

Trinity 9
God Is Faithful
1 Corinthians 10: (1-5) 6-13
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10 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil 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 rose up to play." 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

God is the same forever. He does not change. And although people do change, we all remain members of the same human race. And we share a common condition. We are sinners, who have fallen short of the glory of God. St. Paul says, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man." So, although each of us suffers from our own particular temptations and sins, nothing that afflicts us is unique. Nothing's new under the sun. What tempts us; the sins into which we fall; they've tempted and caused to fall Christians before us.

And this is why it is so important to read and become familiar with the Holy Scriptures. The Bible describes how our God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever deals with his people, who are very much in the same spiritual situation as we are now. St. Paul says these things were written for our instruction or admonition. So, it behooves us to read what was written and learn about ourselves.

St. Paul reminds us that our fathers in the faith, the people of Israel, were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, that they all ate the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink, that they drank from the spiritual rock, which followed them, which was the same Christ we worship today! They worshipped the same God. They followed the same Christ. Notice even the similarity to the Sacraments we have today. They were baptized into the cloud, which was the very presence of God and

into the sea, just as we are baptized not only into water, but in the name of God. They ate and drank spiritual meat and drink from Christ, just as we eat and drink the body and blood of the same Christ for spiritual sustenance. Yet, what does St. Paul say? “Nevertheless, with most of them God was displeased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”

What does this teach us? It teaches us that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper do not save us if we do not have faith! They were all baptized! Yet, they were not all saved! But doesn’t baptism save? Indeed, it does! But only through faith. If you reject Christ, Baptism is of no benefit to you. Doesn’t the Lord’s Supper work forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation? Indeed, it does! Yet, only those who believe the promise of Christ eat and drink worthily!

St. Paul used the example of the children of Israel in the wilderness to warn the Christians in Corinth not to despise their Baptism and not to abuse the Lord’s Supper. And from what we can read from 1 Corinthians, this is exactly what the Christians in Corinth were doing; living as if their bodies were not the temple of the Holy Spirit, who began his dwelling in them at their Baptism, and treating the Lord’s Supper like a common dinner party, even participating in pagan sacrifices in direct contradiction to the Communion into which they participated in the Sacrament.

And this lesson is as important for us to learn today as it was for the Corinthian Christians. Are we not prone to treat Baptism like a superstitious magic spell, which imparts salvation even if we don’t continue in the faith? “Get the child done.” is actually uttered by Christians in reference to bringing a child to the saving waters of Baptism! Yet, Baptism is not a once and done event. Baptism is placing a new-born Christian in to the safety of the Christian Church to be nurtured and to grow in faith. And the Lord’s Supper is God’s food for the faithful, not for those who continue in sin without repentance, or for those who do not believe in Christ.

We must not be idolaters as some of them were. Here St. Paul references Exodus chapter 32, where the children of Israel, impatient with Moses’ delay on top of Mount Sinai, worshipped a golden calf, crediting it for their deliverance from Egypt! God punished them for their idol worship. The Corinthians likewise were tempted with idolatry. They lived in a culture that worshipped many false gods and Christians would often be pressured by social norms to participate in sacrifices to idols. And this

lesson is relevant to us today. It may be uncommon to be invited to eat meat sacrificed to idols, but idolatry is to fear, love or trust in anything above God. And that is a temptation that persists among us today. We trust in money more than God. We love our pleasures, more than God. We fear rejection from our family and friends more than rejection from God. Take heed of this idolatry. Your fathers were baptized into Moses and idolatry destroyed them. Do not let your idolatry throw away your Baptism.

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. Here St. Paul references the episode at the Baal of Peor as recorded in Numbers 25. The unfaithful prophet Baalam enticed the Israelites to embrace cult prostitutes from Moab. In his anger God killed thousands of them in a single day, until pious Phinehas in his zeal killed the most brazen offender and put an end to the plague. The Corinthian Christians needed to be reminded of God's wrath against sexual immorality. They had been rescued from the perversions of the pagan Greeks when they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit in Baptism (1 Corinthians 6:11). Yet, the Satanic world in which they lived continued to pull these infant Christians to tolerate the worst forms of fornication.

And we currently live in a culture that likely surpasses the ancient Greeks in perversity. And we'd be naïve to believe that the church is passing through unscathed. Are your views on marriage formed by how the world behaves or by how God teaches us in his word? Do you promote with your words and actions fornication and adultery? See God's wrath against this sin. Those who participated in the same Christ fell away because of fornication.

Some of Israel tested Christ and grumbled against God, and God destroyed them with snakes and with the angel of death. This is the sin of covetousness: not being content with what God has given you and desiring what he has not given you. Covetousness is rooted in unbelief, because when you covet you are not trusting in God's promise to provide for you. Israel tested Christ in this way. We too are guilty of this testing of God, grumbling and complaining for what we don't have. Our generation has it easier than any other generation in the history of the world. We have more food than we should eat. We have more stuff than we need. Yet, we still grumble.

Christians often think that keeping the faith is simply holding on to the basic doctrine of the Christian faith, and as long as you believe that there is one God and that Jesus died on the cross, then you won't lose your faith. (This is known as mere historical faith: knowing the facts, but not truly trusting in God). But Satan often doesn't attack the chief doctrine of our faith head on. Rather, he tempts us into other sins. If he constantly attacked our faith in one God and in Jesus as our Savior, we would put up guards against him. Rather, Satan attacks from the side. He entices us away from the faith by first drawing us into other sins. He won't tell you to deny God upfront, but rather to also love other gods like money and power and worldly acceptance. He won't deny that Jesus is Lord, but he'll still entice you into sexual immorality or simply to think that it really isn't a big deal. Christians can be guilty of being the worst complainers and malcontents. They think they honor God, while not realizing that their complaints and grumbling about money, against their neighbor, against their boss, and so forth are really complaints against God, who provides for them and bids them to love their neighbor.

This is why St. Paul warns, "Anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall." Don't take for granted your faith in Christ, but rather beware of temptations that destroy faith. Too often Christians think that they can remain Christians by their own strength, merit, and works. They become proud that they will always be Christians no matter what. But as Scripture shows us and as our own experience tells us, Christians can fall away.

But how can you prevent yourself from falling? Who has the strength to resist temptation? And can anyone have certainty of salvation? To answer this, you must look away from yourself and to Christ Jesus. He is the way of escape from temptation. And he is your refuge when your own sins assail you. The reason so many of Israel fell in the wilderness is because they forgot Christ. Their Baptism into the sea and their eating of spiritual food did them no good, because they did not look to Christ their Savior, their God.

Can you have certainty of salvation? Yes, indeed! In Christ alone! Only in Christ Jesus do you find certainty of your salvation. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and no one will snatch them out of my hand." This is a sure promise. Does Jesus lie? Certainly not! If you think you stand, take heed that you stand on Christ Jesus, or you will certainly

fall! It is Jesus, his forgiveness and salvation, which will strengthen you in temptation's hour. And it is Jesus who will restore you again when you come to him with a penitent heart.

God does not change. He always remains the same. And his promise of salvation in Christ cannot be voided or altered. The mercy he has shown to the saints in the Bible instructs us of this great truth. God forgave David, who committed adultery and murder. He forgave Peter, who denied Christ three times. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the worst sinners. We are cut out of the same cloth as all sinners. And we are saved by the same Jesus.

When we look at Scripture, we see how God punishes those who reject Christ by falling away into sin. Yet, also throughout Scripture we see a God who does not deal with us according to our sins, but according to his own mercy (Psalm 103:10). St. Paul writes to the Romans, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) The goal of the entire Scriptures, even when it shows the wrath of God, is to draw us toward the one who is our hope.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
No merit of mine own I claim,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the Solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand. Amen.