you have sinned, to show you the grave danger of it, and the pain it causes him. He is faithful to take that pain, take that sin, take that danger, and enter into it himself. He is faithful to offer himself to that trap, be engaged in your sins and darkness, to suffer for them in his own body on the tree, to free you from them and rise from the dead with all power over sin, death, and the devil. He is faithful to deliver you from evil.

He is faithful to Israel. He remains just but also merciful. He sends Moses who calls the people to repentance. He intercedes for the people, praying to God that he would stay true to his promise and have mercy on them. He provides a way of escape by raising up a bronze serpent so that all who look to his promise would be healed and forgiven. He tells them to repent and call on him that he might be faithful to deliver them from evil.

And he is faithful to us also. He is faithful to send his Son who calls us to repentance. Jesus intercedes for us, praying that God would allow one more season for the vineyard to produce fruit. He provides a way of escape by lifting up His own Son on the cross that all who look to him might be healed and forgiven. God is faithful to call us to repentance and to deliver us from all evil.

This is your way of escape. He baptizes you into Christ. He gives you to eat of the spiritual food offered in the Lord's Supper. He gives you to drink of the spiritual drink spoken in His Word. He strikes the Rock, who is Christ, and God's grace gushes forth where there otherwise was nothing for you. That is how we bear it. That is how we endure it. More and more, by turning to him in a time of need, a time of temptation and trial, and praying to him to deliver us from every evil. God is faithful.

And he is faithful to the young girl also. A few days had gone by and Bridget's guilt has begun to grow heavier and heavier. She knows she needs to talk to her parents. She had lied to them. They will be hurt and angry. But she simply cannot go on trapped in a lie.

She asked them to talk privately and she told them about the party, how she had lied, that she drank and how guilty she had been feeling about it. The first thing out of her father's mouth was, "We forgive you and God forgives you too." Of course there were some consequences, but for Bridget these were far preferred to the weigh she was carrying. Even if she hadn't been faithful, her parents had been. They were faithful to

forgive her. And God was too. She knows there is more to be dealt with about her boyfriend, however. She is relieved to learn that she's not pregnant; but she wonders what she'll do if he asks her again. So she begins to pray, "Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Amen.