

## Testing & the “Way of Escape”

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*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.*

– I Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)

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### 1 Doublespeak

It sometimes is the case that a verse or a passage of Scripture is familiar and frequently-cited, yet generally is misconstrued. In the English Bible, the misconception typically is due to the translation. The translation may be archaic; but sometimes a translation is bungled. And in some instances, a translation has been cunningly devised by a deceiver, with the intent to conceal or obfuscate truth. A case in point is an oft-quoted assertion by the Apostle Paul concerning testing, I Corinthians 10:13.

As it is rendered in the *King James Version*, the verse is nonsense and doublespeak; the verse reads as if Paul were contradicting himself. Temptation being nothing other than a trial or test, how is it possible for one to *bear* or *endure* a test and yet *escape* it? or how does the existence of a way of escape enable endurance? Moreover, the provision of a way of escape itself constitutes a temptation or test, as to whether the escape is utilized.

Surprisingly, most readers and most teachers fail to appreciate the logical incongruity of I Corinthians 10:13 as it stands in the *King James Version*. The failure is a reflection of the fact that, in this day and age, the general populace is lacking in discernment; few have developed the ability to think critically.<sup>1</sup> Discernment comes only through reading, study, thinking, and conversation.

Now and then, a teacher attempts to make sense of the inane translation found in the *King James Version*. These generally follow either of two conjectures, both supposing that testing or temptation is conducted in a chamber which is equipped with an escape hatch. The first conjecture is that once the individual being subjected to testing has reached his limit of endurance, he may exit the chamber and thus circumvent testing to a degree which he is not able to withstand. The second conjecture is that mere awareness of the existence of a means of escape enables the individual to endure testing which otherwise would be beyond his capability. But both conjectures are fanciful, and both are false, for they ignore the twofold declaration of the verse, that:

- The Lord God shall not allow the Justified to be tested beyond his ability.
- The Lord shall provide an *ekbasis* (which the *King James Version* translates “way of escape”) which shall enable endurance of the testing.

In order to determine the correct interpretation, it is necessary to inspect the passage in the original Greek.

### 2 What Saith the Greek?

The noun which in the *King James Version* is translated “temptation” is the Greek word *peirasmos*; the verb translated “tempt” is the cognate, *peirazo*. The meaning of *peirazo* is *to try, attempt, assay, test, or prove*. The verb translated “bear” is *upophero*, meaning literally, *to bear up under*, in the sense of endurance. It is quite clear that the possibility of escape is not in view.

The phrase translated “a way to escape” is *ekbasis*. The literal meaning of *ekbasis* is *a way out*; but the context does not allow that meaning.<sup>2</sup> However, *ekbasis* also is used in the sense of an *issue, a result, or an outcome*; and with *ekbasis* being a *result* or an *outcome*, the meaning of the passage becomes clear. With each test, the Lord provides an incentive which is sufficient to motivate endurance of the testing.

The *Concordant Literal* translation is one of the few English translations which correctly presents the meaning of the passage. Here is the reading of the *Concordant Literal*:

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<sup>1</sup>But how can it be otherwise in a people who have ceased to read; and particularly, in a people who have ceased to read, study, and memorize the Scriptures? We all are paying dearly for the countless hours we have squandered, staring mindlessly into the glowing screen of a television set or sitting spellbound in the darkness of a movie theater, willingly subjecting our thinking to the leaven of the Jew.

<sup>2</sup>As always, it is the context which governs the meaning of a word or a phrase.

*No trial has taken you except what is human. Now, faithful is God, who will not be leaving you to be tried above what you are able, but, together with the trial, will be making the sequel also, to enable you to undergo it.*

– I Corinthians 10:13 (CL)

The English word *sequel* means *consequence, result, subsequent development, or outcome*. Seen in this light—that of *endurance under testing in order to achieve a desired outcome*—the passage not only makes perfect sense, but immediately brings to mind another passage which presents the classic example of the concept.

*Surely, in consequence, then, we also, having so vast a cloud of witnesses encompassing us, putting off every impediment and the popular sin, may be racing with endurance the contest lying before us, looking off to the Inaugurator and perfecter of faith, Jesus, who, for the joy lying before him, endures a cross, despising the shame, besides is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

– Hebrews 12:1–2 (CL)

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that it was “*The joy lying before him*” which enabled Christ Jesus to endure the torture stake (*stauros*). Of course, God the Father promised the Son resurrection and restoration of the attributes of deity which the Son laid aside in order to become flesh and die.<sup>3</sup> But the endurance of the agony of torture was motivated by the great prize of an everlasting throne,<sup>4</sup> together with a bride.<sup>5</sup> It was upon those treasures that Jesus focused as he suffered; those rewards comprised the sequel for which he, by endurance of the testing, qualified.

In like manner, the follower of Christ Jesus is enabled to endure testing by the reward which the Lord offers him, namely, resurrection to Life Everlasting and birth into the family of God. The Apostle Peter likewise notes that endurance under testing is worthy of reward:

*For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

– I Peter 2:19

**Testing as a Measure of Spiritual Maturity.** The declaration of Paul—that God will not allow the Christian to be subjected to a test he is incapable of passing—has a direct yet seldom-appreciated implication: the testing to which one is subjected is a telltale of his maturity in the spiritual realm. In other words, the spiritual mettle of the Christian is manifest by the severity of the tests he faces.

### 3 A False Assertion by a False Apostle

Commentators almost unanimously attribute the *Book of James* to the half-brother of Jesus, the James who presided over the Christian assembly in Jerusalem. But that James, sometimes designated “James of Jerusalem,” was not an Apostle; nor was the *Book of James* written under the aegis of one of the Twelve Apostles. Consequently, the *Book of James* has no rightful place in the Canon of Scripture. Indeed, a careful reading of the Scripture reveals James to be an archenemy of the Christian Faith, a terror to the Apostle Peter, and a deadly enemy of the Apostle Paul. Thus, it should not be surprising to find in the *Book of James* the following assertion:

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

– James 1:13–15 (KJV)

In this passage, the verb which the *King James Version* translates “tempt” is *peirazo*, meaning *to try, attempt, assay, test, or prove*. The verb translated “cannot be tempted” is *apeirastos*, a cognate meaning *not subject to testing*. The noun translated “trial” is *dokimazo*, meaning *a test or an episode of proving*.

Ignoring the clear teaching found throughout the Scripture regarding testing, James portrays testing invariably as evil; James reasons that testing is solicitation to sin, and to fail a test is to sin. Thereby does James imply that God cannot ordain testing, for to tempt man to sin is to commit evil. But this line of reasoning follows the perverse logic of the Talmudic Jew. Such reasoning is the reason Jesus repeated warns his followers to beware the *leaven of the Jew*.

With his assertion that God does not try, attempt, assay, test, or prove man, James demonstrates himself a liar, for his assertion is false. With this statement, James contradicts the account of the temptation of Adam in the Garden, as well as the account of the

<sup>3</sup>Hebrews 2:14–15, Philippians 2:5–11, Psalm 16:8–10.

<sup>4</sup>Psalm 2, Psalm 110.

<sup>5</sup>I Corinthians 11:2.

temptation of the last Adam, Christ Jesus. Moreover, James contradicts the Scriptural account of the testing of Job. And James contradicts multiple assertions regarding testing of the Just which are found throughout the Scripture.

For the Justified, the very business of this present life is Sanctification, and that necessitates repeated episodes of testing. In the pursuit of Sanctification, the Christian constantly is tested regarding *obedience* and *faith*.

*And the Lord God gave a charge to Adam, saying, Of every tree which is in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—of it ye shall not eat, but in whatsoever day ye eat of it, ye shall surely die.*

– Genesis 2:16–17

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

– Matthew 4:1

*And these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel with them, all that had not known the wars of Chanaan. Only for the sake of the generations of Israel, to teach them war, only the men before them knew them not. The five lordships of the Phylistines, and every Chananite, and the Sidonian, and the Evite who dwelt in Libanus from the mount of Aeron to Laboemath. And this was done in order to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commands of the Lord, which he charged their fathers by the hand of Moses.*

– Judges 3:1–4 (LXX)

*And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread upon you out of heaven: and the people shall go forth, and they shall gather their daily portion for the day, that I may try them whether they will walk in my law or not.*

– Exodus 16:4 (LXX)

*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

– I Peter 1:6–7

## 4 Conclusion

On the basis of the bungled translation of I Corinthians 10:13 in the *King James Version*, many Christians have searched in vain for a door of escape from an episode of testing. But the concept of a divinely-provided “way of escape” is absent in the Greek text of the Scripture, and, moreover is incompatible with the Biblical concept of testing. The purpose of testing is to ascertain the nature and quality of the character of the individual—his obedience and his faith. Approval is given only to the one who endures the testing to the end. While the Lord God does not provide a “way of escape” from an episode of testing, I Corinthians 10:13 conveys the promise that the Lord shall not allow the Christian to be tested beyond his capability. Moreover, the verse promises that, with every test, the Lord shall provide a *sequel* or *reward* sufficient to motivate endurance to the end.

*Russell Lee Harris*

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