

Title: “Our temptation. God’s faithfulness”

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1 Cor. 10:12-13

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Service Readings: Ezek. 33:7-20; 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Have you ever walked by someone, glanced over their shoulder and read just a small portion of what they were writing and then thought to yourself, “there is clearly more to this story than I just read?” That’s what it feels like, at least to me, this morning. Here is Paul, writing to a church in Corinth. It was a congregation that he was very familiar with, having spent many months in that city only a few years before and they were clearly struggling with several issues and challenges and he was impressing upon them what it meant to live like Christ’s church. That much is clear from the Epistle reading this morning. But he was also describing the Exodus in such a way as to claim that the Israelites were being accompanied by Christ, and that they were even tempting him! Clearly we need to walk by again, but more slowly and read more of the context. So, just a few verses before what we read, he says this:

“²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize... ²⁶Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Run like you mean it. Run like you want to win. This is his message to them. He is using analogy of a race. And then, immediately what follows is what we read today:

10 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. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

OK, so it is starting to make a bit more sense. The Corinthians need to run like they mean it – and that means turning from the evils of their day. And what are these evil things? Idolatry, sexual immorality, revelry, and grumbling. These were the habits that Paul was imploring the church to abandon. These were the practices, at least for them, that would cause their race to be lost. They would find themselves disqualified for the eternal prize. So, that makes much more sense, now. He was connecting the new church, the one after the resurrection of Christ, to the old church, the one

before it. He was showing that they really were no different – both attached to Jesus and both following him.

<pause>

Now, just as Paul connected the historic church to his current congregation, I'd like to do the same for us and view his letter in the same light. What can we learn about ourselves through the church at Corinth? It is a very timely question to ask because we are now in the season of Lent, a time when we are invited to take a moment and reflect on the status of our own race. How are we doing? Are we running like we mean it? Running to acquire the prize or have we been walking, or maybe even sitting? What are the idols in our lives that have distracted us from the race? What are the habits and bad practices that we have adopted this past year? What are the temptations that we succumbed to? Lent is a time when we can be honest with ourselves and with God – a time where we can explore the areas in our lives where we would prefer to keep hidden and even ignore.

As we list these out, we may also be tempted to list where we haven't fallen and have stood strong, and so Paul also reminds us of the sin of vanity. He says, "if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" We all have areas in our lives that are not pleasing to God. We all have sins that we embrace, feed, and even enjoy. And the moment we believe that we don't is the moment where we are at risk of falling away, of turning our eyes from God and turning inward towards our prideful selves.

But Paul's message goes much deeper than just that. He continues:

¹³No 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.

Those two verses. Right there. Those are gospel verses. He knows that true reflection of self will weigh us down as we feel the burden of God's law. And so he supplies good news and does it really in just two words: temptation and faith. Our temptation; God's faithfulness. What Paul is saying in all this is that *even in our failure to be faithful to him – when we fall into temptation, God will always be faithful to us*. He writes that Israel couldn't be faithful to God. They succumbed to their temptations. They grumbled, turned to idols, were immoral. But even in spite of this, God continued to be faithful to them. And to the church today God will continue to be faithful as well, even when the church is not. And we are Christ's church. So, even in our own times of unfaithfulness, even when we fall into temptation, God remains, and will always remain faithful.

And what is that faithfulness? A promise of a way out after Adam's fall. Even after he and Eve they withdrew their trust from God, even after Israel withdrew her trust from God, even after we withdrew our trust from God, he remained faithful and provided a way out through the sacrifice of his own son on the cross. It was a blood offering that he promised Adam and Eve and that he fulfilled in Jesus. And because he was faithful in that promise, we can rest assured that he will be faithful in his promise that faith in Christ will lead to forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting in the world to come.

And so this confidence that Paul invites us to have. It is not a confidence in ourselves. It is not a confidence that we acquire because we overcome daily temptation through our own strength and might. It is a confidence that starts with a recognition of our weakness. We are weak and powerless against the temptations of the world but Jesus is not. He overcame all temptation and offers us his strength through faith in him. Our temptation; God's faithfulness. Our weakness; Christ's strength. That is how the race is run. That is how the race is won.

Please pray with me.

Lord,

Father God, how wonderful to know that You have provided all that is necessary to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. Your grace truly is sufficient to supply whatever needs and necessities we may have to face, and thank You that no matter how difficult the circumstances and temptations that arise in our lives, Your grace is sufficient for Your strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Amen

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Strength> Amen.