

Repent or perish (standing firm in the Lord)...

¹ I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. ² In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized into Moses. ³ All of them ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all of them drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that travelled with them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, ⁷ or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." ⁸ And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. ⁹ Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. ¹⁰ And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. ¹¹ These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. ¹² If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. ¹³ The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Some Notes on the Text

- * Paul wrote to the Christian Congregation, a congregation he had visited on at least two occasions (Acts 18:1; 20:2-3). The Corinthian Congregation had experienced division. Some were claimed to be more 'spiritual' than others (1:20-2:5; 14:19); others were living sexually immoral lives (5:1 - 6:20); others had questions of the application of the Gospel concerning daily life (7:1 - 15:58).
- * Paul warns Christians at Corinth that some of them were in danger of falling away from the path to eternal life: "if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall"! (v. 12) He uses events from the Exodus to illustrate their plight: the Israelites were the Church's spiritual "ancestors" (v. 1); they too were under God's protection ("under the cloud"). Stretching the metaphor, they were "baptised" (v. 2) in passing through the Red Sea. Their "spiritual food" (v. 3) was manna; ours is the bread of Holy Communion. Their "spiritual drink" (v. 4) was the water from the rock. Now Christ gives to us Himself (Jn 7:39) through His word.
- * This writing from Paul warns us not to take salvation for granted. Paul *fought* to retain his sense of salvation (1Cor.9:24-27; cf. Phil.3:12-14). The Corinthians had a shallow view of their baptismal standing. They saw it as a kind of charm, and thought they could attend idol feasts, and live however they wanted. Paul points out that the Israelites had experienced God's saving hand in many continuing miraculous ways, yet they still called down God's judgment through their persistent rebellion, idolatry and immorality. These things are a warning to us.

- * Paul concludes this section by addressing the *nature of temptation*. In one of the most quoted verses in the Bible (v.13), Paul goes on to note several things about the nature of temptation. First, it comes to everyone. Second, God will remain faithful to the one tempted. Third, that temptation will not exceed one's strength to resist it, for "God will provide the way out..." In all this Paul is calling for radical realism about the *nature of one's life with God*. The temptations to live as though God doesn't really matter to our 'every-day life' is prevalent and on-going. No one is spiritually exempt from temptation! But Paul is also making the assertion that God is with the person in their times of testing, trial and trouble (cf. Heb.4:15-16). And so, we are to 'stand firm in the faith', rejoicing in our God and Saviour.

Faith Talk

- * If you have been associated with the church for many years, what are some changes you have seen in church life over that time? What are some you would call 'good'? Are there any others you don't like? Do you feel 'the church' has become 'too casual'? Do you feel 'the church' is still 'too formal' or 'strict'? Why do you say what you do?
If you haven't been involved in church life for all that long (or only have a memory of church life for the past twenty years or so), have you had a conversation with someone who is older, and talked about what 'changes' they have seen? What do you think about these 'changes'? What might we be able to learn from the past?
- * Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 (and, if you wish, the background to this in Exodus 13-17). In what way had people who had been 'called by God' seemed to have 'taken grace for granted'? (cf. 2 Cor.6:1; Jude 1:3-5)
Read again 1 Corinthians 10:1-4. Note the hints to Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and the Word (Christ the Rock). In what way was Paul suggesting the Corinthian Christians were like God's people in the past?
In what way was Paul suggesting the 'Old Testament people' were rejecting Jesus Himself? (1 Cor.10:9)
What does Jesus also say in this regard? (see Gospel for today: Luke 13:3,5)
So, what is Paul's call to us in 'striving daily to lead a holy life'? (1 Cor.10:12)
Also, in what way can we 'learn' from 'the past'?
- * Consider: we can be baptised, we can attend worship and receive Holy Communion, and we may hear and read God's Word; and yet our heart may not be orientated toward God. Paul has a call to 'stand firm in the Lord' (1 Cor.10:12, cf. Heb.12:1-12). But Paul also says that God will not let us be 'tested' beyond what we can bear. In what way is this a comfort for us?
Why is it important to remember that Jesus endured temptation for us? (Hebrews 4:15-16). In what way is 'standing firm' related to what we 'do', as well as what we 'think/ feel/ believe' (in trusting in Jesus as our Saviour)?