

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, look with favor on your humble servants and stretch out the right hand of your power to defend us against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

**Verse of the Day:**

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14,15)

**Sermon Text:**

There are moments in life that seem tailor made to remind us that we just aren't as good as we think we are. I can remember a failed attempt at showing Caleb how to do a spin move in the living room one day. Apparently, I'm not as nimble as I once was, or at least as I think I once was and upon spinning I promptly ran into a rocking chair. It didn't fair so well, as I basically ended up showing Caleb how his dad could get wiped out by and break a chair. In the grand scheme of things, aside from a bruised ego, and a few more sore spots than I ever remember coming from actual football players, it was nothing a little glue wouldn't fix.

Unfortunately, there are other moments in life when our ego can and does cause us to get into some serious trouble. In fact, spiritually, if our ego gets the better of us it can completely shipwreck our faith. So today we wonder out loud, "Am I **STANDING FIRMLY IN FAITH OR FREE FALLING FROM IT?**"

I find the way our lesson starts intriguing. *<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>3</sup>They all ate the same spiritual food <sup>4</sup>and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.*

I often view Israel as disadvantaged when it comes to their spiritual outlook on life. They didn't get to see Jesus. They surely would have been a better bunch of believers if God had allowed them some of those vantage points given to the apostles. But God certainly did give them one advantage after

**Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

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<sup>6</sup>Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. <sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." <sup>8</sup>We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. <sup>9</sup>We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. <sup>10</sup>And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

<sup>11</sup>These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup>No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it.

another as He poured out grace in the desert. Paul points to the wonder that was the Red Sea crossing as God protected them from the armies of Egypt. Reminds us that they witnessed the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire each day in their journeys throughout the desert. He points to the quail and manna, and the water which gushed forth from the rock at Kadesh. Food and drink miraculously provided at the very command of God.

The reality is that they weren't disadvantaged at all. They knew of the love, the power, protection of God and yet they couldn't see past their own noses. They were so caught up in themselves that they missed God's will for them and His love so clearly on display. They took God for granted and they chased after their own sinful desires.

God is serious about His Word. When they run after idols, women, or grumble and complain about God's providence the results are disastrous. Each example ends the same way, death. Israelite after Israelite pays the ultimate price for their sinful desire. They lose their grip on the one thing needful and fall away, the bodies scattered throughout the desert are proof of it.

They could have used Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. They could have used the encouragement to stand firm lest they fall. But they did have that encouragement! It came through God, his servant Moses and the ritual and ceremony they so often complained about. They could have used the Word of God! It's a shame that they threw it away.

Perhaps you have already glimpsed some similarities in the various sins Paul mentions next. Similarities are seen in the easy to see denials of God's Word. Sex sells! That's our excuse for the filth that is so prevalent in our society and the wide spread fornication that is passed off as normal these days. Greed, it isn't a sin anymore, it's a game show! As we have become completely covetous in our society and we grumble not under our breath but for the world to hear if everything we think we should have isn't simply handed to us. Idols? American or otherwise they come in a million varieties now so that we can pick our poison be it money, fame, person, property or statue.

There are also similarities in the not so easy to see denials of our God. At Sinai, Israel made an idol and then mixed its worship in with the worship of God. Today paganism is once again on the rise and religion in general is seen as one of a million paths to happiness which ultimately matters for nothing. In Moab, the sin was right out in the open for all to see but how often hasn't God's gift of sex been shattered by lust filled minds and lingering eyes. Goodness, today does the visible church even look that different than our world in our defense of marriage and our commitment to it? As Israel tested its God and grumbled it was audible but how many times have we decided to grumble quietly proclaiming that we were too tired for church or too taped out in our time, talents and treasure to commit to ministry here and in throughout our synod and world.

If you are anything like this unworthy servant of God then you are an awful lot like Israel. I can't blame God for failing to show love, power or patience. The Holy Spirit inspired James to write, *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed* (James 1:13,14). I have no fingers to point, no excuses to use, the commandments lay broken and it's all my fault.

As the guilt roles in so does the terrible truth. The Israelites died and James continues, *Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.* (James 1:15) I deserve death, physical and eternal, for all my various sins. I deserve death I'm not as good as I often like to think or portray on social media. Paul's warning couldn't be clearer, <sup>11</sup> *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* <sup>12</sup> *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!* <sup>13</sup> *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.* **BE CAUTIOUS LEST TEMPTATION TRIP YOU ETERNALLY.**

Lying on my back in the living room, holding onto the arm of the chair which had broken off in my clumsy display, I came to the realization that I was not the athlete I once was. No doubt, I often wish that were not the case, but perhaps that realization has prevented other broken objects, maybe even broken bones since. When we come face to face with our sin, it's never a pleasant experience. It is absolutely necessary, however. Paul tells the Corinthians in his second letter, *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while — yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret* (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

This is really the driving force behind the season of Lent. As we examine our sin, our own inability to earn our place in heaven should become painfully evident. An honest humility about who we are poor, wretched sinners, should take the place of our previous pride and self-worth but it also should not stop there. Paul wrote, <sup>12</sup> *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!* <sup>13</sup> *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it.*

Many have taken these words to be the opening to a search in life for the doors and windows which God has left open for us to crawl through so that we have success in trial, victory in tribulation and meaning in the mess that is life. In truth, we don't need to go looking for a new solution to every problem and issue we face. We already have been given the way to stand.

Jesus once said, *I am the way and the truth and the life* (John 14:6). Two weeks ago we saw Him send the Devil packing, unphased by temptation, triumphant over it. His perfect life has already supplied our victory over sin, death and the power of the Devil. When I find out that I am not the spiritual giant I might think I am and the ground gives way beneath me, how did Isaiah, put that? *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed* (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus died for us, for you and me.

*Yes, God is faithful.* He is not backing out on His promises to us. That knowledge brings safety to trouble souls and peace in sin sorrowed lives. It gives firm ground for our shaky legs to stand on. Paul told us we would have power through God to stand in all trials and temptations. It's right there in the words we have been discussing. You are free from sin! Christ conquered it! It holds no mastery over you. God's Word offers the needed strength to stand against the devil's schemes.

Paul says the Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea, we were baptized as well but not in a sea rather at a font. There God made us members of his chosen family and heirs of life. Holy Spirit firmly implanted we have help and power to fend off Satan when he stalks us in our weaknesses.

And then there's the Lord's Supper. Here God invites you to partake of himself. He offers you true spiritual food to eat and be nourished. Israel had its manna but we have the rock itself. In his Body and blood, you regularly receive the forgiveness of sins, new life, and salvation.

In the Word we are taken again and again to the life, death and resurrection of our Savior, the promise that He won for us, the hope that being children of God assures us of. As repentant sinners, forgiven sinners, no temptation common or otherwise, will pull us from our God.

Some moments seem tailor made to remind us that we just aren't as good as we think we are. God's Law often points out the flaws and failures as we battle the temptations of sin and Satan in the world around us. But thankfully God the Gospel points us to our Savior to the one who has done it all for us that we may freely live for Him. Should we wonder if we are **STANDING FIRMLY IN FAITH OR FREE FALLING FROM IT?** It's probably time to stop and dive into the Word and there find the safety of faithful and forgiving God. Amen!