Text: I Corinthians 10:1-22,31
Title: "High Definition Living … Fatal Attractions"

INTRODUCTION

Before I begin today I want us to pray for our students who are heading out to Youth Camp in Breckenridge, Colorado this afternoon. There are prayer bracelets available at the end of the service. Please take one and pray for a student through the week. Pray.

Well, today we are honoring our senior adults. How blessed we are to have such a great heritage of faith in our church! The strength and unity of our church is due largely to a great legacy of faith in the lives of senior adults. What a firm foundation you have laid for us.

Now open your Bibles with me to I Corinthians 10:1 as we continue our series of messages from this part of I Corinthians … High Definition Living. We've summarized this series in the words of I Corinthians 10:31:

> **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**
>
> Everything we do, the food we eat, the entertainment we choose, the relationships we have, the word we do … it's all to be done for the glory of God in hi def!

I just mentioned how blessed we are to have older generations to leave an example for us. Paul is going to talk about the older generation of Israelites who did not reflect the glory of God. Rather than leaving faithful footsteps for the later generations to follow, they left a negative example as we read here beginning with I Corinthians 10:1-6. Read text.

1 Corinthians 10:6 (NIV) - Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

> So pay attention. This is important stuff. The Bible tells us to guard our hearts for out of it flow all the issues of life. And here is the sad story of God's people who didn't do that, whose hearts were lured into the fatal attraction of "evil things." In fact, he will say the same thing a few verses later…
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> **1 Corinthians 10:11 (NIV) - These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.**
>
> This is one of the great reasons we have the revelation of Scripture … to show us the people whose example we are to follow in righteousness, and to show those whose example we must avoid.

So what do we learn from these experiences of God's people in the Bible?

1. THE <u>POWER</u> OF FATAL ATTRACTIONS (vv.1-5)

v.1 – "I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact…" – In fact, most believers today are ignorant of what we're talking about this morning.

All of this happens during a very important time in Israel's history. They had just seen the hand of God move in a powerful way as the Israelites were gloriously delivered from Egypt. Now they were on their way to the Promised Land God had for them. But between that great deliverance from Egypt, and the gracious deliverance to Canaan, there was a time of testing that happened in the wilderness.

We read about how good God was to them all. They were all under the cloud (v.1a) meaning they had the guidance of God's glory in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were all delivered through the Red Sea when Moses parted the waters (v.1b) while the Israelites passed through. And there was a sense in which through these experiences they were all under the anointed leadership of Moses … "baptized into Moses" (v.2). And while they were in the wilderness God provided them with the same spiritual food (v.3) or what was called manna. And they all drank from the same supernatural water source (v.4) when God caused water to come out of the rocks to rescue them from their thirst. And in a mysterious way Jesus Christ Himself was there among them. So they all had <u>access</u> to this, but most of them didn't go on to <u>possess</u> the blessing that God had for them.

1 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) - Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

Why? There hearts were set on evil things … they were lured away to fatal attractions of the heart.

You see, it is possible to be in the community of God's people, gathered with and numbered with the church, and still not be pleasing to God … to still be in love with evil things. In fact, it says that God was not pleased with most of them. And the result was that many of them died in the wilderness.

Note: What we're talking about here is not something that will cause us to lose our salvation if we're saved. That isn't possible. But what it can do is to cause us to fail to enter the fullness of God's purpose and plans for our lives. These people had before them the destiny of the Promised Land. That was the purpose for which God delivered them from Egypt. He didn't just deliver them from something; He delivered them for something … the life of victory and fullness in the land He had set aside for them to possess.

> You see, the sad facts are that many people who are saved, aren't fully experiencing the life of victory and fullness that God saved them to possess.
>
> **ILLUSTRATION** – It would be as if you had won an all-expense-paid trip for you and your family to go to Disney World. So you get your bags packed, get in the car and drive to the airport. And you get to the airport and there in the terminal area dad says, "OK, kids unpack your stuff. Here we are. Isn't this great? There are places to eat, and places to sit, nice clean restrooms, some nice shops, and, hey, we can watch the airplanes taking off."

Now that's ridiculous, isn't it? But that's essentially what happens for many of God's people. There's a life that God has for you that is beyond your wildest dreams, but when are hearts are lured to fatal attractions, we can miss that.

So the Bible gets more specific about the power of fatal attractions as it moves to give us…

2. THE <u>WARNINGS</u> ABOUT FATAL ATTRACTIONS (vv.6-11)

1 Corinthians 10:6 (NIV) - Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

Literally "to keep us from lusting after evil."

Now we see there is a warning about four pitfalls that must be avoided. Warnings against…

- **<u>Idolatry</u> (vv.7,14-22)**

  1 Corinthians 10:7 (NIV) - Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry."

  Now this is what is recorded in the book of Exodus when Moses had gone up on Mt. Sinai to receive the Law. While he was gone, the people melted down their jewelry and fashioned a golden calf and began to worship it saying, "This is the god who brought you out of Egypt." Ridiculous! But that's what idolatry is … allowing anything or anyone to assume the position of God in our lives.

  1 Corinthians 10:14 (NIV) - Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

  Now we'll come back to this in just a minute. You'll see what a big deal this is. But next there's a warning about…

- **<u>Sexual</u> <u>immorality</u> (v.8)**

  1 Corinthians 10:8 (NIV) – We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.

  "Sexual immorality" refers to any kind of sexual activity that is outside of your relationship with the person to whom you are married. It is using your mind or your body for sexual purpose that are outside of God's will.

  Now this episode happened in Numbers 25 when Israel engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women and then they began to engage in pagan worship of Baal with them. God, again being jealous for His honor and holiness, commanded Moses to have the men killed who engaged in this activity … 23,000 of them.

  Then there's another warning about …

- **<u>Rebellion</u> (v.9)**

  1 Corinthians 10:9 (NIV) - We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.

  Now this is the episode also recorded in Numbers when the people were getting impatient, and they spoke against Moses and against the Lord. They were tired of the hard conditions and questioned whether God and Moses were doing the right thing in bringing them out of Egypt to begin with. And in discipline of them God sent venomous snakes into the camp and many Israelites died of snake bites.

  Then there's another warning about …

- **<u>Complaining</u> (v.10)**

  1 Corinthians 10:10 (NIV) - And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

  This episode is described also in the book of Numbers where the people once again challenged the leadership of God through Moses. The Israelites complained and grumbled against Moses, and the result was that a plague started that ended up killing 14,700 people before it stopped. Paul attributes this punishment to the activity of a destroying angel sent from God.

Now I want you to see how all this is connected. These "fatal attractions" are all about idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:7 (NIV) - Do not be idolaters, as some of them were;

1 Corinthians 10:14 (NIV) - Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

The real fatal attraction that we're talking about here is the attraction to idols … the practice of idolatry … the worship of false gods. I want you to see that idolatry is not just another sin in the list with sexual immorality, mutiny and grumbling. It is the root of all other sin.

EXAMPLE: Just think about the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments have to do with idolatry … worshipping other gods.

Exodus 20:2-4 (NIV) - "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. [3] "You shall have no other gods before me. [4] "You shall not make for yourself an idol…

The first two commandments are about idolatry; the remaining eight commandments are about morality. Idolatry is the root. Sins are the fruit.

Why is this such a big deal? God knows how He created us. He created us to be worshippers of Himself. But when sin slipped into our existence with Adam and Eve, it was passed on to us. The

essence of sin then becomes the worshipping of created things, rather than worshipping the Creator God.

> Worship is ascribing "worth" to something. In fact, that's where the word "worship" came from … "worthship."

So the great challenge for all of us is this fatal attraction to idols. Yes, even Christians can turn to idols.

You see, what happens is that "good things" in our lives can gradually become "God-things" in our lives.

ILLUSTRATION – It's easy for us to spot idolatry in other settings. We see this today when we visit India, a nation largely dominated by an idolatrous religion called Hinduism. There are Hindu idols everywhere … little statues displayed everywhere you look. And then there are Hindu temples in every community where people go to leave their offerings of fruit and flowers and money … where people burn incense and do whatever the priest tells them to do in order to please this idol or god. And there are millions of different gods and idols in India.

But that's one the other side of the world. Surely that kind of thing isn't a fatal attraction to Americans. After all I don't keep a little statue and a shrine in the corner of my bedroom where I worship an idol. Oh really?

ILLUSTRATION – What is the title of one of the most popular shows on television today? American … IDOL! For the last 4-5 years American Idol has been one of the hottest shows on television. People have gone nuts over it. The show is about discovering the best young singer in America. So through a series of auditions, a group of singers make it to the "playoffs," if you will. And America gets the opportunity to make someone an idol by calling in and voting.

> Americans idolize entertainers. Why else in the world would anybody be concerned about the jail problems of Paris Hilton?

Just a few miles from here Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys, is building a $1 billion stadium that will seat 100,000 sports fans. Are we looking at sports idolatry?

Well, it goes much deeper than that, and I want to show you why God warns us in His Word about the fatal attraction of idolatry. This is something terrible that happens in the hearts of God's people.

You see idolatry involves three things: a false hell, a false savior and a false heaven.

<u>False hell.</u> Let me ask you this question: If you were to construct your own little "hell," what would it be? Or to ask the question a different way: What is your greatest fear? What is it that sends you into depression or into despair?

- Is it your weight? For you, hell is being overweight.
- For others it might be to be unloved.
- For others it might be to be unappreciated.

- For others it might be the fear of being a failure.
- What is your greatest fear?

The reason that's important is because that's what sends us off looking for false saviors (idols).

<u>False saviors.</u> And we worship that "savior" in order to save us from a "hell."

- So if your "hell" is being single, your savior would be a husband or wife, even if that person isn't good for you.
- If your "hell" is loneliness, then you might look to illicit sexual relationships or pornography as your false savior (idol). Remember v.8 tells us that sexual immorality follows right on the heels of idolatry.
- If your "hell" is rejection, then you might worship the approval and applause of others.
- If your "hell" is failure, then your savior, your idol, will likely be success. And you will turn to that savior to relieve your despair … and you will worship at the altar of your work for more hours than you should.
- If your "hell" is being a "nobody." Then your false savior will be the stuff that you buy and that you wear that sends the signal to others, "I'm somebody. Don't ignore me."
- What are you passionate about? What are you willing to suffer for?
- Where do you go for comfort? Ever heard of "comfort food?" The Bible talks about people whose god is their stomach.

Remember, idolatry is most often a "good thing" that has become a "god thing" for us. More questions:

- What are you grumbling and complaining about? Remember vv.9-10 we read earlier. The people grumbled and complained about their circumstances, and the focus of their complaining and grumbling was Moses. But notice how God saw it. "They put the Lord to the test." In other words, "God you're not enough for me. You're not doing a good job at being God."
- What are you willing to cheat, lie, steal or do something illegal to acquire or protect?
- What do you sacrifice for? Remember that in the Bible worship and sacrifice are always connected. What do you sacrifice time, money, and energy for?

Remember, it can be a "good thing" that becomes a "god thing."

So idolatry involves a false hell and a false savior that gets us to …

<u>The third thing … a false heaven.</u>

So we have our false hell of not having nice things. Our false savior is to surround ourselves with nice things (materialism). And the false heaven is the happiness we think that follows.

There's just one problem. That happiness, that satisfaction, isn't ever enough. And all of us know it.

Why? Because that's not reality. Because…

- There’s a real hell. And that real hell is separation from God for eternity.
- There’s a real Savior, Jesus Christ, who died to rescue us from the wages of sin, the real hell.
- There’s a real heaven where we can enjoy forever, not just for a day, week or a month, that which truly satisfies the human soul … God Almighty.

Matthew 5:6 (NIV) - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

But what about all the things of this world … food, clothes, cars, houses, vacations, health? Is it wrong to want those things? Absolutely not. God just doesn’t want us making idols of them. And the secret to that is to have an all-consuming worship of the One True God …

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) - But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

You see, then I can enjoy the “good things” without making “god things” out of them.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.