

“The God of Grace Is Faithful”

(1 Corinthians 10:1-13 – Lent 3 – March 23, 2025)

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 – ¹Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” ⁸Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Dear Redeemed people of God, by His grace in Jesus Christ:

Sometimes people confess the truth that they were saved by the grace of God alone from their former sinful life; and that they received the gift of salvation through faith in the saving work of Christ alone. But now that they have been saved, they think it depends on their own strength and goodness to remain saved. They think it depends on how firmly they stand against temptation and avoid sinning to remain in God’s grace. So they look to their own holy life for proof that they still are saved.

But how often, just when we think we are standing firm, fighting the good fight of faith, living the holy life, we fall into temptation and sin. Then we feel guilt and shame. We wonder how God could still love us for what we have done. Then the temptation is to think we have fallen away from God’s grace and there is no hope for us.

But as our text reminds us, **“The God of Grace Is Faithful”**: **1) By grace alone, He has saved us and made us His people; 2) By our own sin, we are tempted in every way to fall; yet 3) By grace alone, He still saves us and keeps us as His people.**

1) By grace alone, He has saved us and made us His people

Indeed, it is by the grace of God alone that He saved us and made us His people. While we were still sinners, deserving only His wrath and punishment, God in mercy

sent His Son to the cross to redeem us. Jesus bore all our guilt and shame and paid with His own precious blood to take away all our sin. Jesus rose again as the Savior of sinners who lives to give us His free gift of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

God gave this gift of grace to us through Baptism and Spirit-worked faith in Jesus. The apostle Paul compares this to how He made the people of Israel His own: *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”* (vs. 1-2). This reminds us of when Moses led the Israelites out of bondage and slavery to Pharaoh. By God’s miracle, they passed through the Red Sea on dry ground, while the waters drowned their enemies. God’s people were led under the cloud of His glory. They all underwent a kind of baptism in the cloud and in the sea, as God brought them out in freedom as His people, leading them onward to the Promised Land.

It is similar for us. We were in bondage to Satan, enslaved to him through sin. But God baptized us into Christ. By His miracle of grace, He brought us through the waters, cleansing us by His Word of forgiveness (Ephesians 5:26) in the power of Jesus’ blood. In the Sea of Baptism He drowned our enemies, washing away our sins, freeing us from Satan’s hold on us. God brought us out in the freedom of His children by faith in Christ, to lead us onward to the Promised Land of heaven.

Paul continues: *“all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ”* (vs. 3-4). This reminds us how, during those forty years in the wilderness, God sustained the life of His people by miraculous means. They ate the manna God gave from heaven. They drank the water that flowed from the rock when Moses struck it. All along the way to the Promised Land, who led them day by day in the cloud of glory? Who faithfully provided for them the bread and water of life? It was Christ the Lord, the Rock of their salvation who was with them all the way.

Again, it is similar with us. As our crucified and risen Savior, Christ is ever-present with us, leading us through the wilderness of this world. He sustains, not only our physical life, but our spiritual life. By faith, we partake of the Bread and Water of Life He gives. In His Word and Sacraments, we eat and drink of His flesh and blood, we receive His salvation.

2) By our own sin, we are tempted in every way to fall

So by the grace of God alone, He has saved us and made us His people. And don’t we count on that grace every day? For by our own sin, we are tempted in every way; and if it were left to our strength, we would fall away.

Tragically, this happened with many in Israel, as it says: *“But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted”* (vs. 5-6). Of the original adults God brought out of Egypt, only two of that generation lived to enter the Promised Land – Joshua and Caleb. This is not to say all the rest were eternally lost; for many of them repented along the way, clinging in faith to God’s forgiveness and salvation in Christ.

The temptations Paul lists are similar for us today: *“And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’”* (vs. 7). While Moses was receiving the Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, Israel grew tired of waiting for him. They built a golden calf idol, seeking life in an image of fertility and power. They tried to mix idolatry with worship of God. Then they rose up to play and indulge sinful desires (Exodus 32). In a similar way, we are tempted to grow tired of waiting for Jesus’ return and live as if He were not coming. We are tempted to forsake trust in the true God and to put our trust in the idols of this world, to seek life and hope in its images of power, wealth, and sinful pleasures.

Paul continues: *“Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell”* (vs. 8). Once, the men of Israel crossed the border and committed sexual sins with the daughters of Moab, also sacrificing to their false gods. So God commanded Moses to kill 23,000 men. (Numbers 25). Today, there are many temptations to cross the line and transgress the Sixth Commandment. Pornography lures many souls away from Christ. Many are led away from faith, living impenitent lives in sex outside of marriage and every form of sexual depravity. Again, it is all related to idolatry. For what do we trust to give us life and satisfaction? Do we entrust our lives to God, or do we sacrifice to the false gods of pleasure?

Paul goes on: *“nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer”* (vs. 9-10). Israel often complained and rebelled against God and Moses in how He led and provided for them. When they tested God’s patience He responded with various judgments – sending venomous serpents that killed many, sending destructive plagues, or sending conquering armies against them until they repented. In what ways are we tempted to put God to the test? Do we complain about His way of leading us? Do we show ingratitude for all He provides for us? Do we rebel against the representatives God puts over us, dishonoring parents and superiors?

Paul says: *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (vs. 11-12). It is easy to think, “I haven’t committed such horrible sins, deserving such judgment.” But all sin, even

hidden lusts and rebellion against God in the heart, deserves the wages of death (Romans 6:23). If we claim we do not have such weakness in our own sinful flesh, if we think we can stand firm against temptation by our own strength, then we will fall. How many have been tempted by that self-righteous pride that goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)?

3) By grace alone, He still saves us and keeps us as His people

Yet we need not fall into the temptation to despair either. For the same God who saved us by grace alone, by the same grace still saves us and keeps us as His people. Here Paul turns from the unfaithfulness of sinners to the faithfulness of God our Savior: *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”* (vs. 13).

In time of temptation, God does not allow more than we can bear; and He is faithful to make a way of escape. As we pray, *“Lead us not into temptation”* (Matthew 6:13), God answers by strengthening our faith through His Word and promises. He reminds us of who He made us as His baptized children in Christ. In the waters of our baptism, He empowers us to drown the sinful nature, to crucify the flesh with its evil desires; and He raises us up with Christ to walk in newness of life by His Spirit (Romans 6). He sets our minds on higher things. What are all the idols of the world and their false riches and pleasures, when we have true riches and joys in His eternal Kingdom?

When we fall into temptation and sin, Satan tempts us to feel our guilt and shame is too great for God to forgive us. Yet even then, God is faithful to provide a way of escape by His grace in Christ. He reminds us that He sent His Son to the cross to pay for all our sins, even the worst. As His Word declares, *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* So He leads us not to hide our sin but to confess it, promising: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:7-9). Like the Prodigal Son, we return to our heavenly Father praying, *“Forgive us our trespasses.”* He removes our filthy clothes of sin and shame and puts on us the best robe of Christ’s holiness and honor (Luke 15).

The God of grace is faithful. By grace He has saved us; and by the same grace He still saves us and keeps us as His people. As He kept His promise and led Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land, so He leads us. Christ is with us in His Word and Sacrament, sustaining our faith by His spiritual food and drink, giving us His blood-bought forgiveness and eternal life. He who began His good work in us will faithfully bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6) and bring us to the Promised Land of heaven.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.