

**Sermon:** Freedom & Power when Facing Temptation

**Series:** Love, Power, & Life, 1 Corinthians, part 3 (3)

**Bible Passage:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

We're going to be looking at 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 1-22. It's a massive book with many, many themes. We've broken the book up into several, more manageable themes. We're in a series right now on power and the use of power and freedom. Here we are talking about 1 Corinthians chapter 10:

**10** For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** and all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

**6** Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." **8** We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. **9** We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, **10** nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. **12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**14** Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. **15** I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. **16** The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? **17** Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. **18** Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? **19** What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? **20** No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. **21** You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. **22** Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Let's pray together.

*Father, You promise us Your Holy Spirit would teach us. Your Word tells us that whenever we read your truth, we should be prepared to have your Holy Spirit challenge us and further open our spiritual lives so that we can see things and that you would convict us of the sins we have, not because we can change because we cannot change apart from Your Holy Spirit. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would not only convict us of our sins, but also empower us and give us the hope to become more and more like Christ. Do that this morning as we study Your Word. If we're here this morning and we feel far from You because it's been a long time since we've thought about You or we feel far from You because we don't even know if You're real. Would you speak to us through Your Word this morning. Amen.*

Power. That is our series. In the palm of our hands, we have devices, smart phones, and tablets and have more power and more access to information than I did as a kid. I'm not really into fads; in fact, I tend to resist what everyone else is doing. It could be a pride thing, but it could also be a brain thing. One of the things I really distrust or having a hard time believing at face value is online reviews. Sometimes I'll be eating with people and we'll be looking for a restaurant to eat at. I'll pick a restaurant for us to eat at and they will go online to various websites and look around and say, "Oh look, this restaurant has five stars. We should go!" I'll respond, "Really? You believe these random people who says it's five stars?" It's funny how we rely on other people's reviews.

I've looked at these reviews on online merchant websites like Amazon and other product review websites. I've got to be honest. There is only one kind of review I read – the really, really bad reviews. I really like to look for the one star review because I just don't trust those five star reviews. If there's a restaurant that has thousands of reviews and has five stars, either this restaurant paid a lot of people a lot of money or people actually do really like this restaurant. There is always a one or two star rating where someone is full of hate and bitterness. In fact, I never read two star, three star, or four star reviews; they're useless (they're not useless, only marginally useful). I only read one star and five star reviews.

The idea here is the power of knowledge and the thinking about how this information someone else has given us helps us. In restaurant reviews, there are among a few different things they say: "watch out, don't order this because it's a terrible dish", "I know it says this dish is supposed to feed two grown men but it lies; in reality, it's enough to feed two grown chipmunks", "The line is really long, but have hope, it's worth it." The reason why I bring that up is the idea that some

people have gone before us is a premise that Paul uses when he's talking about the use of power, freedom, and knowledge in a field of life that I don't think we think about.

The topic for today is dealing with temptation. I think for a lot of us, especially out here in America, when we bring up the topic of temptation, it automatically becomes a very private matter. It doesn't matter what other people think about or know. I think many of us here take God's word to be our moral compass, but whatever your moral compass may be, I think all of us can admit that we don't live up to it, do we? All of us that would admit that we fall short. When we think about the ways that we are tempted to go against our conscious, tempted to go against the way that we think is right, at some point, the Bible tells us that we need to think about the temptation, testing, and struggles of the people that come before you.

If you're like me, you're thinking, "I don't know deeply the temptations, struggles, and failures of the people who have gone before me. I know the famous ones, the ones that get written about in the media, the politicians, the sports stars, the celebrities, the academic charlatans, the fake ones, but I don't know the ones that speak to me of hope, purpose, and struggle with the things I'm struggling with in my daily life." Paul says that if you want to deal with temptation, you have to understand the power in knowing the temptation of the people who have come before us. That is really strange.

I was talking with my friend last week, a pastor at another church, and she was sharing at a ministry meeting about a brother in her church who shares with his sons, "I struggle with pornography, and I still do." She was saying, "What father tells his sons that he struggles with pornography and still does?" She was using that as an example of the kind of upbringing that household will get because they will benefit from the failures of the people who come before them.

We're looking at Paul talking to the Corinthian church that is probably one of the worst churches in the New Testament. One of reasons why it has one of the longest books, and two of them at that, is because it has a lot of problems. The way I see it, shorter book means less problems or Paul was imprisoned at that time. The Corinthian church had so many problems and often wrote to Paul and now Paul is writing back. We come to this issue of temptation and power. The reason why we have this topic under the theme of power is because there is this running issue of eating food sacrificed to idols. We mentioned it last week and it was preached a few weeks ago.

In that culture at that time, if you were to buy meat, chances are, the meat that you buy was used in pagan worship. That created a moral problem for some people who came out of that life of idol worship where they would have sexual orgies, cut themselves and use human sacrifices, and have other forms of worship. Paul was dealing with this church that said, “These idols are really nothing. There is no such thing as false gods. We can just eat the meat.” A lot of these people were struggling. How could they eat meat that was part of a sinful, wicked lifestyle and form of worship?

Now we’re coming to a place where we’re thinking about how to use power in dealing with temptation. This passage, I really like it because Paul gives us a theme in two verses. In those two verses, he gives us the three parts that I believe are the outline of this text. I’d like to read you the two verses, verses 12-13, and then I’d like to point out each of these three things.

I believe helpful verses to look at in terms of understanding the author’s thoughts are 1 Corinthians 12-13. In these two verses, I believe you will see three things:

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

As we think about this passage this morning, I’d like you to think of this text in three parts. The first part is a warning. In this passage, when talking about how a person sincerely uses the power afforded to him or her by God to battle temptation, the first part is a warning. The second part is a correction. Firstly, Paul gives a warning about dealing with temptation, when you’re dealing with the things that are wrong or not good for you. Secondly, he gives you a correction. Thirdly, he gives you a promise. He is going to remind us of a promise that God has given when we fight temptation.

Immediately, I want us to understand that this is not as individualistic of a passage. I have to grow in my preaching of this. As someone who has grown up in the modern American culture, I look at that and I think that it’s all about me, but really, there is a communal aspect of this. Paul’s readers would never have thought of it so individualistically as the rugged American. I tell you that because in order to best understand, be helped, and apply this text, we need to understand that Paul is speaking to the community of people and we’ll incorporate that when we go into application.

As we deal with temptation, the kind of external trials and the kind of moral struggles we have, what is the warning that Paul gives us? The warning is: be warned against that you and I are different from other people. Be warned from believing that you and I are different from other people. We see this because Paul was writing to a church that had a lot of spiritual gifts and he is going to talk about how gifted and wonderful they are. Yet, even though they have a lot of spiritual gifts, teaching, guidance, and success, Paul says, “You better watch out. You better take heed. At the exact moment that you think you’re standing, you’re going to fall.” Let’s take a look at this in verses 1-5. I want you to see that Paul is telling the church: you guys are really blessed, but you can still mess up.

**10** For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink.

Now what is he talking about? He’s saying this. Going back to the ancient Israelite history of being captive in Egypt, he is saying, “I want you to know, especially those who have the background of ancient Jewish people, it’s like you’re back in Egypt under the cloud under the providential leading of God.” He gives this sacramental language, how in the church we have the initial sacrament of baptism and the continual sacrament of communion. Paul is using this really cool imagery. “You were baptized under the clouds into Moses and now you’re eating the spiritual food and drink.”

<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

He’s saying that the ancient Israelites had it so good. I used to think as a kid, “If only I could have been there when Moses parted the Red Sea.” It would be better than any movie. If you’re someone says, “I don’t actually believe in those miracles”, that is the exact reason why you need to put yourself there. If you actually saw that, wouldn’t it be so easy to believe? If you actually saw God provide food in the wilderness, quail and manna, you’d have bread and meat (no vegetables, awesome!), and you’d walk around and God would bring water, wouldn’t that be amazing? If I could have just seen Jesus teach and heal people, if I could believe all those things, that would be amazing. If I could just see that, I would not doubt God ever again.

Well the story of the whole Bible, especially the Old Testament, is the exact opposite. Those men and women in the Bible were no different from us. They saw God perform miracle, after miracle,

after miracle. They saw God do the impossible, do the unthinkable, and show great power. Yet, they always went up and down spiritually. In the end, that is why in verse 12, Paul warns us:

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

The moment you think you're standing firm, you're going to fall. This is so pertinent in New England, especially with the ice. I don't know how many times I find myself telling people older than me, people younger than me, myself, my wife who is very smart, "be careful of the ice". People of all ages, including myself, need to be told that. There's this basic belief we have, "I'll be okay. I can handle it. I've got good shoes. I'm fine." I love bringing speakers from other parts of the country and they say, "What ice? There's no ice." I love when people are driving and it's snowing out and people say, "I'm a New Englander. I can drive. It's not going to be a problem." You know who ice trips up? Ice trips up people who don't think they're going to slip. I don't care if you're young, old, an Olympic athlete, but when I say "be careful of the ice", you respond with, "I'm fine, I have a gold medal", then you're really in danger. Anyone who respects the slipperiness of ice, either knows someone or they themselves have fallen. That is why parents push their children when they're small. They don't get hurt when they're small, they just bounce, and learn. The second you feel like you're fine, you fail.

I've shared this story before. Going back to my younger years back in high school, all my friends were in dating girls and having these really pathetically short relationships. I remember in high school, my friend told me, "Today is my anniversary" and I asked him, "What? With your girlfriend? How long has it been?" and he excitedly told me, "It's been thirty days! It's our monthiversary." I guess it tells you something when high school students celebrate month-iversaries. I remember thinking, "Man, what a waste of time, what a waste of emotions, what a stupid silly thing to do to just date for four weeks, when I get my first girlfriend I'm not only going to date her for four weeks." I truly didn't. I dated her for six weeks. I realized, you know, I'm more mature (not really). The reason we only dated for six weeks is because she was long distance.

The key thing to realize here is that the danger you are most in danger of falling into is, not the one you're watching for or are careful of, but the one that you think is something you never have to worry about. Experience teaches you, whatever your spiritual background, that that is so true. To be able to say, "I have seen other people make this mistake. I've even told other people and given them good advice to not fall into this mistake. I never thought that I would find myself in this situation." Have you ever said that in your head? "I never thought I would be in this

mess.” “I never thought I would have this problem.” “I never thought, of all things, that I would struggle with this.” The phrase, “I never thought...” is proof that we are not taking heed that we might fall.

The power that God gives us to fight temptation, the warning is this: You might say, “I’m Christian! I’ve got the Holy Spirit, person of the trinity who gives me hope and truth and abides in me and I abide in Him and that’s awesome!” If you think having the Holy Spirit means you’re sin-proof, if you think having the Holy Spirit means you’re temptation-resistant, if you think the Holy Spirit gives you some sort of protection that you can go into all sorts of temptations – “other people shouldn’t watch those kinds of movies because they could get those thoughts stuck in their mind but I can handle it”, “other people shouldn’t go into those situations where they are tempted sexually to go further with their girlfriend or boyfriend, but I can handle it”, “other people shouldn’t drive in a car with some really attractive person who they’re attracted to, but I can handle it”, “other people need accountability and signatures on their expense reports, but don’t worry about me, I can handle it”. “I can handle it” is the prelude to so many failures and Paul says:

<sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall

You know what? The thing about ice? Even if you’re looking for it, you can still slip. Paul wants to say that even though the resources God has given us to fight the temptations we deal with, the testing we face, is considerable, and as the Bible says, you can overcome the world by the power of God, yet we must remember that every sin you see someone do, every single sin you could see someone do, you and I are fully capable of committing. Do you believe that under certain circumstances, you and I could be Hitler? Do you believe that under certain circumstances, you and I could be rapists? Do you really believe that under the right circumstances, that you and I could give into the corruption and the temptations of the greedy CEOs and business leaders, the people that fall into malpractice lawsuits because they cheat and cut corners? Do you really believe that you and I are different?

If you really deep down think, “Okay Pastor Enoch, I know I’m not perfect, but I’m not like that/him/her”, take heed because when you fall, it could be big. When I fall, it could be big. I

look at my wife and I look at me and there is no sin that I could imagine us not doing. I believe that she is capable of everything. I believe I am capable of everything. We pray against that. I look at my children; every story I've ever heard in my 27 years of working with youth and young people, my kids are fully capable of doing. In every church you've ever heard who has had these scandals with money, infidelity, and moral failures, I firmly believe this church is like every church and is fully capable of doing those things. There is no evil person or leader on the planet who I don't believe I am capable of being like.

Take heed. Whoever thinks they're standing will fall. Now this warning is powerful because Paul goes from a warning to a correction. When I say correction, I don't mean "I'm going to fix you because you're broken". Rather, it's really a correction against a lie. It's a correction against a lie that we believe. "I believe that there are some sins that I would never do because they're so bad or they're just not my areas of weakness. I have to worry about certain sins, but those sins I can't really see myself doing it." If that's true, then think with me. What if you find yourself committing that exact sin, the sin that you thought you'd never do, the sin that you thought only really evil people would do? I think if you're like most people, you would think, "I can't believe I did that. I don't think normal people would ever struggle with this. I must be the worst person of human history. I'm the only one who must struggle with this."

That is why, going back to chapter 10 verse 13, Paul says this:

<sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

In other words, no matter what struggle you face, no matter what struggle I face, it is common to humanity. Other people have faced it. Paul then, gives a litany of examples of where the ancient Israelites committed all sorts of sins in all sorts of categories. That is why he says, in verse 6, he gives four categories of sin:

<sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

The logic is this: if I have a special category of sins, whatever it is and it's different from person to person, lying and stealing money from my business, parents, family, or company, sleeping around with people or cheating on my spouse, gossiping and slander, whatever it is, if you have a special category of sins that you never think you're going to do, if you fall into that temptation, you will think, "I can't believe I did this, only horrible people do this" and feel so alone and so isolated.

The Bible tells us that this is part of the devil's tactics. The Bible believes in a real devil, not necessarily one with red horns, a tail, and a pitchfork, but in a fallen angel whose tactics are like this: "You're strong enough to handle that temptation; I don't think you need to worry about that. You can go ahead. You can move close to that grey area; you're fine". He whispers those things to you, boosting up your spiritual ego. He tells you, "You're a good person. You're not like those other people." The second you turn the corner and commit the sin you didn't think you'd commit, you lied to someone you love or you slept around or you cheated on your spouse or you stole money from the church, the thing you did, at that moment, Satan uses and changes tactics, saying, "You're the worst person in the world. You're the worst Christian in the world. In fact, I don't even know if you're a real Christian because I don't think real Christians do that. That's what this tactic says.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to everybody, but if the warning is true, if someone struggles with a sin and you realize that I am just as capable of struggling with that sin, when you struggle with this, do you believe that perhaps someone else, even in this room, is struggle with the same thing? Maybe not the exact same thing, but similar. In this room, there are numerous of us struggling, maybe with an unwanted pregnancy, with lying, with cheating at work, with same sex attraction, etc. One of the most powerful ways a person can feel weakened in their faith is to believe that they are the only one struggling with that sin. Have you ever thought, "I'm the only one struggling with this", "My family is the only family that has this great problem", "I'm the only guy in the whole church...", "I'm the only girl in the whole school...", or "I'm the only guy in the whole company...". If you've ever thought that, Paul offers a correction: it is a lie.

The part of the gospel is to say this: all of us are sinners, all of us struggle, every single one. That's why we have to heed the warning. There is no sin that you and I cannot fall into. I totally believe that about my life and, by the Bible, about everyone else. It's not because I think lowly of

myself or you, but because the Bible tells us that we are all fallible. At the same time, that means there is not a single struggle that you and I face that others have not faced.

We conclude, going then from the warning, that you and I are not different from other people. Your church is no different from other churches. Your company is no different from other companies. Your families are no different than other families. To realizing, therefore, that all our struggles, though the details might be different, the themes are common to everybody.

We come to the third point of how to deal with and fight against temptation through the power God has given us. This comes from the power God has afforded and this is the promise: the promise of the hope of a way out. Now, we're going to see this as we continue to read verse 12 and we're going to focus on verse 13:

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

There is always an escape. In my household, we like teasers, riddles, puzzles, and things like that. There is no shortage of time when we're looking at a puzzle or problem and we're trying to figure things out. At some point, someone says, "That's it! This is impossible! There's no way you can do this!" Karen will say something like, "Oh, I passed that level already..." When someone says it's impossible, when you and I feel like something is impossible, to find out someone has said, "No, it is possible" creates two feelings. When I get so mad at something like a video game level and then go online and find a video of someone perfectly playing that level, I, on the one hand, think I'm really angry because if I said it was impossible and it truly was impossible, I don't feel bad anymore. It's not my fault if I can't do it; it's impossible. Then, after you realize that something you thought was impossible isn't actually impossible, you get hope. If it's not impossible, are you willing to keep at it?

Isn't that the life of coach, a parent, a mentor? It's not impossible; there is a way out. It's frustrating. Whether it's a game of Sudoku or a morally challenging dilemma, the Bible says that there is a way of escape. I think the heavenly Father, like a good parent, sometimes varies it. Sometimes when my kids are really frustrated with a puzzle or something, I can tell that today isn't the day to tell them, "Come on! You can do it!" I try to be gracious and give them a hint. Sometimes they're so mad they don't want to use the hint, so I have to show them. Sometimes I need a clue and so God gives us a hint and sometimes we don't get hints, and God is saying, "No

hints, you need to figure it out. You can do it.” God, like the perfect coach and trainer, knows when to point you the obvious way out, to hit the eject button for you, or to wait there while you stew and struggle because He knows that, by His grace, you’re going to get it. The hope in every test that you and I will ever have is that there is a way of avoiding that sin, a way out of hurting the people, a way out of defaming the name of Christ – there is a way out. We pray that God would help you believe it and we pray that God would help you find it.

That is the power that He has given us in dealing with this. In doing this, Paul applies this to the very sticky situation of the food and idols thing. Let’s get back to the text and their life for a moment. Paul is saying this, “There are no idols. There are no such thing as false gods. On one hand, yes you can just eat the food.” But then he says something very unique in the New Testament, “Even though there is no such thing as other gods, there are demons, fallen angels, associated with certain worship practices, acts, icons, and symbols.” This is going to sound very unmodern and unscientific, but I want us to see this in the text. Let’s take a look starting at verse 14:

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup> I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

In the evangelical Christian world, we all believe in miracles. Part of believing in the Bible is believing that angels and demons exist. I remember this baptism testimony years ago. This dear sister was sharing about how she came upon the life of idol worship. She realized that there is no such thing false gods and that there is only one true god. One part of her testimony was her taking the idols out and physically smashing them. We know this, especially in more spiritually minded cultures, certain pictures, objects, or places have no power in of it of themselves, but I do believe that it is possible for demons to have influence on people.

I have friends who traveled somewhere and took this little icon and brought it home. One of those friend had a dream of some weird crazy imagine in his mind. He told us that this image made him feel really dark in our apartment. He thought it was possible demonic and it was

freaking him out for weeks. He told his roommates, drew the imagine, and the friend that traveled went into his suitcase, pulled out the icon he brought back with him from his trip to Asia, and put it side by side with the drawn picture; the picture was of the icon. He exclaimed, “How did you even know I had this? I forgot I had this. Someone just gave it to me when I visited one of those Asian temples on a tour!” It’s rare, I admit, and in our scientifically-minded western culture, we are probably less sensitive and prone to these things.

But, there is a way out. Even in those days, Paul is saying if you’re dealing with food sacrificed to idols, it’s possible that demons are associated with that and you need to be mindful. He also tells them, “Okay, food sacrificed to idols? There’s no such thing as fake gods, so go ahead and eat the food, but that being said, I’m not implying you’re worshipping false gods, I’m implying you’re worshipping demons!” So yes, the politically incorrect statement that the Bible says is: every religion that does not worship the true God is worshipping some manifestation of a demon. That is what this passage says.

This explains why, in so many other religions, stories of miracles, every religion has got them. Stories of healing, every religion has got them. I’m reading Exodus with one of my sons for our devotions in the evenings and we see pharaohs and magicians doing the same thing: turning staffs into snakes, producing blood and frogs, etc. I have no problem believing that if there are other supernatural powers operating in other religions, then I’m going to say what the Bible says: it’s not another false god or deity, it’s a demon.

If you were Satan, what would be better? To never show your power or to show it in all these other religions? We get this idea that all other religions tap into the same spiritual forces, it’s just different sides of the same thing. Well, that could be true or it could be the best, most devious trick in history.

And so, when we’re dealing with temptation, Paul says this, “You’ve been given freedom and power. As a Christian, you’ve been given all these things, but especially Christians should know that we can all make the same mistakes.” Christians should not be the people who say, “Oh, I don’t struggle with those sins.” Christians should be the ones that say, “I’m a Christian and I’m absolutely positive that I can struggle with that sin.” The world needs to hear more Christians reflect the Biblical sentiment that Christians don’t think we’re better; we know we’re not better. That’s why we need to fall upon the grace of a savior. Whoever thinks he or she is standing, watch out, because you’re about to fall. But when you do fall, you need to know: do not believe

the lie that you are alone in your struggle. There are others and, because of that, you need to know that there is a way out.

How do you get this way out? What's the take away from here? We said there is this communal aspect to the struggle with temptation and here it is: how will I help someone with my struggles unless I share with them how I fought against the sin in my life, unless I share with them how I struggled against jealousy in my life, unless I share with them how I struggled with sexual purity in my life, unless I share with them how I struggled with stealing or lying in my life, unless I share with them how I struggled with hatred, bitterness, and distrust in my life? How will others learn unless you and I share our struggles?

The Bible is not saying to share with a condescending attitude, "Oh, young grasshopper, I struggled with that a hundred years ago." It's basically recognizing that we still struggle. How will we help others unless we are willing to share our struggles? This morning we, the pastoral staff, and the musicians on the worship team were praying together before service. When you come to this church, what is the impression that you get? That we're really nice, good, moral people? I mean, hopefully we're not giving the impression that we're wicked, evil, lying hypocrites. But, at the same time, if you really walk into a church that follows Jesus, that church should be filled with people who say, "I'm really no different from anyone else. I struggle with the same sins, the same things, so when I do struggle, I refuse to believe the lie that I'm the worst person in the world. I will not let Satan isolate me, and in doing so, I will believe that God has given me a way out. I will find that way through studying scripture. I will find that way through by going to a godly, older counselor and tell them my struggle, perhaps in great detail."

I've seen God fix really messed up marriages. I've seen God heal really broken people, people struggling with addiction, pornography, cutting, substance addiction, etc. The Lord has given me a burden and heart for people who struggle with same sex attraction. In every ministry, I've had the opportunity to walk a long journey with people who deal with same sex attraction. Whatever it is you are struggling with, whatever it is that makes you feel so isolated, would you go home and read this and would you be willing to engage in the community? I can refer you to people. There are things you and I would be scared to find out. I promise you, whatever you're struggling with, is not new because the Bible says there is nothing new under the sun.

Come forward, talk to your Sunday school teacher, talk to your counselor, talk to your Christian friend who brought you today if you're not a regular member of our church. Talk to someone

that you might benefit, and by their help, encouragement, and prayers, be more like Christ and find a way out.

Right now, you've got to be in one of two places: either you're struggling with a temptation and you've given up hope, you're isolated right now and you can't believe you're struggling with something that you think no one else struggles with, or, alternatively, there has to be something right now that you and I have a blind eye towards that could potentially sideswipe us. Everyone, Christian or not, can take something from this passage. Where are you using your power that God has given you?

If you're not a Christian yet, would you understand that this is what God has afforded to you? Our sins are real. They cause real harm in our life, in our relationships, in our society. Jesus offers an incredible hope. Do you have that hope? Do you want that hope? Your marriage is not the worst marriage in the world. Your addiction is not the worst addiction in the world. Your kids are not the worst kids in the world. There are plenty of worst kids in the world; I've met many of them and I've been one of them. In all those things, Jesus says, "Whoever is prideful, whoever thinks they're standing, take heed, because you're going to fall. But, God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bare. No temptation has seized you or overtaken you except what is common to everybody. He will provide you a way out."

Let's keep that in our hearts as we bow our heads and pray.

*Our great Father in heaven, help us to believe these things. It is so easy, and in some ways, to believe that we are the worst Christians in the world or something is impossible because if we think these sins are impossible, and we have no hope of overcoming these struggles in our lives, our families, our marriages,, our health, then we can, in some ways, give up and absolve ourselves of responsibility. But Lord, You don't let us off the hook because You didn't let Your son off the hook. You nailed Him to the cross and He willingly hung on that cross to say that all of us need this and that is why He died, to say we are not alone, which is why He died for the world, and that we have a way out, which is why He rose again. Let us worship Him, let us receive the healing, let us receive the conviction of our sins so that we might obey and enjoy our great savior.*