

## Sermon Outline on “being careful not to fall”

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10: 1 - 13.

**Anchor text 1 Cor 10: 12 and 13.** *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 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. (NIV)*

I find the Message paraphrase very helpful and practical to help me to understand the meaning of this really important passage in Scripture:

### **The Message:**

Remember our history, friends, and be warned. All our ancestors were led by the providential Cloud and taken miraculously through the Sea. They went through the waters, in a baptism like ours, as Moses led them from enslaving death to salvation life. They all ate and drank identical food and drink, meals provided daily by God. They drank from the Rock, God's fountain for them that stayed with them wherever they were. And the Rock was Christ. But just experiencing God's wonder and grace didn't seem to mean much—most of them were defeated by temptation during the hard times in the desert, and God was not pleased.

<sup>6-10</sup> The same thing could happen to us. We must be on guard so that we never get caught up in wanting our own way as they did. And we must not turn our religion into a circus as they did—“First the people partied, then they threw a dance.” We must not be sexually promiscuous—they paid for that, remember, with 23,000 deaths in one day! *We must never try to get Christ to serve us instead of us serving him; they tried it, and God launched an epidemic of poisonous snakes. We must be careful not to stir up discontent; discontent destroyed them.*

<sup>11-12</sup> These are all warning markers—danger!—in our history books, written down so that we don't repeat their mistakes. Our positions in the story are parallel—they at the beginning, we at the end—and we are just as capable of messing it up as they were. **Don't be so naive and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence.**

<sup>13</sup> **No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.**

*Our theme today is: God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it. He has your temptations on a leash!*

(1 Cor 10:12) *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"*

Paul is not thinking of a man falling on a slippery surface. Paul is thinking of a man slipping and falling on temptation. He thinks of a Christian who is spiritually over-confident and more self-assured than is good for him. He is thinking of a Christian who believes he or she is so strong in the faith in Christ that temptation can come to them and they will never give in to its urges.

We have all made firm promises to God. Many of the vows were even made before in the presence of the congregation.

When we got married we promised: I will always be faithful, and we meant what we said. I pray that every husband and every wife has such a resolution. But Paul would say to this man

or woman, (1 Cor 10:12) "*be careful that you don't fall!*" If we are not careful, we are headed for a fall.

When we were confirmed or baptised as believers, or when we joined as members of the church where we worship now, we all say: "I will never stop attending worship services and especially be present at the Lord's Table. I will always hold my minister up in prayer. I will always tithe. I will always make time for family and personal devotions. Paul would say to all such new members of the church, (1 Cor 10:12) "*be careful that you don't fall!*"

Christian teenagers may make a vow to be chaste or to never do drugs. It is great to hear young people make these commitments. Yet Paul also says to them, (1 Cor 10:12) "*be careful that you don't fall!*"

There are many temptations. Think about the impact on people's lives by gambling, pornography, anger, greed, materialism and having a unteachable spirit as a result of spiritual pride. There are these and many other temptations and when we least expect it, and when we are not being careful, we slip and fall or wander away from the truth or put Christ on the back burner. It happens quickly. And before we know it, we have fallen away from God and into the pit of godlessness and self seeking arrogance and impurity.

#### **Paul reminds us that Israel was also tempted - and they fell.**

In our Scripture lesson Paul reminds us that the children of Israel thought they were safe from temptation. They thought they were immune to temptation's ambushes. They thought they would never fall.

The Israelites based their confidence on the miraculous blessings God had graciously shown them during their time of deliverance from Egypt and as they were trekking through the desert. (1 Cor 10:2-4) *They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.*

All of the Israelites saw God's goodness and firm promises to be their God by his miraculous interventions in the past and believed it meant that God made a firm commitment towards them to be their God. If this is so, they reasoned, how can we ever fall?

We see God's commitment to us in the same light because we were baptised and because we publicly confirmed God's promise to us given at our baptism. We may think, how can I fall if God covenanted with me to be my God and the God of my children!

Paul also compares eating manna and drinking water from the rock to the Lord's Supper. The Israelites thought the experience of being miraculously fed and nourished by God in the dessert would preserve them from falling, in the same way we believe that the Lord's Supper will sustain us and make us strong in the Lord. Having had such marvellous blessings, the Israelites thought that they could not possibly fall. Being people who have communion with the living Christ, we may also think that temptation can never be strong enough to cause our fall.

Yet when temptation came, the Israelites fell hard. Think of the golden calf the Israelites made and worshiped while Moses was on top of Mount Sinai with God (Ex 32). Remember what

the people said? *"These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt"* (Ex 32:4). As punishment about 3,000 of them died by the sword.

**The church in Corinth struggled with spiritual pride.** They boasted about all the gifts of the Holy Spirit experienced in their church. They were oh so proud of all the prophecy, speaking in tongues and miraculous healings going on when they gathered to worship. And they believed that "spiritual people" cannot fall. Yet they did fall into sin. Some of them committed the most terrible immoralities and disgusting and shameful things happened amongst them. They fell hard without noticing it. And the majority fell for the temptation to become spiritually boastful!

The lesson we learn from Israel and from the church in Corinth is captured in our anchor text: (1 Cor 10:12) *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"*

As New Testament Church we received so much more blessings and insight than believers had before Christ came. Paul says upon us *"the fulfilment of the ages has come"* (vs 11). We have seen Jesus come; we have seen him finish his work on the cross and we have seen him victorious in his glorious resurrection and his everlasting power at the right hand of God. We know all authority on earth and in heaven belongs to him. We have been baptized in a way the Israelites never were. And we eat and drink from the Lord's Table in a way the Israelites never could. But in spite of these wonderful blessings, we are not beyond temptation. So *"be careful that you don't fall!"*

#### **How can one be careful?**

Listen again to the words of our text: (1 Cor 10:12) *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!* But how do we keep ourselves from falling?  
How do we stop ourselves from falling again and again?

Remember what God *does not promise* to do. God does not promise to remove temptation. That is simply not the way life is. God's desire is not that we should be delivered from temptation, but God's desire is that we should be able to endure, yes to deal with temptation. *God's desire*, says our text, *is that we remain standing in spite of temptation.*

***And we can, because when trouble comes, when each and every temptation comes, God has it on a leash. He will not let us be pushed beyond our limits and he will provide a way out so that we can stand.***

#### **God always provides a way out and contains the temptations!**

Our anchor text also tells us that for every temptation we encounter, God has designed a way out.

That is God's second promise to us when we face temptation. Although the situation may be extremely dangerous and we may be very weak, there always is a way to avoid falling. When you are tempted, God will *"provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* Every temptation has an escape route. There always is an alternative. If you sincerely want to escape temptation and you know you are going to face a particular temptation, go ahead and ask God to reveal the way out.

Think of Joseph and Potiphar's unfaithful wife. "Come to bed with me!" she said. That must have been a strong temptation for the young man. But God provided a way to escape. Joseph was able to run away (Gen 39:7-12). **When we you are tempted, run away!!**

When Jesus was tempted in the dessert, being hungry and tired and the thought of the cross was already filling him with fear, Satan's temptations to avoid all the suffering and sacrifice must have looked alluring. But God provided Jesus with the appropriate words from the Bible to combat Satan and he did not fall and he eventually did go to the cross and the grave for our sins.

In each and every instance God provides the means of escape, a way out and place to hide.

**In conclusion:**

**You don't have to fall every time temptation comes!** You don't have to fall, because God has made you two glorious, wonderful promises:

**He has promised to limit the intensity of your temptations  
and he has promised to provide you a way to escape!**

Listen again to the Word of God: (1 Cor 10:12) *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

And if you have fallen - prayerfully stand up in the power of the risen Christ, listen to his words of forgiveness ***and never again think that you cannot fall***. Be careful, put your trust in Christ Jesus, and run away from temptation before you sin again!

When trouble comes, when each and every temptation comes, God has it on a leash. He will not let us be pushed beyond our limits and he will provide a way out so that we can remain standing.

May our Lord preserve you and may you persevere till your life's end.

*This is the Word of God.*

*Thanks be to God.*

*Amen.*