

Title: So, You think you're tough – eh? Pt.2

Text: 1 Corinthians 10.1-13

Theme: The danger of presumption

Series: 1 Corinthians #39

Prop Stmt. If you think that God's laws do not apply to you, you are toast!

March Madness is upon us. We may have to get some Prozac for Jerry since Kentucky may not even make it into the NCAA basketball tournament. For many people, myself included, I try to predict who is going to make it all the way. Unfortunately since I have watched a grand total of about 3 actual quarters of college basketball this season, I do not really know who is good and who isn't. But really, how can you predict this? The teams that are supposed to be good, do not always play well. Part of the problem is that some of the teams read about themselves and begin to think, "Hey, we are pretty good!" Coaches hate that! It is called presumption. You presume that since everyone knows that you are better than another team, that just by walking out onto the court, you will automatically win. That attitude has been the undoing of many, many teams and the demise of many churches as well.

Presumption is the attitude that says, I know all this stuff. I have heard it all before. I've got a handle on this. I am beyond this. I am above this. I don't need this, like others need this. Presumption wraps us in a false layer of protection and deceives us into thinking that we do not need to be on our guard. It's the attitude that says, I can handle a little bit of sin. I can flirt a little bit. I know where to draw the line. I can look at a little bit of pornography, it really doesn't affect me like it may affect others. I can skip church because, I know as much as the pastor. Presumption is an attitude that falsely elevates me above the Word of God and results in me sitting in judgment of God and others instead of humbly placing myself under His Word. This attitude was destroying the church at Corinth. Some of them apparently thought that since they were baptized, since they had experienced some spiritual things in their life, since they knew a few things, perhaps more than others, that now they were living on a level that was above the rest. Sin did not bother them like it did others. It is related to the warped idea of some in the religious community who party their brains out in mardi gras because they can make it up for it in lent. That is absolutely insane.

As we saw from this text last week, Paul draws a parallel between the believers in Corinth and the people of Israel who did the same thing. This passage is a warning to those who think they are strong. Watch out! You are headed for a fall. Not only are you called to live with a high level of respect and sensitivity to other believers and other people, but you are not as tough as you think. You cannot go and play around with sin and claim that it does not affect you, or that somehow you are above being tempted by it. As soon as you think that you are beyond something – you are toast!

1. **You are not as privileged as you think.** (1-5)

A. **You are not the first to experience the blessings of God.**

When you think about it, these historical events that the Israelites experienced were incredible demonstrations of the power of God. Anytime God chooses to overrule a law of nature that He established is amazing. But, these were huge! Now, connect the dots. You may have experienced some blessings, but they were probably not on the scale of what the Israelites did. If they did not respond to this very well, is it possible that you could miss the point as well? Sure, why? Because...

B. You are not the exception to the rule.

How can a leader in the church crash burn? It is not complicated. As soon as he starts thinking that his sermons or ministry is for others instead of himself, he is in trouble.

C. Presumption will destroy you. (v.5)

If you could look back over the terrain from the Jordan River all the way back around to the Red Sea, you would see hundreds of thousands of graves, filled with the bodies of people most of whom presumed that they knew better than God.

2. **Experience does not necessarily mean Wisdom.** (6-10)

Just because you experienced something does not mean that you learned what you were supposed to learn. The Israelites experienced all sorts of things, but many of them concluded that the reason they experienced these things was because they were better. They were clearly better than the Egyptians. They were God's chosen people. But, why were they God's chosen people? (Deut. 7.7-9; 9.4-6) God chose them because they were the refuse of the world. He chose them because they were so weak. He wanted to show off His strength!

These things (vs. 6-10) happened as a series of events in order to develop a pattern that they were supposed to learn from (v.11a). These also happened as a series of events that we are supposed to learn from (v.6). Verse 6 is the general heading that describes the rest of these events. In this verse, Paul is warning us to be careful about what we crave.

A. Be careful what you crave. – v.6

What do you crave? What do you desire? What do you want in life? What is your ideal, perfect scenario? When we crave things or people instead of God, then we start using God to get what we want, or we ignore God so that we can pursue what we think we have to have. Either way, we are presuming that we know better than God does about our own lives. Over and over and over this happened to the Israelites. Guess what? They did not know better than God. Their cravings destroyed them.

B. Be careful what you worship – v.7

Paul reminds us of the incident that we refer to as the Golden Calf. (Exodus 32) Moses was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the law, while the Israelites decided that they were going

to make an image out of gold that would represent God. This image would help them worship. Instead, the construction and worship of this image became the occasion for their sin and as a result 3,000 of them died. God will not bless His competition.

C. Be careful to guard your purity. – v.8

Immorality goes hand in hand with idolatry. You were made by the Creator for Him. If you have come to faith in Christ, you have been bought back from the slave market of sin to be part of His bride, His flock, His family and the body of Christ. It is not your body, to do with whatever you want. Verse 8 refers to an event recorded in Numbers 25. The Israelites were passing through the region of Moab when some of the women in Moab invited the men of Israel to make sacrifices to their gods. The resulting immorality brought the judgment of God and 24,000 of them died. Paul says 23,000 died in a single day. Do you see a pattern here?

D. Be careful not to test God. – v.9

Verse 9 refers to an incident in Numbers 21. 4-9, when the people began to complain against God and Moses. Blessing after blessing after blessing was not enough. Whenever we are thinking that way, it is like saying, “Hey God, let’s go a few rounds – ok?” That, my friend is simply not smart. These people assumed that they knew more about their lives than God. So, they took it out on God when He did not match their expectations. Once again, the result was that many of them died from venomous snakes that God sent. Do you see a pattern here?

E. Be careful not to grumble. – v.10

Numbers 16 is one of the most discouraging chapters in the entire story of the Israelites journey from Egypt to Palestine. Several men decided to challenge the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They presumed that they were better. In this case, when these men were taking on Moses and Aaron, they were taking on God who had appointed Moses and Aaron. The result was, God killed the instigators and did it publicly. But, instead of seeing how important it was to follow the leadership that God had established, the whole atmosphere turned poisonous. And the text says in Numbers 16 that the whole Israelite community began to grumble against Moses and Aaron and accused them of manipulating God and killing God’s people. They were so blinded by their cravings that they did not even see the clear evidence before them. Like a wave, this grumbling began to arouse itself in the crowd, and then God called out to Moses and Aaron, to get away from the crowd, because God was going to wipe them out because once again they had taken on God. A plague broke out in the middle of the crowd and before Aaron could intercede on behalf of the people who had turned against him, over 14,000 died! Do you see a pattern here?

That is the point of v.11. These things happened as an example to the Israelites. If you hit your head against a brick wall, it will hurt and the brick wall will win. But, time and time again, Israel kept going back and hitting their head against the wall, saying, we are

smarter, we know better. And now, the people in the church of Corinth were saying, we can knock the wall down with our heads, we are smarter. They were missing the point. Much of the time, we miss it to. Look at v.11. Do you see what Paul is saying?

Bam Point – v.11 – You are a taste of what is to come!

Why did God call Israel out of Egypt? He set them apart as a community of people who would serve as a living witness before the world of what it is like to live with your Creator! He picked out the Israelites because they were the most helpless and hopeless bunch on the face of the earth. They had nothing! But when He chose them and called them out of Egypt, it was only a matter of days before they lost sight of what was going on. They were supposed to be a model, an example. They became an example all right. They became an example of what happens to people who think they are greater than what they really are. Now, please do not miss the similarities.

All of these things happened to Israel after they left Egypt, but before they made it to the Promised Land. Already, they were no longer slaves, but not yet were they living where God had planned for them. They were no longer in Egypt, but they weren't home yet. What happened after the Egyptian issue was resolved at the Red Sea? They were led to Mt. Sinai where they received their constitution. The OT law was God's constitutional covenant with His people. Here they became a nation, a people set apart, consecrated, and dedicated unto Him. When the law was given to them, they were supposed to start living now, like they would when they got to the Promised Land. Right now they were supposed to be an example of what life would be like. They were at the end of one age and were about to step into another. And, in addition to that, when they actually got to the Promised Land, they were supposed to live there as an example of what life would be like when God came to the earth as their King, known as the Messiah.

Do you get it now? That is exactly what v.11 is saying to us. We are in the last days. V. 11 says that the fulfillment of the ages has come on us. That is referring to the fact that the king has already come to the earth. We live between the advents. We live in a transition time. When Christ came the 1st time, He came as a Lamb and he died. When Christ comes back the 2nd time, He is coming back as a Lion and will reign! And when He reigns, there will be no competition. His kingdom will be, forever and ever and ever. But, what will His kingdom be like?

Israel was set apart by God to be a living object lesson and a living illustration of how incredible life can be when you know and live with the Creator. They missed it! In their place, God has raised up the church. Why? Because we are better – right? NO! Because we are smarter? NO! Because by His grace and for His glory, God has called us to be a people, a community of believers who together show to this world what the kingdom is going to be like. The entire story of the Bible is the story of God establishing a kingdom for His Son – King Jesus! The universe is His kingdom and the earth is the center stage. We are to live now, to show this world what life is going to be like. We are to live now, to show this world what real culture is supposed to be like. The thinking and living of the world, known as the culture is actually a pseudo-culture. They do not know

who they are and why they are here. We do. We are here to show them. We are here to provide a taste of what life is going to be like.

In the kingdom you will not care if my car was more expensive or less expensive than yours. In the kingdom you will not care if someone dressed a little better or not as fashionably as you. In the kingdom you will treat others with humility and care. In the kingdom relationships will function on the basis of truth and honesty. In the kingdom, our lives will be forever praising God and giving perfect and positive attention to Christ. In the kingdom we will happily follow His desires for our lives. Right now, we live as a taste of what is going to come. We have not arrived yet, and in the kingdom, we will not be the hero – Jesus is. So, do not pretend that you are strong. Do not try to give the false impression to others that you have it all together and that your life is all under control. Because...

3. **You have not arrived.** (12-13)

A. **You are not as strong as you think.** (12)

Every day is a war. Every day is a battle. Who is going to be the king of my life today? If I remember that I am to live now, as a taste of the kingdom to come, then I will realize my purpose and my place. I am not here to see how I can use God or use relationships to get what I want. I do not want to see how close to the edge I can live. I want to see how clear of a picture my life and our live together can paint of the kingdom to come.

B. **God's way is the only way.** (13)

There is no desire or craving that you have that is unique to you. You are not the exception to the rule. What you deal with in your life is common to the rest of us. That is one of the reasons why we can and must help each other at the heart level. And God is faithful. He will never let you deal with a craving or a desire without providing you an escape route.

When driving on an interstate through the mountains it is common to see a ramp for a runaway truck. If a semi loses its brakes going down a mountain, it can be in real trouble. Therefore, ramps are built into the sides of the mountains that enable a truck to pull off, go uphill and stop before people are killed. God always provides escape ramps for you. But if you ignore them, your life will be a colossal wreck, and it won't be because God let you down, it will be because you did not heed the warning that you are not above God's law.

Hemant Mehta is a graduate student at DePaul University and claims to be an atheist. Recently he admitted that he suspects that he is missing out on something. So, he sold his soul on e-bay to the highest bidder, claiming that for every \$10 he received he would attend an hour of church.

The truth is you live next to and work with people just like him. They are wondering if they are missing out on something. They are following all of the rules of the world, buying as much as they can, living for stuff, vacations, and trying new restaurants. But they suspect that their hearts are empty, their relationships are shallow, and their beliefs are rather flimsy. They may not be so bold as to admit it on e-bay, but you are here to reach them. How do you do that? Live now, as a taste of the kingdom that is going to come. The church is the culture of the kingdom. We are not here to take over, Christ will do that. We are here to show the reality of Christ and the shallowness of this world.