

**+ 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11-13 + A Time for Giving Up False Security +**  
**+ 3rd Sunday in Lent + 3 March 2013 +**

How do you not see it coming? A top team takes on an underdog. No one gives the other team any chance at winning, because it's going to be an easy win, but then the final buzzer sounds and the top team has lost. Investors and money managers take increasingly risky, even ethically questionable, chances at scoring the big payday, but the bottom drops out and they lose everything. A powerful nation, an empire even, gets lulled into a false sense of security failing to see the disaster that will soon destroy it.

It even happens to Christians, including many a hero of faith in the Bible. A wealthy and powerful king named David, who has the Lord's favor, spots a beautiful woman bathing and allows his lust to take over. After all, he's the king, right? Next thing you know he commits adultery, orders the murder of the woman's husband, and covers it up with lies. Then before you know it, violence and pain and death mar the reign of this ancestor of Christ.

Perhaps it's even happened to you. The Lord has given you so much, but then you start to get lulled into a false sense of security. You get complacent. You get spiritually lazy. You get overconfident as your sinful nature nudges you closer and closer to the fire of temptation without you realizing how close to disaster you really are. So many have fallen into that same trap and never recovered, so it's no surprise that the Lord through his Apostle warns us that it's **A TIME FOR GIVING UP FALSE SECURITY.**

You could say the Corinthians were a very "secure" group of believers, a very confident bunch. After all, the Lord had blessed them richly with a wide variety of gifts, but their security was nothing more than a manmade illusion. Their spiritual immaturity showed as instability, divisions, envy, lawsuits, marital problems, sexual sin, and overconfidence pushed them closer to the brink of disaster. They had to give up their false security or lose everything.

So Paul pointed them back to the past. He wrote, ***"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was Christ."*** The Corinthians needed to remember their spiritual past. Most had been pagans, but as Christians, their spiritual **"fathers"** were God's people of the past—the Israelites who followed Moses out of Egypt, a group as richly blessed by God as the Corinthians.

God had regularly displayed his gracious power and saving will for Israel. They had passed from a life of slavery to a life of freedom as God led them with a pillar of cloud and when he miraculously parted the great waters of the Red Sea for them to pass through on dry ground. The Israelites ate manna God miraculously provided from heaven and drank water God miraculously provided from a rock. Above all, they had the saving presence of Christ. ***"Nevertheless, God was not well-pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desolate wilderness."***

Think about that. ***"God was not well-pleased with most of them..."*** At Jesus' Baptism, God announced from heaven that he was ***"well-pleased"*** with his Son. (Matthew 3:17) Not so for many Israelites. They constantly complained about God's ability to provide and save. They worshiped golden calves and fertility gods and defied God's promise to be with them if they entered Canaan. In spite of that, they figured God would keep on helping them, when finally he condemned them. ***"Their bodies were scattered over the desolate wilderness"***. Their false sense of security only got them God's rejection.

Of course, Paul didn't want that to happen to the Corinthians. He explained, ***"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, to whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."*** The Corinthians had it even better than the Israelites because they had the rest of the story. They enjoyed the life-giving Word of God, the cleansing waters of Holy Baptism, the forgiving meal of Holy Communion, and the saving presence of Christ. Still the Corinthians lived as if all that didn't matter, as if they had license to do whatever they wanted because they were "Christian". Paul desperately warned them so the past would not be repeated.

So what does all this matter for you and me right now? We need to learn from the past too. The Israelites died in the wilderness because they took God and his blessings for granted. The Corinthians eventually disappeared because they, too, took God and his blessings for granted. You and I have the privilege of receiving not only God's countless physical blessings, but also his greater spiritual blessings. We have the Word taught in its truth and purity and his Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Communion administered faithfully. Through those means Christ grants us his saving presence. The Lord blesses us so richly, but do you ever take it for granted? It's easy to assume it will always be this way, but if you forget the past, you're bound to repeat it and remember what eventually happened to those who did.

...But it's not too late! In fact, the Lord in his grace still provides you with the healing and forgiveness you desperately need. Above all, he gives you Christ. Through his Word, you learn from the past! Christ miraculously rescued and provided for Israel and he saved the Corinthians from their unbelief. Jesus is the Savior, who in your place never took his Father's grace for granted and never fell into the trap of false security as he lived a life of perfect obedience to God's holy will. Then he gave his life that you might live, that you might have forgiveness, that you might finally realize how high and deep and broad and wide the love of God is for you. In Christ every visible blessing reminds you of his eternal blessings. Jesus provides his blessed Word and water and meal to give you those eternal blessings.

Out of love, Christ Jesus did all that for you to give you his tremendous blessings, but we dare not get overconfident about those blessings. **Learn from the past**, but also **watch in the present**. Paul puts it simply, **"...If you think you are standing firm, watch out that you don't fall!"**

The Corinthians had grown overconfident in their own character. They put themselves in positions of temptation joining in at the local pagan fertility festivals, even though they were Christians. They needed Paul's warning.

We need it too. Do you ever mentally pat yourself on the back because you attend worship and Bible study or because you happened to do something good that God has to notice? Does your ego ever get stroked because you're faithful to the Lord or because you made it through a trial or temptation so well? Could you fall into sin? Sin is actually easier for 21st Century Christians than it was for 1st Century Christians because temptation is so accessible around us. It's hard enough trying to avoid temptation, let alone intentionally putting yourself in its path. All it takes is a couple clicks on your computer, a little change in the figures on your tax return, a couple more drinks at the party, or a couple more pointed comments when before you know it, you've put your soul in danger for all eternity.

Unbelief is easy as countless activities and demands on your time pull you away from God, his Word, and his Sacraments. It's sadly easy to fall out of the habit of weekly worship when work or play or general laziness takes up your time. It's tempting to fall away when your faith is tested, when the finances are really hurting, when your schooling threatens to shake your foundation, when love in a marriage grows cold and families break up. "Don't ever think you're standing so firm that you can't fall," Paul warns us. "Look at all the carnage on the road of life. See how many believers have fallen when tempted or tested because they were overconfident in themselves."

Paul's warning hurts, doesn't it? In fact, it can leave you feeling uncertain of God's grace. "How can I really be certain that I'll even make it through today, let alone get to heaven, without falling? I could fall anytime!" That warning is humbling, because you realize you can't do it all. You can't save yourself or help yourself in God's eyes, so how will you walk the dark road of life ahead?

**"...But God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way of escape also so that you can stand up under it."** Sometimes it's the little words in God's Word that make all the difference. **"...But God is faithful..."** How amazing is that! God is faithful to his people and his promises as he proved in the sending of his own Son Jesus. He's more faithful than you could ever be and more generous than you can imagine, because he's never going to let you be completely crushed by temptation or trial. He won't allow you to be tested beyond what you can bear. He will provide a way out, even if that means simply giving you the strength to bear those trials and difficulties in this life and those times when you face temptation.

When we **learn from the past** and **watch in the present**, then the Lord helps us to **trust for the future**. **"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear...He will also provide a way out..."** Those promises of preservation are guaranteed in the blood of Christ, so now you see life differently. You realize that behind every visible, perishable blessing is something more important that is invisible and imperishable. With that guarantee, you reorder your priorities. You see your time as a precious gift from God to be used for more than just work and school and play, but also for his service in your life's callings. You see your talents as precious gifts from God to be used for more than getting yourself ahead in life, but also for humble service to your gracious Lord. You see your treasures not as "yours", but as God's gifts to you to be used in his service and in ways that are "well-pleasing" to him, whether in how you spend daily or in your offerings to the Lord here.

Knowing **"God is faithful"** can and will give you what you can't conjure up in yourself—a real sense of security fully dependent on God's promises fulfilled in Christ our Savior. So this Lenten season give up that false sense of security that creeps into your life and the life of every Christian, and instead, find real security for the life to come—security in the blood of Christ shed for you and the life of Christ won for you. Amen.