

STRENGTH TO MEET TEMPTATION / Sunday, July 20, 2014

Unifying Topic: **OVERCOMING TEMPTATION**

Lesson Text

- I. **A Warning About Temptations** (1 Corinthians 10:12-15)
- II. **A Spiritual Communion With Christ** (1 Corinthians 10:16-18)
- III. **A Warning Against Communion With Demons** (1 Corinthians 10:19-22)

The Main Thought: 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 (1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV).

Unifying Principle: The pride of individual persons and communities can lead them to act in destructive or harmful ways. How can communities resist the desire to move in harmful directions? Paul reminded the Corinthians that all believers are tempted but God will not let them be tested beyond their strength—God will provide the way out.

Lesson Aim: To prepare students to reject all temptations that place Christ second to anything.

Life Aim: To live in a manner that exhibits victory over all ungodly temptations.

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- 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
- 10:13 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.
- 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.
- 10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.
- 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
- 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
- 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?
- 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?
- 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.
- 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.
- 10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

HISTORY:

In **chapter 8**, Paul sets forth the principle that, although Christians are free to do whatever Scripture does not forbid as being morally wrong, if we love as God calls us to love, we will limit our liberty for the sake of weaker believers. In **chapter 9**, he illustrates this limitation from his own life and ministry. He uses himself as an example of a mature Christian who disciplines himself to better serve God. To keep from giving them reason to think he was preaching for the money, he accepted no wages from those to whom he was ministering. In **chapter 10**, Paul uses Israel as an example of spiritual immaturity shown by their overconfidence and lack of self-discipline.

¹Paul reminded the experienced believers not to become *overconfident* in their ability to withstand temptation. The five "alls" (vv.1-4) emphasize the five downward steps in (vv.5-10).

- I. "under the cloud" (v.1) - divine guidance
- II. "passed through the sea" (v.1) - divine deliverance
- III. "baptized unto Moses" (v.2) - divine leadership
- IV. "eat the same spiritual meat" (v.3) - divine provision
- V. "drink the same spiritual drink" (v.4) - divine intervention

Israel had the cloud of God's presence and guidance. When the people passed through the Red Sea they were freed of the enslavements of Egypt (*baptism—both in sea and cloud v.2*). God gave Israel Moses, the leader it needed to reach the Promised Land. Israel partook of the food and water that God provided. He took care of their daily necessities. It was Jesus who was guiding and providing for Israel through its wilderness journey toward the Promised Land. (*Jesus was there with them as a mighty Rock of spiritual refreshment v.4*). However, what happened to most of the people is tragic. There were over two million Jews who stepped out to follow God to the Promised Land, but only two made it (vv.1-5).

²Paul points out that the Corinthian church was guilty of the same sins that the Jews committed. (*From this lesson we are*

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-dangers-of-overconfidence/>

² <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/god-will-help-you-resist-temptation/>

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

warned that we must not desire evil things as they did, nor worship idols as they did v.6, 7).

II. Five downward steps of *temptation* for the Israelites (vv: 6-10):

1. They lusted after evil things - (v.6, Num. 11:4) They wanted the things back in Egypt.
2. They worshiped idols - (v.7, Ex. 32:6) - The golden calf worshiped in the wilderness.
3. They committed immorality - (v.8, Num. 25:1-9) - Baal worship and sexual immorality.
4. They tested God's patience - (v.9, Num. 21:6) - Israelites spoke against God and Moses.
5. They murmured - (v.10, Num. 16:41-49) - Complained about Moses and Aaron.

II. Three conclusions about *temptation* in (v. 11-13):

1. Temptation will come. It is not designed to make us fall but to make us stronger (v. 11).

Temptation or being tempted is not a sin. ³Temptation is a sign that we still live in a fallen world. It is how you respond to the temptation that makes the difference. We know our Lord Jesus was tempted. Therefore, all will be tempted and it comes when you least expect it! When everything is going your way ... when you just got a promotion ... when your dreams start to come true ... Watch out! Be careful! Today's victories often lead on to tomorrow's trials.

Verse 11 sums it up: *All these things happened to them as examples—as object lessons to us—to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end* (TLB).

LESSON:

1 Corinthians 10:12-15 A Warning About Temptations

10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Receive the warning—Heed lest you fall!

2. Temptation comes to everyone. Don't feel that you have been singled out (v.12).

Talking to the Corinthian believers that think he is strong and exercise his Christian liberty at the expense of the weaker brethren, he was to take heed lest he fall; not from salvation, not yet from his position of strength to that of weakness, but that he should suffer the judgment of God, as the Israelites, and "*fall in the wilderness.*"

- This age is what is known as the age of grace, grace being the way God now deals with men. The age of Christ or of grace is the last age of human history. Therefore, since we are living in the last age, we must heed the warning example of Israel.
- A person can fall, especially if he begins to think that he stands, that is, if he begins to feel safe and secure.

We must not think that because the Jews were under the Law that their sins were worse than ours and therefore dealt with more severely. Sin in the church today is far more serious, because we have Israel's example to learn from, and we are living "*at the end of the ages.*" To sin against the Law is one thing; to sin against grace is quite something else. The believer who thinks they can stand may fall, but the believer who flees will be able to stand! We're talking about temptation.

10:13 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.

3. Temptation can be resisted. God will help you resist it (v.13).

III. Five ways God will help you resist *temptation*:

1. Recognize the people and situations that give you trouble.
2. Run from anything that you know is wrong.
3. Choose to do what is right.
4. Pray for God's help.
5. Seek for friends who can help you.

Paul is about to show that trials and temptations will be proportionate to our strength. "*Common to man*" means normal problems. This means a wonderful thing: some men have already overcome it. Yes, many fell, caved in; but some demonstrated the will and energy to overcome it. God permits us to be tempted, but, still, whatever the problem, God is faithful! He knows what we can handle; what we can take; what we can bear; and exactly the time of escape from the problem. Therefore, He limits every single temptation within our limits. It will never be above what we are able to suffer. He's built us for perfection. Our frame may be frail but our inner man is stronger than we think. He always provides a way to escape. He always gives us the strength to turn and flee from it or else the energy and strength to overcome the temptation when it's persistent! Our way of escape is always in Him!

10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Paul dearly loves the Corinthian believers, but gives them a direct command: "*flee idolatry!*" There is no other way around it! Don't ponder over...

- No one will know.
- I deserve this.
- Everyone does it.
- God knows my needs.
- They made me do it.

⁴Paul returns to the subject with which this letter began - the eating of meat offered to *idols*. In expressing their Christian

³ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1999-05-30-Faithful-to-the-Tempted/>

⁴ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/eating-meat-offered-to-idols/>

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

liberty, some of the Corinthians were living dangerously close to *idolatry*. Paul says that it is true that an *idol* is nothing, but the ones behind every *idol* are very real (v.20).

I. Concerning meat in the temple. (vv. 14-22)

Most people are worshipping some god other than the Lord God Himself. The word "*idolatry*" means both the worship of false gods and the failure to have a right relationship with God. Any person who does not worship God is worshipping some idol. An idol can be: self, family, business, sports, possessions, sex, knowledge, religion, or power. It is anything that consumes a person's mind, heart, soul, and, body. Some of the Corinthian members were attending social functions held in the banquet halls of idolatrous temples; and also in their homes they placed these images to oversee their family.

10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. I remind you that there is not a reward from the world when you say no. The one we are to please is God! He honors those who dare to say no. Remember Joseph? - from the pit; to the house; to the dungeon; to the palace. It took a while but God honored him. Paul here appeals to their sense of wisdom; men having intelligence, that what he is saying is true, at least they are to consider from their own judgment. In other words, he assumed he was addressing believers who were mature to consider for a moment the logic of his argument and to draw correctly their own conclusion of what he's said.

1 Corinthians 10:16-18 A Spiritual Communion With Christ

10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?— Paul used the Lord's Supper as an illustration. When believers partake of the cup and bread at the Lord's Table, he is having fellowship with the blood and body of Christ. By remembering Christ's death, the believer enters into a communion with the risen Lord! In remembering His death, burial, and resurrection, we bless the cup which represents the blood of Christ and we are thankful for the bread we brake which represents His body.

10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Being many, we form one body of that One bread, Jesus Christ, whom we all partake of. When we properly share in Communion we spiritually participate in fellowship with Jesus Christ and with other believers.

10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?— Paul uses Israel as an illustration. When an animal was offered as a sacrifice to God, only a portion of the animal was actually consumed upon the altar. The rest of the meat was always kept and eaten by both the offerer, and the priest. The very fact that the Jewish worshipper partook of the same meat offered in sacrifice identified him as a worshipper of God.

1 Corinthians 10:19-22 A Warning Against Communion With Demons

10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?— "*What say I then?*" means "*what am I trying to say?*"; "*What do I mean?*" He needed to make this thing clear about the idol itself to whom the heathen brought sacrifices; are they really alive and are real gods? or the meat offered in sacrifice to idols; does the meat have any real value? An idol is nothing and it has no existence; no soul, no spirit, no power. It is nothing more than the imagination and idea within a person's mind. And the thing (meat) offered to the idols has no spiritual power.

10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. The answer: the things which the Gentiles sacrificed have no real value because they sacrificed to devils and not to God. Well, here it is, point blank: "*I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*" Demons are the spiritual force behind all idolatry. Don't fellowship with devils!

10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Paul goes on to inform his readers that there is a direct relationship between heathen feasts and demonic activity. To sit at an idol's table could mean fellowship (*communion; being a partaker*) with demons. Paul was again enforcing the important doctrine of separation from sin. It is not feasible to drink the Lord's cup and the devil's cup (*the cup of evil spirits*) at the same time, neither sit at the Lord's Table and the devil's table at the same time. If we practice setting up idols of any kind, we open ourselves up to demonic influence. Remember the golden calf? Moses asked who was on the Lord's side (Exo.32:26). And those that weren't, about 3,000 men were killed that day (Exo.32:27-28). Remember Ananias and his wife Sapphira opened themselves up to the spirit of greed and they were struck down because they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-6, 9-10). God has holy jealousy because He will have no competition. Are we trying to lead two lives: following the desires of both Christ and the crowd? The Word says you can't do both.

- "*Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers*

served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" Joshua 24:14-15.

- "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" Matthew 6:24.

10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?— The question to the Corinthians is: Are they trying to make the Lord jealous? Or are they trying to stir up God's anger? We and neither are the Corinthians are stronger than the Lord, and will not escape His judgment if we practice such idolatry. Do you think God would allow such to continue without Him doing anything? Deuteronomy 32:21 says "*They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.*" We should want God to be in His fullness in our lives and not have anything to cause us to be out of fellowship with Him.

SUMMARY:

⁵We can just as easily fall (v.12), though God is faithful to provide help in dealing with temptation (v.13). Therefore, flee from idolatry! (v.14). Paul speaks as to those capable of making wise judgments (v.15).

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is a communion of the Lord's body and blood (vv.16-17). The priests of Israel who ate the sacrifices were sharing in the services offered on the altar (v.18).

Not to say that an idol is anything, nor that which is offered to the idol (v.19). But those who offer the sacrifices do so to demons, not God; and Paul would not want them to have fellowship with demons (v.20). They cannot eat and drink at the Lord's Table and then do the same at the tables of demons (v.21). Such would provoke the Lord to jealousy (v.22).

APPLICATION:

Our strength in overcoming temptations should not be fleshly strength. It should be the inner strength to say no. When we place Christ first, we get that inner strength to overcome the temptation.