

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
January 23, 2011

“Resisting Temptation”
1 Cor 10:1-13

Anyone here this morning who enjoys fishing? There is something special about the thrill of hooking a big fish and reeling it in. I love to fish, but haven't in 20 years. I grew up fishing with my grandpa and fishing while on family vacation. Mostly I caught blue gills off the dock and released them back into the water. Well several months ago one Saturday morning I was washing dishes and listening to the radio tuned to 103.3 ESPN - the sports radio station, and the show at the time was the “Big Boat & Outdoor Show.” I don't usually listen to this, but that day they were talking about fishing – the status of the various lakes in North Texas, and they had on an expert fisherman who was weighing in his opinion and answering caller's questions. At the end of the show they asked him to share what he had learned from his many years of professional fishing. My ears perked up. Anytime an expert is asked to reflect on what is significant I think that is important. And this is what he said.

“Make sure you use bait – fish go where the bait is.”

There it is – that is all you need to know about fishing. Fishing 101: “Make sure you use bait – fish go where the bait it.” If you have the right bait to catch the right fish, you will do well in fishing!

This morning I want to remind all of us that *Satan is an expert fisherman*. He knows what bait is attractive to you and to me. Things that look good, smell good and taste good, but are NOT good. Then he takes that bait and hides the hook of sin. But if we give into the

temptation and take the bait – just remember - Satan does not like to catch and release. He catches and destroys.

What temptations are you facing this morning? What bait entice you, even though you know there is a hidden hook? Do you have any good strategies for resisting temptation? Do you experience victory or defeat? I am going to guess that all of us could use help in the fight to stand strong when temptation comes.

Turn with me in the book of 1 Corinthians to chapter 10, verses 1-13. Paul talks to the church in this passage about temptation and gives two strategies for resisting its allure.

Resist Temptation by Learning from Other's Examples. (1-11)

The first strategy is found in verses 1-11, let's take a look. In verse one, Paul begins with this curious statement: "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren"(1). Odd... unaware of what? What was lacking in their understanding? What had they not yet figured out? Paul tells them it has to do with stories in the Bible. Stories about Israel. How God loved Israel so much and provided for them spiritual food and drink – yet time and time again when faced with temptation, rather than trusting in God and turning to Him for help they gave in to sin, and therefore, v5: "with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness."

That phrase, "laid low" is my NASB is really not very clear. I think the NIV here gets a better picture. It reads: "God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered all over the desert." The Greek word for "scattered" communicates the death of many, many people, and their bodies thrown as if by an invisible hand; corpses scattered dead on the ground. Like rolling dice in the game Yahtzee. If you can you picture some of

those old Civil War battlefields with bodies everywhere – you have the sense of what Paul is saying.

Now regarding what they didn't clearly grasp, verse six: **“Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.”** You may be aware that a unique feature of the Bible is its surprisingly blunt and embarrassingly honest descriptions the failures of its best heroes: Moses, Abraham, David and Israel. Why did God include such accounts? Paul says they are preserved as examples for us so that we would not make the same mistakes. This is the first strategy Paul has for us in resisting temptation learning from the mistakes of others. The key word is **“example.”**

Four Common Sins (7-11)

What examples did Paul provide? He now recalls four spectacular disasters from Israel's history, where they gave into temptation.. Let's look at each one briefly. The first is in verse seven: **1Cor. 10:7 And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.”** The first temptation is that of **idolatry**. Paul references the time when Israel made and worshiped a golden calf. If you remember, while Moses lingered on Mt. Sinai getting the 10 commandments, the people grew impatient. Let me read some of the story from Exodus 32. They said: **as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him (v1).** So they decide to abandon God. **Ex. 32:4 Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf.** The people exclaimed, **“O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!”** Forget Moses, forget Moses' God – worship and give glory to THIS idol we just made. **Ex. 32:6b They celebrated with feasting**

and drinking, and indulged themselves in pagan revelry. God was so angry He considered destroying the nation, but he limited his punishment to 3,000 priests. Paul wants the Corinthians to remember 3,000 bodies scattered on the ground.

The first sin was **idolatry**. The second sin highlighted in verse eight: [1Cor. 10:8](#) Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. The second sin is **sexual immorality**. This is a reference to Numbers chapter 25. Again let me remind you of the story. [Num. 25:1](#) While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men defiled themselves by sleeping with the local Moabite women. [Num. 25:2](#) These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, and soon the Israelites were feasting with them and worshiping the gods of Moab. [Num. 25:3](#) Before long Israel was joining in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD's anger to blaze against his people. This time 23,000 people died and their bodies are added to the battlefield – scattered, dead across the desert.

Adultery. Sexual Immorality. The third sin is in verse nine: [1Cor. 10:9](#) Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. The third sin is the sin of **testing God**. This reference is to Number 21:4-7 where the people got tired of eating manna, they got tired of the lack of water and all the dust and the hard living. [Num. 21:5](#) and they began to murmur against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this wretched manna!" [Num. 21:6](#) So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among them, and many of them were bitten and died.

The people tested God's patience with their continual complaining and their bad attitude - and God, as longsuffering as He is, finally got fed up with them, and many, many were killed, their bodies scattered in the wilderness.

Adultery. Immorality. Testing God. The last sin is in verse 10: [1Cor. 10:10](#) **Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.** The third sin is the sin of **grumbling**. Now because Israel grumbled so much, it is hard to say which Old Testament passage this refers to; perhaps the judgment against Korah. Korah was a man who rebelled against Moses in Numbers chapter 16. After the rebellion was put down the people should have been repentant and humble before God. However that was not the case. [Num. 16:41b](#) **They grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people."** No... Actually you were the cause of the trouble, by your lack of faith. God responds with a plague that kills 14,700 people are destroyed, their bodies strewn across the dessert.

Do not be unaware, men and women, boys and girls... that these *horrible sins and sobering punishments* are part of your Bible - so that you might have motivation to say "no" to temptation when it comes to you. You do not have to learn from your own mistakes, you can learn from the mistakes of others. [1Cor. 10:11](#) **All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close.** The word Paul repeats and wants us to remember is "**Example.**" Learn from the examples of others.

ESCAPE from Temptation 10:12-13

Now in verses 12-13 we have our second strategy: [1Cor. 10:12](#) Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. [1Cor. 10:13](#) No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Notice here the positive tone. In contrast to all those dead bodies strewn over the ground – in Jesus Christ we can stand strong and alive in the face of temptation! The contrast is between those who were dead, and those of us still alive (i.e. standing).

Paul makes three important points. First, **your temptation is not unique**. Sometimes we justify our sin arguing that our set of circumstances is much more difficult than anyone else. Not so. We may not all struggle with the same temptations, but none of our struggle is particularly unique. Second, God, in His sovereignty **will not let you be tempted beyond your capabilities**. I don't know exactly how God does this, but this is a grace to you and I. Our temptation, hard as it is, is in our pay grade. Third, **God provides a way of escape**. The next phrase seems contradictory, "so that you will be able to endure it." If you have escaped from temptation, how can you all being enduring still in it? But you see the way of escape may not occur the moment the temptation starts, God may require you to endure and persist in holiness in the face of temptation for a time, until the way of escape comes and the temptation ends.

The first strategy we captured with the word "example." Let's capture this second strategy with the word "**escape**." With God's help you must believe that you can escape or

emerge from the temptation victorious – because the temptation is common, it is not beyond your ability, and God Himself will help you escape from it, if you let Him.

Application –

I would like to spend a little time now moving to some practical suggestions for how we might put the “example” and “escape” strategies into practice in our lives this week. Let me share with you six suggestions that I believe come directly or indirectly from our text.

(1) First, **RECOGNIZE YOUR TEMPTATIONS**. I started asking you – what bait does Satan use to tempt you? What temptations are common to you? Paul brings up idolatry, sexual immorality, testing and grumbling because these are the things the Corinthians were struggling with. In March of 2010 USA Today polled 3,000 adults to see what tempted them. Each person was given a list of five temptations: sex, food, money, alcohol and power. They were asked to identify their top temptation. And upon completion of the study they found men and women were tempted with different things. For men 50% rated sex as their number one temptation. Food was selected by 29%, money 14%, alcohol 7% and power 2%. For women the top temptation was the food 56%, sex 22%, money 15%, power 7% and alcohol 2%. Not everyone struggles with the same things! We all have different backgrounds, and different experiences. Know your weaknesses and recognize your temptation areas.

(2) Second **ENDURE THE TEMPTATION**. We must endure at times because the way of escape does not always come immediately. Some Christians have given into temptation so often that they have quit fighting. Like a scared quarterback who sees an all out blitz coming, they just hit the deck and give in to the sin. Our picture is one of standing victorious. Listen to what C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity: “Only those who try to

resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting it, not by giving in. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.

- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, book 3, chapter 11.

(3) Recognize your temptations, endure the temptation. Third, **SEPARATE FROM THE SOURCE of temptation**. Remember Joseph when tempted by Potiphar's wife? He was able to flee from temptation - to separate himself from the source as quickly as possible. Now that is not always possible. If you struggle with materialism and work in a high-end retail shop at North Park mall, you may have to endure the temptation for a time. But you might think about another line of work. But in many areas we can put DISTANCE between ourselves and the temptation. If you are tempted by computer porn – get a filter and accountability software. If you struggle with the temptation to overeat – throw out the chips and ding-dongs. Separate yourself from the temptation as much as you can.

(4) Recognize your temptations. Endure the temptation. Separate from the source. Now fourth, **IMAGINE THE CONSEQUENCES**. This is what Paul was doing with the Corinthian church with examples from the Israel and the sobering punishments. "Hey if you don't get a handle on these things – such consequences may come to you!" One of the assignments given at Dallas Seminary in a first semester class called Spiritual Life is to write down all the consequences that would occur, if we as pastors fell into sexual sin, for example what would happen if I as a pastor committed adultery. The professor said he

updates his list every year as an effective tool against temptation. Satan will tell you there are no serious consequences; no big deal! We have learned this morning just the opposite.

(5) Recognize your temptations. Endure the temptation. Separate from the source, imagine the consequences. Now **Seek accountability**. When the Scripture tells us that God will provide a way of escape. I believe 95.5% of the time that will come in the way of accountability from other people! The Christian faith is to be lives in community with one another. We share one another's burdens. And because we are all tempted, we extend grace and mercy not judgmental attitudes. Seek accountability in your community life group, or with an accountability partner.

(6) Recognize your temptations. Endure the temptation. Separate from the source, imagine the consequences, seek accountability, now, sixth: **TRAIN IN GODLINESS**. If you are growing spiritually; reading your Bible; praying, memorizing Scripture; involved in the church - your spiritual training is your best weapon against temptation.

Pastor John Ortberg tells of an apparently fictitious training manual for Peace Corp workers going to South America called: "What to do if attacked by an anaconda." Ten things are required: 1. If you're attacked by an anaconda, do not run; the snake is faster than you are. 2. Lie flat on the ground. 3. Put your arms tight at your sides and your legs tight against one another. 4. The snake will begin to climb over your body. 5. Do not panic. 6. The snake will begin to swallow you from the feet end. 7. Step 6 will take a long time. 8. After awhile, slowly and with as little movement as possible, reach down, take your knife, and very gently slide it into the snake's mouth. Then suddenly sever the snake's head. 9. Be sure your knife is sharp. 10. Be sure you have your knife.

If you are prepared and trained – you will be OK when the snake attacks! And if we as Christians are training ourselves in godliness, when temptations comes, we will have victory over it.

This morning we have seen Paul's two strategies for resisting temptation. "Example" and "Escape." The practical steps we talked about again are: (1) Recognize your temptation. (2) Endure the temptation. (3) Separate from the source of temptation. (4) Imagine the consequences. (5) Seek accountability and (6) Train in godliness.

If we put these into practice we will have the power to **RESIST** temptation with God's help. So, church family, the next time Satan comes fishing for you, with that bait that looks good, tastes good, smells good and feels good but isn't good. Say thanks but no thanks. Resist temptation by the power of Christ.