

Third Sunday in Lent – March 24, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 (NIV)

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2) They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3) They all ate the same spiritual food 4) and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5) Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6) Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7) 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 revelry." 8) We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9) We should not test Christ, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. 10) And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. 11) These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **13) 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.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In today's world, many appear to esteem celebrity, notoriety, and fame, as valued character traits. However, ask anyone what they desire in a relationship, and you'll find faithfulness high on the list. President Theodore Roosevelt recognized this when he said, "It is better to be faithful than famous."

Throughout the Bible, faithfulness eclipses fame as the mark of greatness. There are numerous examples in the Bible of those who were faithful. Ultimately, God is our highest example of faithfulness. In fact, He is faithfulness! God remains faithful to us even if we mess up. That's the point of text for today.

The last verse of our text provides a nice summary of the verses that precede it. **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.** This verse suggests the theme and parts for our sermon today.

Theme: God Is Faithful

1. When we think our sins are new
2. When we think we're standing firm
3. When we think there's no way we can endure temptation

In the opening verse of our text Paul reminds us of the faithfulness that God showed to his people Israel even when they were unfaithful to him. **For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2) They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3) They all ate the same spiritual food 4) and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.**

God's OT people were privileged to enjoy God's grace and faithfulness in ways that no people before or since have experienced it. Who else but Israel had seen the Lord of the universe blazing a trail for them through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night as reported in Exodus and confirmed

by the Psalmist in **Psalm 105:39? He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night.** (NIV) Who else but Israel walked through the center of the Red Sea with walls of water stacked up on both sides? These experiences connected them to Moses whom God called to rescue his people from slavery. Paul puts it this way: **They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3) They all ate the same spiritual food 4) and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.**

The spiritual food and drink that Paul had in mind was the miraculous provision that God gave his people in the wilderness. The spiritual or miraculous food was the manna that God rained down from heaven to provide his people with daily bread. The spiritual drink miraculously supplied by the Lord flowed from a rock at Kadesh Moses struck with his staff in obedience to the Lord's command. But even more amazing that this is the fact that they enjoyed true spiritual nourishment from Christ as he strengthen their faith with his abiding presence. Who else but Israel could have said, "We have the Son of God with us and leading us." All of their needs for time and eternity were supplied by their faithful God in his grace and goodness.

Paul was making a comparison between Israel of old and the Christians in Corinth. He wanted them to understand that even privileged people like Israel and themselves could fall into sin. We also are a privileged people – a people who have been baptized into Christ – and are recipients of his grace and forgiveness. In baptism, we are clothed with Christ and his righteousness. We have the privilege of eating spiritual food that connects us to our Lord and Savior each time we receive the Lord's Supper in which we eat the very body and blood of Christ in communion with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins. Yes we, too, are a people whose needs for time and eternity have been supplied by a merciful Savior.

Unfortunately, God's people in the OT ended up rebelling against the Lord who had been so gracious to them. Their unfaithfulness in the face of God's faithfulness stands as a reminder to us that God is faithful even when we think our sins are new. **Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.** This tragic statement reminds us that of the 600,000 plus men 20 years old and older who left Egypt only two, Joshua and Caleb, were privileged to enter and live in the Promised Land. And why was that? It was because they took the grace of God lightly. They found there security in their own history not in the God of history. Because of this spirit of self-reliance, Israel developed an unfaithfulness to God. They took for granted all he had done for them and said to them. Their unfaithfulness revealed itself in the way they lived their lives before they ever reached the land of promise. These acts of rebellion have been preserved for our benefit as Paul reminds us:

6) Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7) 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 revelry." 8) We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9) We should not test Christ, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. 10) And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel.

The sins of idolatry, sexual immorality and complaining against the Lord affected God's OT people, the Christians in Corinth and also affect us. The Old Testament Israelites committed the sin of idolatry - as they grew impatient in waiting for Moses while he was speaking with God on Mount Sinai. They erected a golden calf and worshipped it as they indulged in all kinds of dancing, revelry, and "plain-old" living it up. In America, we have our own Golden Calf which allows us the opportunity to "live it up". Who of us can honestly say that we haven't been attracted to the many things of this world – at times allowing them to take the Lord's place in our heart.

Sexual immorality was another downfall of the Israelites. Our generation has problems with that sin too. Today even many Christians think nothing of living together before marriage and enjoying sexual relationships as they do so. And on the opposite side of the spectrum we noticed large numbers of marriages which end in divorce for reasons not allowed by the Lord. And while extra marital relationships might grab the headlines if they are uncovered in the lives of certain public figures, its hardly regarded as shocking and sinful by the vast majority of people today. Surrounded, as we are, by a society which flaunts sinful lifestyles and unhealthy sexual relationships and pornography; it isn't always so easy for us as Christians to remember that our bodies are the dwelling places of the Holy Spirit as Paul reminded the Corinthians: (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV) **Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; (20) you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

The last sins of Israel mentioned in our text are also common place today. Frequently Israel was guilty of complaining and grumbling against the Lord and his care for them. It seems that they were never satisfied. They often challenged and tested God – just as we often end up putting God to the test with our frequent complaints about our place in life and our rebellion against the Lord's representatives.

In each case God showed his loving faithfulness to his wayward people by disciplining them – allowing them to feel a tiny bit of his anger over sin so that they might be lead to see the error of their ways and return to the Lord who was will and wanting to forgive their wickedness, rebellion and sin. **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.**

We have seen the fulfillment of all God's promises to send his Son to be the Savior from sin. The example of the OT Israelites warns us to watch our lives carefully. God's faithfulness to his promise comforts us when we think our sins are new. Our text reminds us: **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.**

God is faithful when we think we are standing firm. Our text carefully explains why God's word has recorded the sins of his OT people and God's response to those sins. **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!**

To ignore what former ages have taught us about the wages of sin is foolish. To look at these warnings and say that this could never happen to me is also foolish and eternally dangerous. If we think that we can stand on our own, we're standing on dangerous ground. That's the reason for Paul's warning to be careful that we don't fall. He didn't cite any examples from OT history of those who fell because they placed their confidence in themselves but he could have. Think of King Saul who was rejected by God and eventually killed himself because he thought he could worship God in his own way. Too much money, too much worldly wisdom, too much sex lead King Solomon astray at least for a time. And then, think of Judas who ended up betraying his Lord because of his greed.

If we're thinking that we'd never fall like that or if we're a bit smug because we haven't fallen like that, we've become guilty of the sin of pride. When we stop being humble and repentant or begin to think that we're not as bad off as others – we're setting our selves up for a fall. If we even begin to think, we can stand before God on our own we will fall from our faith. And it is then that we need to be called back to the Lord with the reminders t1hat he is only one who can keep us from falling. Once again, our text reminds us that God is faithful even when we think we are standing firm. **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.**

Paul makes it clear that God's faithfulness to us and not our faithfulness to him is what will enable us to overcome temptation. God is faithful when we think there's no way we can withstand temptation. The final verse of this text highlights God's faithfulness for us. Time and again in OT history, God's people deserved to have their names removed from God's family because of their sin and unfaithfulness. But because of his faithfulness to his promise, time and again God forgave them. It is true that a generation of Israelites died in the wilderness but God non-the-less gave his people possession of the Promised Land and the Promised Savior.

God is faith to us too. As we consider our sins, our many sins, we may be tempted to think that there is no way we will ever overcome and gain the victory over sin and temptation. But God is faithful. Every time we do what is right, it is our faithful God who gave us the power. Every time we resist temptation, it is our faithful God who has provided the way out. And every time we fail to take the way out – our faithful God is ready and waiting to assure us of his forgiveness in Christ.

When we are tempted to be unfaithful, the place to go is our faithful God. The Gospel accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ show us, again and again, the faithfulness of Israel's God and ours! God is faithful; we can look to him in every temptation. None is too great for him. This faithful God regulates our lives in such a way that none of us will receive a temptation or trial so great that with the Lord's help we will not be able to bear it. He never lets trouble come into our lives without giving us a way to escape and get through it. If we've sinned, we can come back. When we've slipped and fallen; our faithful God has seen to it that the blood of his son has cleansed us from every sin. (1 John 1:9 NIV) **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us join with the hymn writer in confessing:

In God, My Faithful God (CW438)

In God, my faithful God, I trust when dark my road;
Though many woes o'ertake me, Yet he will not forsake me.
Though heavy griefs are pressing, He'll turn them into blessing.

My sins assail me sore, But I despair no more.
I build on Christ, who loves me; From this rock nothing moves me.
To him I all surrender, To him, my soul's defender.

If death my portion be, Then death is gain for me
And Christ my life forever, From whom death cannot sever.
Come when it may, he'll shield me; To him I gladly yield me.

"So be it, then," I say With all my heart each day.
We, too, dear Lord, adore you; We sing for joy before you.
Guide us while here we wander Until we praise you yonder.

Amen.