

Warning And Consolation As To Temptations.

Text: 1 Cor 10:6-13

1) Warning As To Temptations

Suggested Hymns:

2) Consolation As To Temptations

371, 372, 426, 289, 341

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 10:6-13, *⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*

¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

St. Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians. Corinth was situated on the narrow strip of land which connects the Northern with the Southern peninsula of Greece. It was a city of six hundred thousand inhabitants, all heathen, excepting a small number of Jewish merchants and manufacturers.

It was a city entirely given to idolatry, where gods and goddesses were worshiped in the finest temples, and where the grossest sins of immorality were committed in the religious services. It was a city of a mixed population,

especially at the time of the Isthmian games, when people would come from nearly all parts of the world to see the contests.

A Jewish tentmaker by the name of Aquila and his wife Priscilla were among the inhabitants of Corinth. Paul probably knew this family from Jerusalem, and he visited them on his missionary journey through Greece. He stayed with them almost two years, and founded a Christian congregation consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the stock of the congregation being Jews, but the overwhelming majority of the members being Gentiles.

Things went well for a while in the Corinthian church, which had grown to a large congregation; but when the Apostle had left them and had gone to Asia Minor, trouble was brewing in the church of Corinth.

Factions formed in the congregation, and there were divisions among the members both as to doctrine and practice. Some of them even denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and one of the members committed incest with perfect impunity.

The members no longer separated themselves from the Gentiles around them, but were on the most intimate terms with their heathen neighbours, and went with them to places where they should not have been seen, and joined them in their sinful pleasures.

Apollos, who had taken charge of the congregation after the Apostle's departure, wrote all these things to Paul, and asked him to come as soon as possible. But Paul, being detained, wrote a letter to the Corinthians, and in this letter he warns them and admonishes them not to succumb to the temptations with which they are beset. And at the same time he consoles those who were about to give up in despair under this sad state of affairs.

Now, as the Christian congregations in our days are subject to temptations as much as the Christians were in the days of the Apostles, let us consider the *Warning And Consolation As To Temptations*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Warning As To Temptations

The Apostle reminds the Corinthians of the punishments which came upon the Israelites in the wilderness because they succumbed to temptations, and he

lists some of these temptations as a warning to them that they should be on their guard and not yield to the same temptations.

He says, ⁶ *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*”

When God fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness, they were not satisfied with this bread of heaven, but, as we are told in the book of Numbers, ⁴ *Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”* ⁵ *We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”*¹

And are not Christians tempted at all times to lust after evil things? Are not the sinful pleasures of this life a constant menace to the Christians? Be on your guard, then, my friends, when temptation approaches you in the form of the lust of the flesh. Crucify your flesh with the affections and lusts!

Our text continues, ⁷ *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”* The Israelites committed gross idolatry when they made the golden calf and danced around it in true heathen fashion.

The temptation to idolatry came to them because Moses was delayed on Mount Sinai after they had received the holy Ten Commandments which God had given to them from the mount. When Moses did not return, they said to Aaron, *“Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”*²

And are not Christians tempted with idolatry to this day even as the Corinthians also were tempted to become idolaters in their association with the heathen? Are they not continually tempted to make mammon their god, to trust in riches and earthly goods?

Take warning, then, my friends, and be on your guard when this temptation comes to you, when the love of money, which is the root of all evil, seeks to get a foothold in your heart, when covetousness and greed seizes upon you, when

you feel loath to give for the Lord and for the support of His kingdom. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Another temptation is immorality. The Apostle says, “⁸ *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.*”

When the Israelites, on their journey to the Holy Land, came to the borders of the land of Moab, they intermingled with the Moabites, and worshiped the god of the Moabites and committed fornication with the daughters of the Moabites so that God’s anger was kindled against them. Upon God’s command all those who had committed fornication were executed, twenty-four thousand in all,³ and twenty-three thousand in one day, as the Apostle testifies.

Here we have an instance to show how sternly God is opposed to the sins against the Sixth Commandment. And are not Christians, being flesh and blood as all other people also tempted to this day with unchastity? Take warning, then, and be on your guard, my friends, when the temptation comes to you to sin against the Sixth Commandment.

Say with Joseph “*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*”⁴ Remember that your body is a temple of God’s Holy Spirit, and that you must lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed.

The Apostle continues, ⁹ *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*”

In the wilderness the Israelites spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “*Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.*”⁵ This was blasphemy, it was tempting Christ who guided them in the pillar of clouds.

And what was the answer? The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many of them died. Also when the people murmured against God because an evil report had come to their ears concerning the land of Canaan all the people 20 years and older died in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua.⁶ God sent a plague upon the 10 spies and they died immediately.⁷

O how careful we should be not to tempt Christ and not to murmur against God! When these temptations come to you, my dear Christian friends, when dissatisfaction with your lot in this life seizes upon you, take warning and be on your guard that you do not blaspheme God, and that words do not cross your lips for which you will be sorry when they have been spoken.

Having urged us in his warning as to temptations to stand firm and not to succumb to any temptation, the Apostle proceeds to show how we can learn from others and do better than they did.

He says, ¹¹ *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.* It is for our admonition that these failures of the Israelites have been recorded in the Old Testament.

We should read them and profit thereby. We should take note of the sins into which they fell, and not commit the same transgressions. We should take warning, and fear the punishments with which we shall be visited if we succumb to the temptations with which we are being beset.

And finally, the Apostle warns us not to make light of these temptations, nor to think that of our own power we can overcome them. He says, ¹² *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

If so far you have stood firm in temptation, be careful that you do not overestimate your strength. Do not exalt yourself above others who fell when beset by temptation. Your time may come before you think so.

You may fall deeper than those whom you are criticising, and of whom you think that they are far below you. What will become of you if the grace of God does not uphold you? You will not be able to resist a single temptation. Therefore do not trust in your own power; for *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”*⁸

2. Consolation As To Temptations

From warning the Apostle turns to consolation in the latter part of our Epistle.

How greatly are we in need of consolation, knowing as we do that we are beset with temptations on every side, that our flesh is weak, and that of our own

natural power we cannot resist the evil! And what consolation does St. Paul give us ?

In the first place he calls our attention to the fact that the temptations which come to us Christians are the same temptations which are common to all people. He says, ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.*

Can we Christians complain that we are unduly tempted, superhumanly tempted, more severely tempted than others who are not Christians? It is true that the old tempter, the devil, has his mind fixed on the true followers of Christ, and that he endeavours a great deal more to seduce them into sin and evil than those whom he has in his power and who follow him willingly.

The devil lays snares for the Christians everywhere and tempts them to sin. It is also true that the world constantly tempts the Christian, and seeks to entice him. Often the unbelieving children of this world will use greater efforts to seduce a Christian than an unbeliever.

And how they boast if they succeed! How they laugh in their sleeves if they get a Christian intoxicated, or if they have lured him into the dens of wickedness! But, after all, these temptations of the devil and of the world are such as are common to people. They are not superhuman. We can resist them. We can overcome them in the power of God.

Furthermore, the Apostle consoles us with the assurance that God does not allow His Christians to be tempted above what they are able to bear. He says, *“but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”* God is faithful, that is, He keeps His promise, and does what He says.

We read in Numbers 23:19, ¹⁹ *“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”*

And what precious promises has our God given us by which He assures us that we shall not be tempted above that which we are able to bear! He says in Psalm 34:17, ¹⁷ *The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.* God also says in Isaiah 41:10, ¹⁰ *Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’*

Especially when suffering is connected with the temptation, we should comfort ourselves with this assurance of our God, that He will not allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear.

Heavy burdens may be laid upon you, my dear Christian friends; you may have to suffer a great deal more than others, although everybody has his own troubles and generally considers his troubles greater than those of others; but as long as you are a child of God, you can rest assured that you will not be tempted above that which you are able to bear. Either God will endow you with strength to bear your special cross, or He will remove it from you.

Finally, the Apostle encourages us to bear up bravely, and not to give way to despair under temptation, because God will provide a way of escape so that the temptation can do us no harm. He says, *but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

With the temptation God makes a way to escape, that is, when the temptation comes, the means of escape comes also. With the sickness comes the cure, with the arrow the shield.

How graciously God provided a way to escape for Job when he was tempted! Job lost all his property, he lost his children, his friends deserted him, his own wife told him to give up his trust in God, and, finally, he was smitten with illness and covered with ulcers. But Job stood firm and held on to his trust in God, and the Lord blessed him most abundantly when the time of temptation had passed away.⁹

How mercifully God provided a way to escape for Daniel who was cast into the lions' den! He sent His angels to protect him against the hungry wild beasts, and moved the king to come to the den and have Daniel taken out.¹⁰ The Bible is full of examples to show how the Lord can provide a way to escape for those who trust in Him.

Let us look to our God, then, for help as often as temptations come, whether we be tempted to sin or whether we be tried by suffering.

Let us call upon Him as His dear children and say, *“Help me, O Lord; show me the way of escape! I know that I have not deserved Your gracious help; for I am a sinner, but You have given me Your only-begotten Son, my dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has atoned for all my sins by His suffering and death,*

and in whom I have believe. Help me for the sake of Your dear Son, and deliver me from this temptation!"

And if in this we call upon God, we shall surely not go down in temptation, but overcome and obtain the victory to the glory of His holy name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Numbers 11:4-6

² Exodus 32:1

³ Numbers 25:9

⁴ Genesis 39:9

⁵ Numbers 21:5

⁶ Numbers 14:29

⁷ Numbers 14:37

⁸ James 4:6

⁹ Job 42:12-16

¹⁰ Daniel 6:22-23