



November 1, 2009

1 Corinthians 8 – 10

*“When Temptation Comes”*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

This study continues Paul’s challenge to the Corinthian church to go on to maturity. One of the critical subjects he addresses is temptation. Temptation<sup>1</sup> is the enticement to do evil with the implied promise of greater good or pleasure. Someone has said, “Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door forever.” It’s this idea that Paul addresses with the church, because it appears that they either underestimated the power of temptation or didn’t take it seriously or they overestimated their ability to withstand it, which is the risk people take when they take an unguarded approach to temptation.

Paul uses a short lesson from the history book of Israel to provide examples of specific times when they didn’t take temptation seriously, which cost them their lives. In **1 Corinthians 10:1–5**, Paul refers to the Israelites being under the cloud, passing through the sea, eating manna and drinking water from the rock. Paul’s illustration demonstrates the Israelites were all eyewitnesses of God’s divine power; they were beneficiaries of his amazing grace and recipients of his incredible provision! And yet, we read, *“nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them and their bodies were scattered over the desert.”* (**1 Corinthians 10:5**) They participated in idolatry, sexual sin, testing God, grumbling and complaining. So, an entire generation of Israelites died because they flirted with temptation and lost, and caused them to be disqualified and forfeit their reward.<sup>2</sup>

Paul said **1 Corinthians 10:1, 6**; *“I don’t want you to be ignorant of these things,”* because *“[t]hese things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”* His purpose was

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,temptation> TEMPTATION – The act of tempting; enticement to evil by arguments, by flattery, or by the offer of some real or apparent good. When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. (**Luke 4:1–13**) 1. Solicitation of the passions; enticements to evil proceeding from the prospect of pleasure or advantage. 2. The state of being tempted or enticed to evil. When by human weakness you are led into temptation, resort to prayer for relief.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include: **1 Corinthians 10:7** Idolatry (**Exodus 32**); **1 Corinthians 10:7** Sexual immorality (**Numbers 25**); **1 Corinthians 10:9** Testing God (**Numbers 21**); **1 Corinthians 10:10** Grumbling and complaining (**Numbers 12, 16**).

to alert them to the dangers of being cocksure, and you can almost hear his warning as he urges his readers, as well as each one of us in **1 Corinthians 10:12**: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”

### The Rules Of Temptation – Don’t Think To Yourself, “I Can Handle It”

1. Strength comes in weakness, because it’s in knowing that we are vulnerable at every turn to commit any sin if the circumstances are right.
2. Christians should always be on guard against temptation.
3. Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, said, “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.*” (**Matthew 26:41**)
4. **Psalm 73:26**, a psalm of David, says, “*My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*”
5. The only chance for survival against the power of temptation is to recognize that the strength required to fight temptation comes from the Lord.

### The Rules Of Temptation – Everyone Experiences Similar Temptations

6. **1 Corinthians 10:13a** tells us that everyone faces similar temptations, which is meant to be an encouragement to fight temptation.
7. Satan uses isolation as a tool to discourage people into thinking that they are the only one facing some kind of temptation.
8. If Satan can get people to think they’re alone in their struggles and sinful desires, he can isolate them so they can be defeated.
9. **1 Peter 5:8–9** says, “*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*”
10. It’s important to note that being tempted is not sin; it’s giving in to temptation that becomes sin.
11. **Hebrews 4:15** says, “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.*”
12. **Hebrews 2:18** says, “*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*”

## The Rules Of Temptation – God Limits Our Temptations And Provides A Way Of Escape From Them

13. It is comforting to know that God knows our breaking point and he knows what we can and cannot handle, which means that when we are being tempted, we can assume God knows we can handle it or he wouldn't have allowed it to come our way.
14. It is challenging to know that every temptation has an escape route provided by God. ([1 Corinthians 10:13b](#))
15. The challenge is to know that if God is faithful to provide a way of escape for us, then that means that every temptation we succumb to isn't due to a lack of God's power, it's due to our lack of self-control.

## The Rules Of Temptation – Keep Fighting The Flesh And Keep Your Eyes On The Prize

16. In [1 Corinthians 9:24–27](#) Paul said, *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*
17. The strategy Odysseus employed when it came to the tempting songs of the Sirens was to “plug his ears and hold on!”<sup>3</sup>
18. The winning strategy that Jason and the Argonauts used when faced with the same temptation was to listen to the sweeter and louder sound of the music of Orpheus, the great musician who played the lyre above the volume of the songs of the Sirens.
19. Temptation to sin never presents itself to us in its true colors, saying, “I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you forever!”
20. Sin comes in the guise of a sympathetic man or woman who listens more than the spouse; it comes in the form of a bottle, a pill or a powder; it comes where there is poverty or power, fame and money. It promises pleasure but it produces pain.
21. Sin never tells you in advance that it has the potential to ruin your life, to steal your family, wreck your marriage or destroy your reputation.

---

<sup>3</sup> Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus instructed his crew to melt wax and plug their ears to muffle the sound of the Sirens' songs, in addition to ordering them to tie him to the ship's mast; with instructions to keep him tied there no matter the orders he might give.

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **1 Corinthians 9:24–10:13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Someone has said, “Opportunity knocks only once but temptation leans on the doorbell.”
  - a. How can you recognize when temptation is leaning on the doorbell?
4. Read and discuss **Matthew 4:1–3** and **1 Thessalonians 3:5** regarding the fact that Satan is the chief source of temptation.
5. Spend time reading and discussing these questions and Scriptures.
  - a. What is the difference between tempting and testing?
  - b. Does God test people; does he tempt people?
    - i. God tests us to bring out the good in us, while Satan tempts us to bring out the evil in us.
  - c. **James 1:13** says, “*When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.*”
  - d. **1 John 2:16** tells us that our own sinful nature is a source of temptation.
    - i. “*For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.*”<sup>4</sup>
  - e. **James 1:27** says to keep yourself “*from being polluted by the world.*”
  - f. Satan and the world tempt us from without and temptation from our own flesh comes from within.
  - g. Why do you think people believe they can handle temptation on their own?
  - h. Are most people conscious of the sin and downfall of others?
    - i. Do you think people think about the impact and consequences of their actions when they’re tempted to sin?
6. Read and discuss **1 Peter 5:8–9**.
  - a. In the animal kingdom, what sort of prey do lions go after?
    - i. Lions go after the sick, the weak/lame and the young!
  - b. If we’re told that it’s possible to resist and “*stand firm in the faith,*” why do we so often yield to temptation?
    - i. Is it that people don’t believe there is a way out? (**1 Corinthians 10:13b**)
7. Pastor Gary mentioned two accounts from Greek mythology: Odysseus and Jason and the Argonauts.
  - a. Why would Odysseus want to hear the Siren’s song? Someone has said that he wants to hear their seductive song because he’s confident that if he follows Circe’s advice that he will be the

---

<sup>4</sup> KJV – “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*”

only man to have experienced the joy of listening to the Sirens and living to tell about it, since all of the other sailors who had sailed past their island in times past were mesmerized and paid for their indulgence with their lives.

- b. What part of yielding to temptation is related to curiosity?
  - c. What part of yielding to temptation is related to pride and the idea that you can get away with it?
  - d. What does it look like to “sail to a sweeter sound, the sound of God’s promises, so that the songs of temptation are drowned out”?
8. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: ask the Holy Spirit to give them strength to deal with temptation; that they would see temptation for what it is and how destructive and evil it is; ask the Lord to forgive them for specific sins they’ve committed when they’ve succumbed to temptation; ask the Lord to take away the guilt and shame of sins past; to ask the Lord to preserve and protect them and to help them to fight the good fight of faith that they would be victorious over temptation and sin.