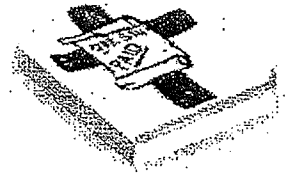


Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

Set Free Ministries of Missouri and Illinois P.O. Box 22006 St. Louis Missouri 63126 - 0006 www.emmauscorrespondenceschool.org

GOD'S GRACE PROVISION FOR TEMPTATION

Greetings in the mighty name of the true God and Eternal Life Jesus Christ! (1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13). He is our Savior (Deliverer) from sin's penalty (Rom 5:8; Heb 7), from sin's power in our daily life (Rom 6:8; 8:2), and from sin's presence in and effect on our body (1 Cor 15:50-58; Rev 21:4). This is the good news of your past, present, and future salvation! Actually, this good news is the answer to your struggle with sin as a believer. I will explain this, but you are responsible to believe it and, therefore, live in light of it, that is, live depending on it to be true (Jas 1:21-25). Our Father wants a close relationship with us, so He has abundantly spoken to us in His Word. His Words are life to those who believe/obey them. As our thoughts and ways conform to His, we come progressively into agreement and further enjoy happy fellowship with Him (Psalm 119:9,

11, 50, 105; Prov 4:20-22; Heb 4:12; Amos 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Emmaus courses will help you a great deal to know what God is saying to you. Deliverance comes by knowing what God says and then believing/obeying it. Our perspective on the things of life is so often "off." Hence, the need to consistently be hearing His thoughts and meditating/reflecting on how they differ from our own so that we know how we ought to think and live. Without His revelation we would never know. God has not remained silent, but we must strive in His Word and hold fast to it to really hear what He has to say (Philippians 2:15-16;

By God's grace provision, you can experience freedom from sin's powerful lusts. Yet, many have not heard this good news. So, although many have been freed from sin's bondage and possess new life from above, they are not experiencing this freedom or the abundant life of Jesus which they possess.

4:1; Proverbs 14:12; Is 55:8-9). Praise God for your sincerity, honesty, and desire to please your Lord! We are striving to do the same and to help you to also. Now, I noticed in your letter that your thinking regarding a few things is not consistent with God's thinking. Herein lies your confusion! When our thinking does not match up with His, we need to take sides with God against our own flawed thinking. This is essential for having a sound mind (a mind in agreement with God's mind/will) and for living the abundant life in Christ. He gives us His Word. If we walk in it, our joy will be progressively full, despite the effects of living in a sin-corrupted body and world for now that is passing away (John 15:1-11; 10:10; 1 John 2:17). We experience Christ and the new life He has given us only to the extent to which our thoughts and ways come into conformity to His (1 John 2:3; 4:16; 2 Peter 3:18). In your letter you said, "I have turned over my problems to God." This is a common phrase among Christians. However, it can be a somewhat confusing phrase. If you are saying that your responsibility is over and God is obligated to now make sure you are never tempted again in the particular sin you are struggling with or provide you with something He has not already provided for you to not sin, this is simply not how God says it works. As long as we are in this sin corrupted body and world we will experience the temptation to sin from within (the flesh), from without (the world), and from Satan. At times God does remove the temptation, but this is not the norm. The norm (that which is generally true for every believer) is that He expects us to not sin and to live a joy and peace-filled life (despite inevitable trials and temptations) by believing/depending upon that which He has already amply provided (John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:1-12; 1 John 2:17).

Here is how God says it works (the good news of God's provision): Regarding the temptation to sin, God has put all believers in union with His Son and, therefore, when He died, we died with Him. He died for us and also as us. This brought about an important change in sin's relationship to us. Death severs sin's master-slave relationship with us. Sin is still present within us, but we are not under any obligation to listen to it. We

are no longer its slave. (Romans 6; 1 Cor 1:30). Further, God has given us His Spirit to empower/enable us not only to say no to sin or to respond to it as a dead man would, but also to do what is right. His Spirit is now the dominant/ruling power within us. This is what it means to be "in the Spirit" instead of "in the flesh" (Romans 8:11). The Spirit aims to manifest or make true or real in our daily experience Christ's victory over sin on the cross. The flesh (sin within) was and is more powerful than we are, but God's Spirit is more powerful than the flesh. However, this requires your cooperation. He has also given us His Word so that we know of His abundant provision in order to experience deliverance from sin's power by believing it. As we received new life by faith, we can only live out this life by faith (Colossians 2:6-7). Do you see? If we believe this good news of God's grace provision, we will grow in the experiencing of His life at work in us and through us (Philippians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:18). You no longer have to sin (Romans 8:12); you are not helpless against the God who has already provided (already answered your prayer for deliverance when you repented of your sin in God's presence and believed on Jesus Who died and now lives to set you free from sin's penalty and power)! He has made you a new creation and given you His nature/life and Spirit to live a new life to God. He has given you everything you need to live a life of godliness (2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21). If you believe this, you can say no to the lusts of your flesh right now and every day. It is only in light of His great and all-sufficient grace provision that God tells us to "put off" (stop) our old way of living and "put on Christ" (His character and behavior)—Eph 4:22-24; Rom 13:14. He also says, "Depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19), "Those who have believed in God should be careful to engage in good deeds and be obedient" (Titus 3:1-8), and "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:1-10). He means it when He says these things.

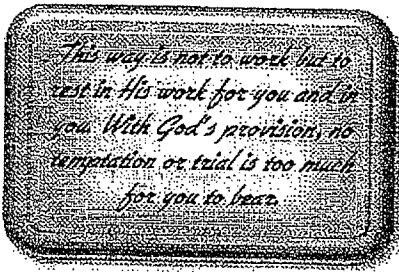
God has already given you all you need to live a life of godliness. Do you believe it?

The reality now for every believer in Christ is that God's love for us by the Gift of His Son and His nature now within us compel us to love and obey Him. His Spirit within us empowers us to do so. Now, when temptation comes, you can resist it and obey God, doing right instead of wrong by believing that your relationship with sin has been severed/broken and God's Spirit is within you to empower you to do right. When you move to obey, you will know it is not in your strength to do it but God at work in you (Phil 2:12-13). It is important to understand that the flesh cannot force you to sin. Sin requires your total cooperation. If you present yourself to sin so your members can carry out its cravings, you will be its slave. Present yourself to God! He has bought you from the slave market of sin with His Son's blood. With Him you have died and in Him you have received new life. This life is meant to be lived out through the members of your body to glorify God and proclaim or exalt the character and life of His Son on the earth (Rom 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:19-20).

Maybe the following illustration will help you to see this spiritual truth "A slave is purchased from his master so that he is now legally free. His old master has no legal charge over him whatsoever, and he has it in writing to prove it. His freedom has the backing of the law of the land—the authorities (the ruling power), the courts, the laws etc. which, of course, are far more powerful than his old master. So he goes free to live a new life. However, his old master comes calling on him to do his work as he used to do. He knows he is free, but he goes along with his old master into bondage once again, back to his old lifestyle. Now, the one who purchased his freedom sees him slaving away in bondage. If he didn't know better, he would think the man was legally a slave because what fool would be a slave if he didn't have to be. What free person would go and willingly become a slave under the delusion that being a slave offered something better than freedom? (In doing so, even though great and sufficient provision has been made for his freedom, he makes it of no practical effect by obeying his old master.) Well, the one who

purchased his freedom pleads with the man, telling him, "You are free! You are not obligated to obey your old master! You do not have to listen to him or do what he says, and he can not do a single thing to you! A life of freedom from your old life awaits you, but you must live in light of the fact that I have purchased you; you are free! I can not force you to experience this freedom and new life to the fullest. You possess it, but you are not living it, experiencing it. Do not live in bondage! YOU ARE FREE!! YOU ARE FREE!! LIVE FREE!!"

Now, God is pleading with you by His Spirit in union with His Word to do the same. "He Whom the Son sets free is free indeed!" (1 John 8:36). By God's grace provision you can experience freedom from sin's powerful lusts. Yet, many have not heard of this good news. Therefore, although many have been freed from sin's bondage and possess new life from above, they are not experiencing this freedom and, therefore, not experiencing the abundant life of Jesus which they possess (John 10:10b)! First Corinthians 10:13 tells us that temptation is common to all. You are not alone. We all have the same principle of sin within that lusts after and desires to latch onto temptation when presented to us. This makes us our own worst enemy. While in this body, the flesh wars with the Spirit. The result is the inward struggle you are experiencing along with every believer (Gal 5:16-17; Rom 7). Sin is calling on you but so is God's Spirit—the Spirit of Christ (Christ is your new Master—



1 Cor 9:21). You have to take sides with Him and against your flesh (sin within). When you are tempted or have a thought that is contrary to God's Word, judge the thought for what it is (SINFUL, against God) and answer the temptation by agreeing with God that it is sin and that your body is no longer your own or sin's but the Lord's because you were purchased with His blood. As long as you do this, you can obviously not be in cooperation with

the flesh, and it requires your cooperation to act its lusts out through the members of your body (Titus 2:11-14). Fellowship with God is truly the good life. It is far better than whatever sin is offering. If you believe this, your sinful habit can be over right now because if you believe this, you will say no to the sin and move to do right, finding that there is the power within you to do it.

The second part of 1 Corinthians 10:13 says God is faithful. This is true, but in your letter you have entertained the idea that God has failed since you continue to be tempted and continue to sin. Therefore, much confusion in your mind has resulted. You are helpless if you do not believe God's Word! God has made overwhelmingly sufficient provision for us, and He makes it known to us through His Word. Therefore, to not believe His Word is to deny the provision He has made for you and, therefore, make it of no practical effect in your life (1 Thess. 2:13). You cannot know His Word experientially (live it outwardly) until you know it (believe it) absolutely, as truth inwardly. But simply, you can not live it until you believe it. Believing or faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17). God is faithful and true and every man a liar. Let's be honest, you and I are unfaithful; God cannot be unfaithful. He is God! It is impossible for Him to be unfaithful or fail or lie (Heb 6:18; 2 Tim 2:13). If you do not start and continue on this basic fundamental truth, you will be swayed and tossed by every feeling and idea that enters your mind from any other source than God. Remember, Satan only had to lead Eve to believe that God had not told the whole truth and all creation was cursed. Do not fall into the same trap. Take sides against any thought which comes into your mind which is not consistent with God's Word. Do this and you will find that over time your mind will be renewed as you replace your old sinful thoughts with the thoughts of God in His Word. Definitely begin memorizing Scripture, some that I have given you in this letter. When you are tempted, once you judge the thought (put off), replace it in your mind with Scripture (put on). God teaches us not only to put off the sinful habit but to replace it with a godly one (Ephesians 4:22-24; Rom 13:14). Like a lot of believers, including myself, you have walked in sin for quite a number of years before repenting and putting your faith in Christ. So it will take time to replace the old ways in your mind with the new. But, it is high time that we serve the Living God with our whole heart, don't you think? He saved you for you to no longer serve self but Him. To Him alone is due all the worship and service and glory of the visible and invisible creation (2 Cor 5:15; 1 Pet 4:1-3).

Also, we were created in God's image. One aspect of this is that we have a will to choose. We don't just automatically do one thing. There are a sea of options and influences all around us acting upon our will. This greatly influences the choices we make. Ultimately, the choices we make determine our character and walk. You can say that we become what we are occupied with or what we set our heart on (what we allow ourselves to be influenced by). This is why God says, "Think on" that which is "pure, just, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy" (Philippians 4:8), "Set your mind on things above..." (Colossians 3:1-4), "Keep your eyes on Him (Christ)" (Heb 12:1-2), and "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). If we occupy

Your mind with the things of this world that feed the flesh like TV, worldly company, material things, and worldly goals, then these things will influence our choices and, ultimately, characterize our life behavior. We will be as the world is (worldly Christians). But, if we are occupied with Christ, if He captures our attention (He is Beautiful Beyond Description you know!), we will day by day take on His moral likeness. We will progressively think His thoughts and imitate Him! "As He is so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Ultimately, you have God's Word that He will complete the good work of transforming you into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. He will resurrect your sleeping body, giving you a new body without sin within so you will never sin again. To God be the Glory, for great things He has done, is doing, and will do when He returns! (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:50-58). As you learn to rely on His provision for deliverance from temptation as well as for peace in this world and joy in difficult circumstances, you will learn that He is sufficient in all things. He is your portion. He is all you need—your All in All. You are complete in Him. Every spiritual blessing is yours in Christ. God has withheld no good thing from you. Temptation pleads with you to believe the lie that God is withholding something good from you. Remember, God is true and faithful and everything contrary to Him is a lie! Also, remember that which is truly good is defined by God (His character, His Word) not the world, Satan, or your flesh. Do not let them redefine that which is good. In your flesh dwells no good thing. Every good thing is from God. God alone is good (Col 2:9-10; Psa. 27:4-5; 119:68; Matt. 19:17; Jas 1:17; Rom. 7:18; Lam. 3:24-25; Eph 1:3-14).

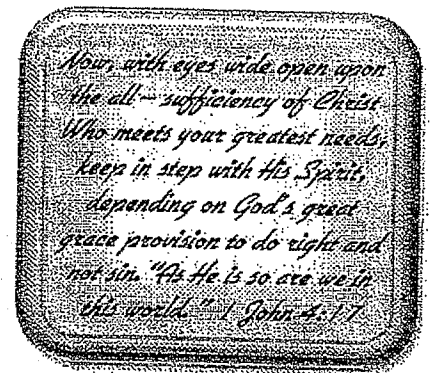
One last thing from 1 Corinthians 10:13. The "way out" God has provided is what I have been speaking about. 2 Cor. 12:9-10 helps to explain it—His grace (God's Spirit and Word working within you) is sufficient for you to resist any temptation, to do what is pleasing in His sight, and be sustained through any trial (even with the Lord's joy). It is not "I am trying to do right" as if I have to work up the strength to beat the flesh. Rather, it is, "I know God is at work in me to do right, and He is far more powerful than the flesh." "I" against the flesh will be defeated, but it is God Who goes before you to fight, and this guarantees victory over sin. Therefore, believe this and go to do right knowing God will do it for you, in you. Do you believe God is more powerful than the flesh? If so, then you know you can have victory over the sinful habit. It is no longer you but Christ Who lives in you (Eph 3:20; Rom 13:14; Gal 2:20; 5:16, 24, 25; Phil 2:13; 4:13; Eph 4:13-15; Deut 1:30; Rom 8:2). This way is not to work but to rest in His work for you and within you. With God's provision, no temptation or trial in life is too much for you to bear. 1 Corinthians 10:13 also tells us that the intensity of temptations and trials is under God's control. See Job. God put limits on what Satan was allowed to do to Job, limiting Job's temptation for his faith to fail in the midst of adversity. "This far you may come and no farther" (Job 1:12; 2:6; 38:11).

Finally, as you grow in godliness, you will fail at times because you believe the lie that sin, Satan, or the world tells you instead of God. When you do sin, take it seriously but do not wallow in defeat. Do not let failure defeat you. Failure should result in your clinging to Christ because you see all the more that you are helpless without Him as you become more and more aware of your self/sinful nature. Or, you can hide from God as Adam and Eve did in the Garden and, therefore, let failure keep you from His presence when His presence is the very thing you need in order to be transformed. You must go into the presence of God, into the light. The fear is that in the light you will be rejected by a holy God. But, God's love has made provision and accepts you in Christ. He now pleads with us

all to walk in the light where the forgiveness and deliverance flows. In the light we find abundant mercy and grace to remove all our sins as well as provision to sin no more. When Adam and Eve stepped out from their hiding place, they found that God had already provided for them what they could not provide for themselves (Gen 3:21). So when you sin, repent to God in His presence in prayer. Take sides against yourself, agreeing with God about your sin and turn from it. You have assurance from His Word that your salvation is secure because it is accomplished by God, not you. Be thankful to God for His Son Who has saved you. You are forgiven by His blood! (1 Jn 1:1—2:1; Prov 28:13; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Cor. 7:9-11). Learn to appreciate this all the more as you confess your sin. Go on then in happy fellowship with God, all the more thankful for and eyes wide open to the all-sufficiency of Christ to meet your greatest needs. Keep in step with His Spirit, depending on God's great grace provision to do right and not sin (Amos 3:3; Gal 5:16-25).

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