

Flee Temptation [Slide 1] 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Someone once said, “The trouble with trouble is that it usually starts out as a whole lot of fun.” Another person said, “Opportunity knocks only once, but temptation bangs on your door for years.” Finally Rita Brown said, “Lead me not into temptation; I can find the way myself.”

Last Sunday we learned that Paul was concerned that he might be disqualified as a minister of the gospel even though he had the privileged position of being an apostle. In today’s passage he is going to expand that idea to include all of us. No matter whatever privileged spiritual position we may hold, we are all susceptible to temptation and failing. The main idea of our passage today is written on your sermon outline: Flee temptation and take God’s escape because a place of blessing will not protect you from God’s judgment if you commit evil.

[Slide 2] I invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 1-13 in your Bible. 1 Corinthians is the seventh book in the New Testament after the four Gospels, Acts and Romans. I am going to begin with verses 1-4 where Paul explains the place of blessing the Jews enjoyed. Read.

Allow me to explain the blessing Paul refers to beginning in verses 1-2. Paul says the Israelites were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. So picture the nation of Israel crossing through the Red Sea with a wall of water rising up to their left and right while a cloud of water is above them. So they walk down into the dry sea bed of the Red Sea surrounded by water and they come up on the other side out from among the waters. What you have is a symbolic picture of water baptism of them going down into the waters and then coming up, but none of them got wet because the waters represent God’s judgment. As long as you are dry you are not judged. The Egyptians got wet because God judged them.

Paul says that they were baptized into Moses which should remind you of the idea that we are baptized into Christ. The core meaning of baptism is identification. It comes from the fact that the word bapto or dip was often used of dipping clothes in colored dyes and when the clothes came out of the dye they had the same color as the dye or they were identified with that new color. God identified the Jews with Moses.

Moses was God’s appointed deliverer just like Jesus is God’s appointed deliverer. Because the Israelites trusted in the words of Moses and followed his directions they were saved from the waters of God’s judgment as they passed through the Red Sea. God identified them as being in Moses and sharing in Moses’ standing before God just as when we trust in Jesus God baptizes into Jesus or identifies us with Jesus and his righteousness.

Being baptized into Moses or being identified with Moses was a place of blessing for the Jews because it meant they were delivered out of Egypt; God supernaturally provided food and water for them in the Wilderness; God protected them from their enemies, and God gave his revelation to them of how they could live with God.

[Slide 3] Paul specifically mentions the food and water in verses 3-4. They all ate the same spiritual food which was a reference to the manna. They all drank from the spiritual rock which was following them which was Christ. The spiritual rock reference is a bit of a mystery. Twice in the Wilderness wanderings Moses did strike a rock with his staff and water poured out of the rock, but there is no evidence that a rock literally followed the Jews around. “Rock” is a figurative image that stands for both God and Jesus. For example rock refers to God in

Deuteronomy 32:4 and 15 which are on your outline. In Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8 Jesus is referred to as the rock of offense. Paul was probably asserting that Jesus was with the Jews in the wilderness as their spiritual rock to lean upon and that he was the one who provided them water when they supernaturally needed it.

The Jews were blessed because they were in Moses and we are blessed because we are in Christ. We have his righteousness and his presence within us. His Spirit guides us, teaches us, leads us and empowers us. Nevertheless we should never think that we are immune from gross failure and sin. That very presumption of being safe when they were not, led Israel into sin.

Verse 5 Read. God was displeased with them because they disobeyed God and refused to enter the Promised Land when he told them to do so which led to that generation wandering in the Wilderness for forty years and dying there without ever seeing the Promised Land.

Verse 6 Read. The sins of the Israelites are recorded in Scripture as examples for us that we should not crave evil things. Paul will mention some examples of evil cravings in verses 7-10.

[Slide 4] The first example of evil is idolatry and the wanton, revelry that can go along with it. Verse 7 says, "Read." Aaron made a golden calf for the Jews to worship. He proclaimed a feast to celebrate this new god and with the feast came excessive drinking, sensuous dancing, probably a lot of lewd and vile comments along with probably some illicit touching. Moses was successful on that occasion in convincing God not to judge the Israelites.

[Slide 5] The second example is of fornication and forbidden marriages. Verse 8 Read. In Numbers chapter 25 the text tells us that the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab both sexually and worshipping the god of the Moabites. They were fornicating and worshipping a false god. God sent a plague on them and killed a total of 24,000 people. Paul says that in one day 23,000 died so it may have been that the other 1000 took longer to die, but most of them died the same day they sinned.

[Slide 6] The third example is when the Israelites grumbled about not having food or water and God sent fiery serpents among them. Verse 9 read. Let me read their complaint from Numbers 21:4-5. Read. There is no food and no water, which was not true because God miraculously provided them with manna but they had grown tired of it and said, "We loathe this miserable food." Can you imagine saying that to God? We loathe this miserable food you provided us. That's a lot of stinking ingratitude. So God sent fiery serpents among them to bite them and people started to die.

Moses interceded for the people and God had Moses set up a bronze serpent on a staff in the midst of the camp. Anyone who looked to the bronze serpent for deliverance or healing would be saved. The serpent on a staff was a type or an Old Testament picture of Jesus placed on the cross, taking in God's judgment so that people might be saved from the poison of the Serpent. Paul says they were testing Christ when they were grumbling and complaining about their food and how worse their life was compared to what it had been in Egypt.

[Slide 7] The fourth example is when Korah and others challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron in Numbers 16. Verse 10 Read. By challenging Moses' unique right to lead Korah and his followers were challenging God. God responded by having the ground open up and swallow Korah and his associates, some kind of earthquake phenomenon that killed only the rebels. Paul references them being destroyed by the destroyer. The Greek word for destroyer is rare. It only occurs once in the NT and hardly anywhere else outside of the Bible so it's hard to know who the destroyer was. Some think that an angel of destruction oversaw the death of Korah and his followers which is probably as good a guess as any.

In verse 11 Paul says, “Read.” All these examples were written down in the OT for us to learn from them so that we don’t have to repeat the same mistakes. Paul says “upon us the ends of the ages have come.” We have entered the final age or the last times. They extend from the death and resurrection of Jesus until his Second Coming. The OT provides examples to us of how to live. The stories in the OT are not just there to entertain us. They teach us lessons about how to relate to God.

[Slide 8] In verse 12 Paul draws the conclusion or the application to these four examples. Read verse 12. An individual Jew might believe that he was spiritually invincible. He was a member of God’s Covenant Community. He was a recipient of God’s revelation. God had promised protection to his people. God had delivered his people out of slavery in Egypt. He stood in the blessings of God, blessing which began with God’s covenant with Abraham. Thus a Jew might easily believe that he was secure in his relationship with God, and not in danger of losing God’s blessing. Paul used these examples to show that God brought judgment on his own people because they sinned. Their place of blessing did not protect them from God’s judgment.

You and I are in the same position. We are members of the New Covenant. We are in Christ and identified with him. God has declared us righteous based on our faith in Jesus. God has adopted us into his family. He has given us his Revelation. He has sent his Spirit to live within us. We are in a place of blessing, but if we sin we can still receive God’s judgment. I am not talking about Hell or eternal matters. I’m talking about this life judgment. I’m talking about God killing Ananias and Sapphira because they lied to the Holy Spirit. I’m talking about many of the Corinthians becoming sick and dying because they abused the Lord’s Supper. I’m talking about God turning us over to the tormentors because we refuse to forgive others. I’m talking about God turning us over to the consequences of our sin.

God is more patient and gracious with us, because we are his children, but there is a limit to what a holy God will tolerate. The Corinthians may have thought they could do anything they wanted to do now that they were so obviously blessed by God, but Paul warned them that their place of blessing did not protect them from God’s judgment on sin.

[Slide 9] That brings us to verse 13, one of the beloved verses for Christians because of its great promises. Let’s read it. Read. No temptation has overtaken you such as is common to man. You are not alone. Others have shared your struggle. Others have been tempted in the way you are. You are not exceptionally evil because you are tempted. Rather you are one of many who has had the same struggle. Take comfort in the knowledge that others have faced the same temptation and have overcome it.

God is faithful to you. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. God knows the point at which you are totally incapable of resisting sin and he will not let you be tempted to that level. If we sin, it is because we have given up too soon. We had the power and ability to resist, but we chose not to resist. Franklin Jones said, “What makes resisting temptation difficult for many people is they don’t want to discourage it completely.” Our failures usually are not due to our lack of ability but to our lack of desire. We don’t hunger and thirst for righteousness. Rather we crave evil things as Paul wrote in verse 6.

Be encouraged. God has given you the resources to resist, but also know that when the temptation becomes too strong, God has provided a way of escape. Paul writes that God will provide you a way of escape so that you may be able to endure it.

In the OT story of Joseph, he became the house overseer for the Egyptian official, Potiphar. Potiphar’s wife lusted after Joseph and continually made advances to him. Joseph resisted with the strength God gave him. Joseph kept reminding himself of how graciously Potiphar had

treated him, taking him from slavery and giving him an exalted position in his household and Joseph decided he could not sin against Potiphar and God who had elevated him to this position. So, day after day, he resisted her temptations.

Finally, the day came when Joseph found himself alone in the house with her. She seized her opportunity by seizing Joseph and then his only option was to flee. He literally ran out of his cloak to escape her clutches. God's way of escape was to run, and often that is our way of escape too.

There comes a time when we must recognize that we have run out of strength to resist and then we must flee the situation. It is interesting how secular research often corroborates Biblical counsel. Listen to this example. Read research example. In other words, flee temptation.

[Slide 10] So, let's finish by talking about some practical measures for overcoming temptation. First, positively build into your life a series of good habits that crowd out temptation. In explaining how to deal with the temptation to worry Paul first said to build into your life a habit of constant prayer and thanksgiving. He wrote in Philippians 4:6-7, "Read." Then he said to take control of you thought life and to fill it with positive things. In Philippians 4:8 he said, "Read." Henri Nouwen stated it this way: Read card.

Temptation starts in your mind. The thought to try something, to do something, or not to do something begins the process of temptation. If your thoughts are already centered around Jesus Christ and following him, it is much harder for tempting thoughts to gain traction. John Piper said, "Read p. 34 dog book." But if I am constantly filling my mind with the healthy vegetation of how desirable it is to follow God, then the weeds of temptation will have a harder time establishing themselves.

[Slide 11] Second, set boundaries. If you are dating, don't spend a lot of time just the two of you alone and unsupervised in a house or car. It is not that hard to be private without being totally isolated. Pornography is a massive problem in our country. Read statistics. Put filters on your phone or device. Ask people to hold you accountable. Gasp, you may even have to get rid of your device if you can't resist temptation. Determine that you are not going to watch certain TV shows and movies. We have one TV and two computers which are always in the living room where Julie and I can see what the other is looking at. I know I'm a dinosaur, but I don't search the internet on my phone so there is really no place to hide to catch secret glances of X-rated material.

Determine that you are only going to say positive things about people or you're not going to speak about them at all. Decide not to listen to gossip nor to share it. Don't pass on information without verifying its accuracy.

If your temptations lie in the area of spending money then cut up the credit cards. Unfortunately we are going to a cashless society or otherwise I would encourage you to pay for most things with cash. Cash can be highly inconvenient and that in itself can deter undisciplined spending. Don't watch TV ads or read other ads, because that will increase your spending.

Read 2011 study on top temptations. A large portion of sin is the attempt to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways because the illegitimate ways are usually easier, initially. Sin will never meet your need. It will only deepen and sharpen your need until you get addicted to the counterfeit solution and still are empty inside.

[Slide 12] Third, look for the way of escape. God has promised a way of escape when you are tempted, so look for it. Usually that escape means to flee the situation. Why don't you make the decision this morning that you are always going to look for the way of escape? Let's pray.