

**Be on the look out!**  
**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

Did you enjoy what you saw this week? I believe you saw less clouds and more sun, didn't you? You saw less snow and more ground. You saw less cold and more warmth. So how did you react to all of that? I'll tell you how I reacted. I went outside! I ran around. I played in the yard. I walked around as carefree as the songbirds I've been hearing again. And that's the reason why my reaction to all of that was actually to be a little alarmed.

I know; it sounds a little weird. But I was a little alarmed because it just dawned on me this week. The sun, the warmth, the bare ground—a few years ago that didn't mean running around haphazardly and carefree. No, it used to mean *keep your eyes open*. It used to mean *watch your step*. Do you know why? In the part of the country I was in for a while, there were critters that liked to warm themselves in the late winter sun and meander through open ground, too. They were critters that slithered... critters with fangs... critters with a rattle for a tail. So if you were in the right places you would have to be on the lookout in weather like this.

But I haven't seen many critters like that here. I haven't heard any warnings on the radio like I used to. And so I've just kind of lost my awareness. And even though that's perfectly fine in this part of the country, it's still a little alarming to know that I've maybe gotten a little too secure or that I take my safety a little too *for granted*.

Rattle snakes may not be a danger around here, but there are plenty of other dangers, aren't there? So, false security is never good. It's not good for us physically. And what's even worse, false security is never good for us spiritually either. So today God wants to make sure that we are very aware as we walk around this earth. He wants us to be aware of spiritual predators slithering around for their next victim. He wants us to be on the look out! (Read Text)

I could have lived out west with the attitude of an Easterner—that since I'd never seen a rattle snake before then I probably didn't have to worry about it then, either. But that would have been silly. No, it was good to learn from the knowledge of those who had experienced such things throughout their history. It's good to learn from history. That's probably why Paul starts these verses out by challenging Jewish people to think about their history. Looking back, was there another nation that God had blessed more than the nation of Israel? Who else but Israel could say they marched out of powerful Egypt in the middle of the night? Who else but Israel had walked through the center of the Red Sea on dry ground with water stacked up on both sides? Who else but Israel had seen the Lord of the universe blazing a trail for them in the wilderness with a pillar of cloud and fire? Every Jewish person had reason to think, "I must be one of God's people. Look at what great things he's done for me!"

And really we can say the same, can't we? Maybe God hasn't powerfully marched us out of a nation, but he has allowed live in protection and safety and freedom. Maybe God hasn't walked us through a sea on dry ground, but has walked with us through the many trying situations of life. Maybe God hasn't blazed a trail with fire for us, but he blazes the way through life with the burning light of his Word. Maybe God doesn't shower us with bread from heaven to feed us, but he gives us his forgiving body and blood in the heavenly food of the Lord's Supper. You can say it with me or to yourself, "I must be one of God's people. Look at what great things he's done for me!"

And Paul's purpose in pointing out God's grace from the past is to warn about taking it lightly in the future. He writes, "**These things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.**" On God's part, the history is all good. We can't say the same for his people's part! As it so often happens with God's blessings, it was too easy to find security in the blessings, not in the God who stood behind those blessings. And that is no security at all. Just listen: "**The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.**" Israel grew tired of waiting for Moses to come down from Mt. Sinai. They erected a golden calf and overindulged in eating, drinking and living it up. The worship of the golden calf still goes on today. How easy it is for us to grow tired of waiting for Jesus to return—to live as though he never will. Is any pagan revelry ever involved when it comes to our attraction to things of this world?

**“We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of the did.”** Israelite men went and enjoyed sexual relations with women they were commanded to stay away from. Again history repeats itself. With all the living together outside of marriage, all the divorce, all the homosexuality so prevalent, does today’s Christian always take to heart God’s commandment to honor marriage?

**“We should not test the Lord, and do not grumble as some of them did.”** Israel grumbled about the miraculous provisions, the leaders God placed over them, and God’s guidance. Showing ingratitude for all the Lord does for us, complaining and grumbling about our situation in life, rebelling against God’s representatives—how many times don’t we twenty-first century Christians put our Savior God to the test?

It just goes to show that temptation is a lot like death. For most of our lives we spend our time trying to convince ourselves that we’re not going to die. But each news story we read... each funeral we attend... each sickness we fight brings us back the reality that it *will* happen. The point—treat temptation like we ought to treat death! Don’t think that these things can’t happen to you. After giving us those vivid examples, Paul smacks us in the face with the reality: **“If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.”** Be on the look out, dear brothers and sisters! Even God’s people, especially God’s people will be tempted!

Rattlesnakes might not be out in this nice Michigan weather, but runners are. And as you know, I’m one of them. And that’s probably where I’m most on the lookout. Maybe this is a little weird, too, but when I’m on the road with the cars I’m constantly thinking, “What if this car doesn’t see me, or swerves in my direction?” So I’m always looking for a place that I can dive out of the way. I’m always looking for a way to escape the danger. And it’s not just a good plan on the road; it’s a good plan spiritually, too. When we do face those dangers and temptations, God gives us a promise! **“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”**

Like a critter or a car heading straight for us, temptation has slammed into us too many times to mention. It happened time and time again for Israel and they sinned. And time and time again we sin. And when we do we deserve to be blotted out of God’s book of life. But look at God’s promise here. He is faithful. As we follow Jesus during Lent we see that so clearly. Jesus faithfully overcame temptations that tripped us up. Jesus faithfully bore up under the load of the cross that would crush us. Jesus faithfully conquered the death that enslaved us. And so look at what has happened as a result. Time and time again, because of Jesus’ work on our behalf, God blots out our sin and writes our names in his book of life.

And that means something for you. Have you ever wondered why a Christian is able to tell a friend who is in trouble, “It will be OK. This too shall pass?”... why a Christian teacher is able to tell her students, “You don’t have to do what your friends are doing, there are better alternatives?”... why a pastor is able to say with confidence to someone who is suffering, “God has a plan for you?” It is because of God’s promise here. It’s not just a promise for the past when Jesus earned our heaven or for the future when Jesus will take us to heaven. It’s for now. God’s faithfulness also means that he never lets a trouble come into our lives without also giving some way to get through it. It means that every time we get out of a bad situation, it is our faithful God who provides the way out. It means that every time we choose the right path, it is our faithful God who gives us the power. And the times that we choose wrongly, it is our faithful God who sees to it that the blood of his Son cleanses us from every sin. So be on the look out! Temptation will come our way, but when it does God’s people will be rescued!

I don’t have to keep my eyes open as much. I don’t have to watch where I step. I can get outside and run around as carefree as a songbird. That’s the beauty of warm weather in Michigan—I don’t have to be on the lookout for venomous snakes! But please don’t take that attitude toward the slithering tempter who is always on the loose. He’s after God’s people—God’s people will be tempted. And that’s why God is always at our side as well—God’s people will be rescued. So, for temptations and escapes from them, be on the look out! Amen.