

Pastor Jim Lloyd

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Title: RESIST

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Today we find ourselves in chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians. In this chapter, Paul continues his discussion of the principles behind a believer's decision on whether or not to eat food sacrificed to idols, AND... It leads to a greater discussion on HOW A BELIEVER SHOULD BE ON GUARD and MONITOR THEIR LIVES CLOSELY to ensure they don't wander away from the victorious life God has in store for them. He's talking about food sacrificed to idols, which is a non-issue for us, but the principles behind his message to the Corinthians still apply to us today.

In chapter 9, Paul talked about his motive for ministry and the values that would guide him. He concludes by saying: "I discipline myself so that after having preached to others I won't be disqualified from finishing the race I set out to win." He carries that idea into chapter 10 as he appeals to the Corinthians who, as we have seen previously, were a little too smug and self-satisfied for their own good. They were a little too impressed with themselves and a little too dismissive of others. So, Paul is saying to them, in effect: "Just like I take care to protect myself spiritually, YOU need to be on guard so that you don't let slip through your fingers all the blessings that God has provided for you.

Paul then makes a reference to the story of the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land, and he makes it an analogy to their salvation in Christ. He says that our ancestors were figuratively baptized into Moses, so to speak, just as you have been literally baptized into Christ, and... As Moses led his people along the way, they partook of spiritual food and spiritual drink, which was miraculously provided from above, and... They drank from the SPIRITUAL ROCK that accompanied them.

What is this SPIRITUAL ROCK? Paul is referring to a Rabbinic tradition that was developed from the Old Testament record. Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 talk about the Hebrew people being in a desperate situation without water to drink, and God tells Moses to strike the rock and water will come forth – and it does. That Rock provided for their imminent need. Paul refers to this traditional teaching when he refers to the spiritual rock that accompanied them. And... Then he says, *"...and that rock was Christ."* And so there they were, God's chosen people, being led through the desert by God's chosen man, on the receiving end of God's supernatural provision. If you have to pass through the desert, that's the best way to do it. And yet, Paul said... *"Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness"* (vs. 5). Why this? What happened? Well, we're getting there. Paul wants his readers to be on guard – and to take specific action – to protect themselves from the same kind of devastation experienced by so many in the desert during the days of the Exodus. Paul wanted his readers to be on guard, just as God wants you and I to be on guard, so that we don't fall to the same fate as the (ancient) Israelites.

So today Paul points the Corinthians and us to three security checks (for lack of a better term) that Paul mentions here in 1 Corinthians that will help us guard against the potential destruction of our spiritual lives. Potential destruction? Really? It sounds so serious. And it is serious! Paul wanted the Corinthians to hear the warning and heed the call: They were so self-obsessed and self-impressed that they ran the risk of running afoul of the standard God had established for them. WE, likewise, need to HEAR the warning and HEED the call. So, here are three things we can do to ensure that our spiritual life doesn't end up scattered in the wilderness. Here's the first security check.

1. Let those who think they know as much as they need to know make an effort to learn from the lives of others. That's a wordy way of saying: **WE NEED TO BE TEACHABLE.** Sometimes we do not know as much as we think we know, SO... NEVER STOP LEARNING. Be smart enough to learn from the stupidity of others. We ALL make mistakes. So, learn from the mistakes of others. Seriously, we need to be willing to learn from the life experience of others. Paul said... *"Now these things occurred..."* And he's about to list "these things" in just a

moment. *“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did”* (vs. 6). He’s saying that we can learn from their experience and avoid the same outcome. And... Then he lists four attitudes – four behaviors that served to sabotage the spiritual well-being of so many Israelites. In verse 7 he mentions **IDOLATRY** – RESIST IDOLATRY – which was seen in their worship of the Golden Calf. You may remember that story. The people were stranded in the desert. Moses had gone to the mountains. He was gone just a little too long for their liking, and everyone got restless. Aaron collected all the jewelry he could and melted it down and shaped it into a calf, and... Aaron stood before them all and basically said, “This is the god that led you out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.” And... They threw a big party in celebration of this more tangible god. As the psalmist would later say... *“They FORGOT the God who saved them”* (Psalm 106:21). *“They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. ²⁰They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. ²¹They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, ²²wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. ²³Therefore he said he would destroy them – had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. ²⁴Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise. ²⁵They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord. ²⁶Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness, ²⁷and would make their offspring fall among the nations, scattering them among the lands. ²⁸Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead; ²⁹they provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them”* (Psalm 106:19-29). Paul says BE ON GUARD against idolatry. **Idolatry is anything that takes the place of the Almighty.** Here it was the statue of a golden calf, BUT... It is ANYTHING that takes the rightful place of God. Then he goes on to say BE ON GUARD for **SEXUAL SIN** – RESIST SEXUAL SIN. We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did – and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. He’s talking about the story found in Numbers 25 in which a number of the men in Israel began to engage in immoral behavior with the women of Moab. This involved not only sexual sin but led also to the worship of idols and making sacrifices to foreign gods, threatening the security of the nation. That’s the erosive nature of sexual sin. It blinds one to just about everything else. Think of all the preachers and politicians and public figures whose lives today have become a devastating demonstration of the destructive power of infidelity and immorality. Let their lives teach us as well! Paul then says... We should **NOT TEST CHRIST**, as some of them did – and were killed by snakes. RESIST TESTING CHRIST! This refers to Numbers 21 when the people showed their utter contempt for God’s provision, saying to Moses... *“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”* (Numbers 21:5). Paul calls this “testing Christ.” Another word for it might be UNGRATEFUL, or unappreciative, or entitled. We are putting God to the test when we refuse to appreciate His loving care and protection. God had sustained them, and they made light of it. Paul’s next warning is closely related to this one. He calls it **GRUMBLING**. RESIST GRUMBLING. *“And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel”* (vs. 10). Whatever sin Israel engaged in – idolatry, sexual sin, testing Christ, or grumbling – there were grave consequences. As we read through the Old Testament, specifically the story of the Exodus, we see that grumbling and complaining was one of the most persistent sins of the people of Israel. Again and again, they were called out. Again and again, they paid the price. Today we fail to realize how destructive our grumbling can be – in a church, in a business, in a family, even in our own spiritual life. If your default setting is to whine and complain, you are putting your spiritual health – and the health of those around you – in jeopardy. This is why there are dozens of Bible verses warning us against it. A couple that come to mind: *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing...”* (Philippians 2:14, ESV). *“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door”* (James 5:9, ESV). I find it rather interesting that Paul mentions grumbling and complaining and testing God with our ingratitude and lack of appreciation – and he equates these attitudes with sexual immorality and the worship of pagan gods. This is why we must take heed. Because there are those who would never in a thousand years kneel before a golden calf, but they go through life grumbling at every turn, never truly grateful for all the good that God has brought their way. Have you known such a person? I have. More times than I can count I have encountered those whose lives are spent in bitter isolation;

every relationship fractured by their perpetual displeasure – their perpetual grumbling. Paul is saying: Let's learn this lesson from the lives of others. See where their grumbling and complaining took them. Your grumbling and complaining will take you to the same place. That's the inevitable outcome, so take the steps necessary today to avoid it. So, Paul repeats what he said before... *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come"* (vs. 11). Those who think they know as much as they need to know need to make an extra effort to learn from the lives of others. Learn from the deeds of the Israelites. The reason we do this is because we understand the importance of this second so-called security check.

2. Let those who think they are strong take extra care. This is what Paul says... *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (vs. 12). Why do we need to take heed or take care? Not only aren't we as smart as we think we are, but we might also not be as strong as we think we are. A couple of chapters back, Paul gave a similar warning. *"Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know"* (1 Corinthians 8:2). He said this right after he said, *"Knowledge puffs up."* The story is told of a professor who was passing out papers for his first-year Greek exam students. A brazen, arrogant student held up his ink pen and said something along the lines of, "I can take this test in ink. I know this material so well that I won't need an eraser. That's how confident I am." The professor said, "That's not confidence. That's OVER-confidence." The professor handed the student a pencil. And he ended up needing the eraser. Here's the warning: If your life is particularly strong in any given area, that's great. BUT... Please understand: You will never be so strong that you can choose to neglect ANY area of your life from here on out. Even when you leave your guard down in your area of great strength, you become vulnerable. You might not be standing as firm as you thought. You might not be as strong as you thought. You still need to monitor the parts of your life that give you the least trouble, to ensure that decay NEVER has the chance to set in. DECAY is a rather accurate metaphor. I guess I've made more than 100 visits to dentists over my lifetime. I've had my teeth cleaned, x-rayed, filled, polished, repaired, and pulled. I've probably been to a dozen different dentists. Not one of them has ever said, "Mr. Lloyd, your teeth are so good that you don't need to come back." The only reason a dentist would tell you that you needn't return would be because he pulled your last tooth. You can have a million-dollar smile, but you'll never get to the point where you can neglect taking care of your teeth. Even if you're a dentist and you have drilled and filled and pulled and polished thousands of teeth in your career, you must take heed that you remember to floss and brush YOUR OWN SET OF TEETH, lest they fall out. Paul is saying, in effect, *"Keep a close watch on your life, even in the areas where you have the most confidence and experience the most victory."* As in: My marriage is strong, and I will continue to pay close attention so that it will remain a strong marriage. My finances are good, so I will continue to keep an eye on my spending. Business is doing well, so now is not the time to slack off. I'm growing spiritually and walking more closely with Christ than ever before, so I will continue to follow the fundamentals." The idea is that we NEVER LET UP; we continue to focus on WHAT MATTERS MOST. It's also important to remember, and this is what Paul is leading up to: If you think you're strong in any given area, you might NOT be as strong as you think you are. You might NOT know as much as you think you know. You might need a pencil with an eraser for your exam. The second security check, then, is to make sure we keep an eye on our perceived strengths, as well as our weaknesses, so that we never make room for spiritual decay.

Here's the third security check.

3. Let those who think they are destined to fall take heart. Oscar Wilde once said, "I can resist anything but temptation." That's the way many feel, that we just don't have what it takes to stand up to temptation, that we're bound to fail each and every time. Understand that God doesn't want us to continue to see our temptation as a losing proposition. He wants you to know that you don't have to lose the battle against sin. You can win every single time. Paul said... *"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it"* (vs. 13). There's a lot in this verse and we

would do well to memorize it AND live by it. In these last couple of minutes, I want us to consider the power of this promise from God's Word. God wants you to know that whenever you find yourself face-to-face with temptation, you're not the Lone Ranger. What you're facing, EVERYONE has faced. Even Jesus. That's what Scripture says. *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). You're not alone in your temptation. And... Neither are you outmatched. Whatever the temptation might be, it's never bigger than you are. *"He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."* Believe me, I know that it certainly looks bigger than you are. It feels bigger than you are. It makes you think that you may as well give up before you exhaust yourself in futility and failure, because you're bound to fall. BUT... You're not destined to lose this battle. You are, instead, destined to win. You are destined to be more than a conqueror through the power of Jesus Christ. You are not alone. You're not outmatched. And... You're not nearly as trapped as you may feel, because *"when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."* Whenever you face temptation, you can take heart because IT DOESN'T HAVE TO END BADLY. Yes, far more times than it should, we let it end badly. WHY? Because we fail to seek God's power, AND... We fail to claim His promise of victory.

CONCLUSION. It doesn't matter how much confidence you may have, how much knowledge you may have, OR... how many victories you may have piled up in the past. We must hear the warning and heed the call to be on guard in every area of life and TO RESIST the devil. This may seem like a somber word because by nature warnings are quite somber, but... Today's message is a word of hope: No one needs to fall by the wayside. We don't have to follow the examples of those who have fallen before us. We can hold to and stand upon the Rock Christ Jesus. You can live a life of victory if you'll only be on guard. Resist IDOLATRY. Resist SEXUAL SIN. Resist TESTING JESUS. Resist GRUMBLING. The life of the believer isn't meant to be a losing proposition. In fact, life is full of battles that we should be equipped to win, because God has given us all that we need to walk in victory – down to the very warnings we need to hear. The wise will learn life's lessons from those before us who have learned the hard way. We need not repeat their mistakes. We can watch ourselves closely and catch ourselves before we fall, AND... When it seems like we're sure to lose the battle against sin, we can take heart because God has given us the path to victory. 1 Corinthians 10:4 – *"For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."* Many of the wonders of the world were made of huge rocks, and because of this they have survived in part to this day: The Great Wall of China – 7th century BC, The Great Pyramids of Egypt – 26th century BC, The Parthenon of Greece – 5th century BC, Stonehenge in England – 3,000 to 2,000 BC. The rock is a symbol of STABILITY. That's why when men build something meant to last, they use rock. The terms rock and stone are used synonymously in the New Testament. 1 Peter 2:6-8 calls Jesus the STONE, the CORNERSTONE, the PRECIOUS STONE, the STONE THE BUILDERS REJECTED. There are endless parallels between men's use of rocks and stones, and who Jesus is. JESUS IS THE ROCK. Jesus is THE WAY (*Odos* – Greek for "road"). If you study the history of roads, you will discover that those that have lasted are made of rock. There are the existing cobblestone roads of Europe. The old Roman Roads of New Testament days are still being used where they were made of stones. I've walked them. Our modern superhighways are built with a foundation of various size rocks. So is the bed for railroad tracks. If you want to make a way to anywhere that will be lasting, you make it with rocks. Jesus is the permanent way to God. Scripture names Him the Rock of Ages. The songwriter says it like this – *"On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."* That is why there are over 3,000 commercial crushed rock plants in the United States. They play a major role in the construction of our country and our country's roads. If you go to our nation's capital in Washington, DC, you will soon note that it conveys an image of strength and endurance because its major buildings and monuments are made of quarried sandstone, limestone, or marble: The White House, The Capital, The Supreme Court, The Smithsonian Institute, The Lincoln Memorial, The Jefferson Memorial, and other lesser-known buildings. JESUS IS OUR ROCK. Christ is the answer. He's our refuge and strength and present help in trouble. It is CHRIST who makes the way. 1 Corinthians 10:4 – *"For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."*