

3rd S. in Lent 3/23/25
 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 C

Epistle lesson for this Sunday, from the 10th chapter of 1st Corinthians

The lyrics of the country song, “Watching You,” tell of a boy and his dad driving through town and, much to his father’s dismay, he discovers his son is quite good at profanity. When the dad asks, “Where did you learn to talk like that?,” his son’s answer is as straightforward as it can get, “I’ve been watching you, dad.”

The song goes on to describe the father’s prayer for forgiveness and the bedtime prayer of his son. When he asks, “Where’d you learn to pray like that?” His son answers, “I’ve been watching you, dad.”

It’s a song, but it reminds how great parent and, I would add, adults’ influence is on children. Children learn by example, both good and bad.

By good examples, we learn what we should do. And we learn from bad examples what not do, and how not to conduct ourselves.

That’s exactly what we have in our Epistle this morning. Paul uses the history of the nation of Israel to warn us so that we do not repeat the sins of disobedience of Israel,

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ (vv. 1-4).

Paul says that the Israelites “were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” This happened right after Israel left Egypt. The Lord led them out by a pillar of cloud. The Israelites came to the Red Sea, with Pharaoh’s army in hot pursuit. What did God do for His children? He blocked the way of

the Egyptians by the cloud, while Moses lifted his arms and parted the waters of the Red Sea. Israel walked through the sea -- they were all “baptized into Moses,” so to speak -- and when Pharaoh’s army pursued, the chariots and horsemen were destroyed.

Paul is saying Israel had a saving water experience, in which they were united with their leader, Moses, and through which they were saved from their enemies. Well, guess what, Children of the Heavenly Father? You have had an **even greater** saving water experience! You have been baptized into Christ! Yes, in your baptism, God delivered you from your enemies -- sin, death, and Satan. In the blessed washing of baptism, you have been united with your Leader, Christ, joined to His death and resurrection, buried with him in baptism, and raised to newness of life.

This is most wonderful! What a mighty thing God has done for us in Holy Baptism! It’s like what God did for Israel, only better.

And then Paul goes on. He says they “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.” When Israel was hungry, the Lord provided them with manna to eat, a “spiritual food”. When Israel was thirsty and there was no water for them to drink, the Lord instructed Moses to strike a rock, and out came water in abundance. Paul even says that these miracles pointed ahead to an even greater fulfillment in Christ: “For they,” the Israelites, “drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ”.

Paul is saying that we have been blessed in a similar but an even greater way. We have been given spiritual food and spiritual drink to eat and to drink. It is the Lord’s Supper. Yes, you have spiritual food and drink from God, **even greater** than what the Israelites had.

What a great blessing the Sacrament is, for here Christ Jesus gives us His very body and blood -- given and shed for you on the cross -- to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

My Friends, we have been blessed, abundantly blessed, with the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, just as the Israelites were blessed passing safely through the Red Sea waters and given the manna to eat and water to drink in the wilderness.

Then, notice what Paul says -- in spite of these blessings, Israel turned to idolatry and came under God's judgment. And in that, there is a warning for us.

Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 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.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 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.

Oh, oh, bad example. A bad example we are not to follow, My Friends in Christ. In spite of all that God had done for them, the Israelites gave in to temptation and sinned. And they suffered judgment because of it. This is a warning for us, that we do not give into temptation and sin against God, sin like desiring evil, indulging in sexual immorality, putting God to the test, and grumbling against God.

My Friends, we find ourselves in the season of Lent. Lent is a time of repentance and renewal.

I call that to your attention because I think we have become quite casual about sin. Look at the example of Israel Paul holds before us. They were they richly blessed by God, His love, and care poured out all over them. They should had been grateful to be His people. And, they had the Law of God. But, they didn't take it seriously; they did not fear the threats that God attached to His Commandments. And most of Israel fell away from God.

This is a warning for us, My Friends. We do not see sin – our sin – as rebellion against God, which deserves death. It is a deadly thing to take our sin lightly. This is how Paul applies these examples from the Exodus to us:

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 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 (vv. 12-13).

The Christian life is the life of repentance and repentance is nothing other than the daily return to the waters of our Baptism. Seeing our sin, knowing that we deserve only God's temporal and eternal punishment, we cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

And what mercy God has. He sent His own Son to die on the cross for all the times we desired evil, our idolatry, our sexual immorality, the times we put God to the test with our doubt and worry, all of our sin. And because the Lamb's blood was shed on that cross, we are forgiven, My Friends.

And we can be sure and certain of that, My Friends, because God is faithful. He wants nothing more than to take you to heaven to be with Him. He sent his Son, Jesus, to be the Passover Lamb for us, so that we would

be delivered from our bondage to sin, Satan, and death. God provides us with the sacraments, with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to create, nourish, and strengthen faith in us, so that we will be strong and not fall into sin and unbelief.

Dear friends, the Lord God wants you to make it all the way to the Promised Land. For God is faithful, and He keeps his promises. God is faithful; we can trust Him. God is faithful; He will keep us in Christ. God is faithful, and He will bring us safely to heaven to be with Him there.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.