

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. (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

Humanity wants to believe that we are getting better. We want to believe that we are not like them. We like to believe that we have learned some things over the years and have improved. We've seen the mistakes of the past. We won't make them. We know better. We are different. We aren't going to let this happen to us!

The apostle Paul does not want you to be uninformed or ignorant, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. So he takes us back to the Israelites of the Old Testament. They had been dead in slavery in the land of Egypt. Then the glory of the Lord in the cloud led them out through the Red Sea. In those waters their old way of life of slavery was washed away and they were made a new creation—all of them were baptized. God fed his people with manna and quail and gave them water from the rock to drink. Paul explains this is spiritual food and spiritual drink from that rock was Christ. In other words, they had God's presence right there in their midst. All of them. God was with his people. God had given his people his gifts. They had the same opportunities and blessings. All of them. And, yet, so many failed to see God's presence among them and take it to heart. In fact, God was not pleased with the majority of them. Over 1 million decaying dead bodies were scattered in the wilderness over their forty years of wandering as a testament to this fact.

Here we are, God's people. You too have been baptized. With water and Word God has washed away your old way of life and declared you his child in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You who were dead in sin have been born again a new creation and alive in Jesus. He feeds you not with manna and quail and water from a rock; Jesus gives you his body and blood with the bread and wine really present in the Lord's Supper. God's presence is here in your midst. God gives you his blessing. He is with us. But do you see it? Do recognize his gifts and make use of them? God does not give us this recorded history in the Bible just for our reading entertainment. He gives it to turn us and to change our attitudes from ourselves and trust in him.

So Paul writes, **“Do not be idolaters, as some of them were”** (v.7). God promises that he, the Lord, would be their God and they, Israel, would be his people. He would watch over them and protect them; he would greatly bless them if they remain faithful. That was all easily forgotten and quickly doubted. Israel needed something they could see, touch, and feel. God's promises were not enough for them to fear, trust and love him above all things. So Aaron made the golden calf and they worshipped it, **“The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”**

You probably don't have golden calves that you are worshipping. But is the almighty dollar and fear of rising inflation leading you to not trust God will provide? Is your personal need to be in control leading to doubt God's control over all? Have you placed your family on a pedestal expecting children, grandchildren, spouse to be the provider of all your happiness while putting their comfort and happiness above all else? Is your reputation and status with friends and how others see you, having this experience, achieving that goal what you love most? An idol is anything that we love, fear and trust too much. What's yours?

Paul continues, **“We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did”** (v.8). The people of Moab had led the people of Israel into sexual sin and to abuse God's gift of male and female sexuality. They thought they were standing firm, and look what happened, **“In one day 23,000 of them died”** (v.8).

If there is one thing that is out dated to our world, it is how God calls us to live with his gifts of marriage and sex. Today, having sex before marriage is almost assumed. At the very least, it is generally accepted and promoted. Statistically it sounds good that one night stands are less common than 20 years ago. But that's partially because of the rise of pornography and its easy convenience that's only one click away. We live in a world that says, “It's just sex,” and this shouldn't be so serious. Look again at what happened to those 23,000 Israelites. Do we tell ourselves it's only going to be this once, I have it under control and no one will find out? Do we quickly call out the LGBTQ+ lifestyles and communities while turning a blind eye to these things? Do we bemoan the filth on

TV these days while joining in with the jokes about sex and talking down about and belittling our spouses?

Paul's not done, **"We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes."** The people of Israel had grown impatient in the wilderness. They were sick of the food God had blessed them with and tired of the leadership of Moses and Aaron too. So God sent venomous snakes among the people and many of them died.

"And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel." More grumbling from the people of Israel against the leaders God had chosen. More grumbling about God's timing and his blessings. This time the Lord sends the destroying angel that killed the firstborn during the 10th plague in Egypt.

Have you ever complained about the leadership God has placed over us in the United States? Have you ever rolled your eyes or talked back to teachers or parents when told to do something? Have you ever complained about the blessings God has given to you? Have you ever grumbled because you don't have as nice of things as someone else? Have you grown impatient with God because he isn't operating according to your personal timetable while not giving you what you want or had planned?

You who are baptized, you who were confirmed and partake in the Lord's Supper, you who have God's presence amongst you—we have the same blessings and opportunities as Israel of old! **"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."** Yes, the times are different. Yes, situations are not the same. We want to believe that what we are facing should be the exception to the rule and you just don't understand! But the cold, hard truth is we aren't. If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. Don't think that this will never happen to you. Maybe the only reason that you haven't fallen into a specific sin like him or her is because you've never faced that specific situation.

So there's the owner of vineyard, God the Father, looking over his vineyard, this world. He sees all of this rotten fruit and lack of fruit production with our false god worship, gift abusing, complaining and grumbling. And as he is ready to chop it all down the worker in the vineyard, God the Son—his Chosen One—steps in and says, "Wait. I'll take care it. Let's see what happens." And because he still loves this world, God sends his own Son, not sparing him but giving him up for us all. Jesus takes on flesh and blood so that he might call you brother and sisters; he's not ashamed to do it either. He shares in our weaknesses and suffers alongside us as he is tempted just as we are. But where we have been unfaithful, he was faithful to all of God's commands. His tree was so full with good and pleasing fruit in His Father's sight that it's branches are weighed down to the ground.

But there still was the matter of your fruit production. So Jesus gives you his and claims your lack of fruit and ugly fruit to be His own. Instead of the Father chopping you down, Jesus takes your place on the tree of the cross. The Father cuts down his own Son so that you might have peace with Him. Justice is served and carried out on that cross. Jesus lifeless body is laid in the tomb.

But God is faithful. He accepted the sacrifice that Jesus made. We know he did; He raised Jesus on Easter. He lives. That same living Jesus continues to work amongst us and in our presence tenderly guarding and keeping you, fertilizing your faith so that it grows and produces good fruit. He invites you, "Repent! Turn from your sin and live." He leads you back to your baptism where daily we die to sin and he makes us a new creation alive in him. That's repentance. It isn't this one-time thing that you do, get it over with, and be done. This is the daily life of the Christian. Daily we confess how we have failed and daily Jesus assures you, "God is faithful. I already suffered for you. I already died for you. I have already washed you clean in baptism with my blood. For the sake of my work for you, God will not hold your sins against you." As you see water washing over your hands, water in a cup, water in your life remember it was with water and the Word that God makes you his child. I am baptized. I am forgiven. That is how I stand, you stand, right now before God because God is faithful and he does not lie.

Jesus fertilizes your soul with the spiritual nutrients and nourishment you need. He tells you, "Take and eat this bread. This is my body. Take and drink this cup. This is my blood. With it I will strengthen you so your faith grows and you will produce good fruit. With this I forgive your sins. Go in peace." As you sit down to eat, as you take a drink remember this Holy Supper where he invites us unworthy sinners to be in his presence, brings us into communion with him, and then sends us out to love and serve others.

God is faithful. We will face many temptations as we continue through this life. In the midst of these battles, remember that you are not fighting them on your own. So we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." Not that God leads us into temptation but with this we pray that God would guard and keep us, and lead us through this dark valley to him. These temptations do not control you and cannot force you to do anything. He will provide a way out so that you can endure it because God is faithful. Change your attitude of trying to find strength and ability to stand from yourself. Jesus invites you to come to him as he comes to you in Word and Sacrament. In him you find one who stood up under temptation, who defeated sin and freed us from it, who lives and stands in our presence, who works in you to will and to act according to his purpose and produces fruit that is pleasing in God's sight. And on top of it all he promises an end to these temptations when he will call us from this world of tears to be in everlasting glory with him. Amen.