

## 10 Could I ever lose it like he did?

### 1 Corinthians 10:12-13:

If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

When the wise see another person fall, they are quick to admit their own weakness. In fact, naivety is the first step towards a fall: "I could never do something like that". Beware!

It is disturbing to reflect on the appalling thoughts that have crossed our minds. Perhaps you have been driving down the road and suddenly you have thought to yourself, "What's to stop me driving headlong into an oncoming car?" At times our mental wanderings go to some very dark places.

It may be that Bird had some kind of medically defined psychotic episode before committing his crimes. That's not to demonise those members of our community who suffer bravely with very disturbing conditions. They have to face as a reality what others only fear as a possibility.

We would want to affirm these friends as they benefit from various treatments, knowing that if we should ever need such help it is available.

But of course Bird may not have been in a state of psychosis, medically defined. So when people say, 'he lost it', or 'he flipped', what do they really mean? I take it they mean that he was overcome by a powerful urge, whether through festering bitterness or curiosity we don't know.

Even though the world is in headlong rebellion against God, God has put restraints in place so that society doesn't completely implode: conscience, good parenting, the police and fear of punishment. However, temptation can reach such strength that none of these restraints is powerful enough to stop us.

In those moments, many Christians find 1 Corinthians 10:13 very comforting indeed. God has promised not to tempt us beyond what we can bear. He guarantees that we need not be overcome.

Coupled with that is the promise that he will always provide a way out of the temptation. The way out takes different forms. It could be a person to help us, a distraction or a reminder of some Bible teaching to strengthen us.

So beware of people saying, "Desire *overcame* me, and I just lost it and flipped".

It is confusing language to say that someone – Bird, for example – was *overcome* with desire. It suggests that from the moment he was overcome, he was no longer doing what he wanted but that the desire was making him do it.

But the desire belongs to the one who desires. No one is overcome by desire *against* their will. The problem is precisely that our will sometimes forcefully breaks all restraints on it.

"I was overcome with desire/ rage/ passion/ envy", does not lessen blame, as a more accurate translation of the phrase clearly shows: "I did what I really wanted to do".

Thank God he promises to help us in times of high temptation.