Lent 3 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
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Lessons From Our Past
I. Lessons about God's goodness.
II. Lessons about God's holiness.
III. Lessons about God's faithfulness.

Dear Christian friends,

This Bible - **just like yours** - is conveniently divided into two parts – the OT and NT. As you know **from reading** your Bible three-quarters of the Bible is the OT. That should mean that A LOT of our **Bible reading** would be in the OT.

But my impression is that we SHY AWAY from the OT. **Maybe** it's **because** we have a hard time **keeping** the PEOPLE and PLACES straight. We **have a hard time** just trying to pronounce some of those names! **Maybe** we avoid the OT because we think it's BASICALLY A HISTORY of the Jews and it really doesn't have much to say to us today.

Paul here shows us how to **read** and **use** the OT. Using the OT Paul teaches us some LESSONS FROM OUR PAST - **lessons** 1)about God's goodness, 2)about God's holiness and 3)about God's faithfulness.

I. Lessons about God's goodness.

Paul begins these lessons by saying, ***"I do not want you to be unaware – ignorant."*** One of the greatest dangers to a Christian is IGNORANCE – ignorance of God's Word. The LESS WE KNOW our Bibles the weaker our faith will be – the less Christian **our lives** will be – the easier it will be for Satan to get us to fall into temptation. That ignorance of God's Word INCLUDES **ignorance** of the OT.

Paul calls the Israelites ***"our fathers."*** Corinth was a city in Greece and the majority of the members of this church were Gentiles, **not Jews**. Yet the **OT Jews** are our fathers IN THE FAITH. Time is what separates God's **NT people** from His OT people. They lived in the AGE OF PROMISE and we live in the **age of fulfilment**. Their history is OUR HISTORY – and a GOOD LESSON on God's goodness.

Paul emphasizes the similarities between God's OT and NT people. God's **OT people** had a TYPE OF BAPTISM in the exodus and **the crossing** of the Red Sea. **At that time** God delivered His people from **slavery** and their **enemies**. God separated the Jews AS HIS SPECIAL people. God was leading them to the **Promised Land** of Canaan.

"They were all baptized into Moses." With those **great acts** of deliverance God placed His people into a SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP with Moses. Moses was their God-given leader whom they were to follow and **obey**. Moses was their mediator with God. He was God's prophet to them.

"They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink." Paul is referring to the MANNA and **water** God miraculously provided His people in the wilderness. That food for their bodies was also to STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH in God's **goodness** as they tasted **how good** their God was. Paul points too to the CLOUD that **accompanied** them on their journey. That ***"pillar of cloud and fire"*** was a visible sign of God's **presence** with His people. Their **gracious God** was with them EVERY STEP of the way!

The similarities between us and ***"our fathers"*** are STRIKING – **although** we have been MUCH MORE RICHLY blessed. We have our baptism – that ***"washing with water and the Word."*** Through that sacrament God delivered us from sin, death, and the devil by bringing us to faith in Jesus. **Through** baptism God separated us from the world – made us His **dear children** and **heirs** of heaven. And EVER SINCE God has been leading us home to heaven.

We have been ***"baptized into Christ."*** We have Jesus as our MEDIATOR with God. God's **own dear** Son personally intercedes for us with His Father. Jesus bids God to NOT LOOK on our **many sins** but on the perfect life He lived for us. Jesus bids God NOT TO CAST us away **in righteous anger** but to forgive us **for the sake** of His blood shed on the cross. Jesus is OUR PROPHET – speaking to us **God's Word** of pardon and **peace** – of hope and **encouragement**. HOW GOOD God has been to us!

God has given us this SPECIAL MEAL of **Holy Communion** to feed our souls. **With the bread** and wine Jesus feeds us with His own true body and blood ***"given and shed for the forgiveness of (all) our sins."*** We are strengthened **in our faith** as we TASTE HOW GOOD God is in forgiving us.

Paul does ***"not want us to be unaware – ignorant"*** of these FACTS. Why? **Because** God's grace and goodness put us into a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with Him. God's goodness calls FOR GRATITUDE. God's grace should never be TAKEN FOR GRANTED. God's forgiveness means a WHOLE NEW WAY of life for us.

LOOKING BACK at ***"our fathers"*** we need to LEARN WELL that lesson on **God's goodness**. Despite all that God had done for our fathers ***"God was not pleased with most of them. He had them die in the wilderness."*** LEARN FROM OUR PAST…

II. Lessons about God's holiness.

We are more like our OT fathers **than we may realize**. We have the SAME and **even** BETTER BLESSINGS from the **same God**. We must fight the **same devil** and struggle with the **same sinful nature**. Paul wants the similarities to STOP RIGHT THERE. He wants us to LEARN FROM our **past** so that we don't have the SAME ENDING our fathers did.

"These things took place as examples to warn us not to desire evil things the way they did." RIGHT HERE is where the problem begins – with the HEART. When the heart is controlled by God and guided by **God's Word** there is NO PROBLEM. But when it's not – well, JUST LOOK what our **fathers did**!

Richly blessed by God our fathers turned from Him **to idols**. Paul is thinking about the GOLDEN CALF. That has a big lesson for us today. Aaron called that idol ***"the LORD who brought you out of Egypt."*** Our fathers didn't want to COMPLETELY TURN THEIR BACKS on God. They just didn't want to COMPLETELY FOLLOW God and His Word. Isn't that still a strong temptation? **Many** want God in their lives but they don't want GOD IN CONTROL of their lives. **God** is forced into SECOND PLACE – behind what we want – and that's idolatry!

"Let us not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell." The Moabites were out to stop the Israelites. They did it by getting the Israelites to ***"engage in sexual immorality"*** – sex OUTSIDE of marriage. That appealed to our fathers' **sinful natures** and they gave in. **Satan knows** this is a GREAT WAY to conquer Christians – BREAK DOWN their **morals** – get Christians to think they can separate their sex life from their **faith life**. Instead of Christians being separate **from the world** get Christians to follow **the ways** of the world. AND IT WORKS! Look at the influence – the TOLL! – our **godless, immoral society** has on us.

"Let us not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and so were being destroyed by the serpents." This is the incident of the BRONZE SNAKE. The Israelites were fed up with **life in the wilderness**. They were impatient with **God's ways**. They didn't like how God was **taking care** of them. So they ***"spoke against God and Moses."*** That wasn't the only time either. ***"Do not grumble, as some of them grumbled, and were destroyed by the destroyer."*** Grumbling and complaining reveal DISTRUST in God and DISSATISFACTION with God's ways. Greed replaces **gratitude**. Grace is TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

Paul calls these incidents from our past ***"examples – warnings."*** Our God is THE HOLY God. Those who spurn **His blessings** and turn from **His ways** will be rejected by Him. All those dead corpses of our **fathers** in the wilderness show that ***"God will not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."***

With all that in our FAMILY BACKGROUND it's no wonder Paul **wants us** TO LEARN FROM our past. **How often** aren't we tempted to COMPROMISE God's Word or exempt ourselves **from doing** EVERYTHING God says? **How often** aren't we tempted to have a FAITH OF CONVENIENCE instead of **commitment**? How often aren't we tempted to follow the ways of **this world** – to do WHAT I WANT instead of **what God says**? How often aren't we tempted to grumble and **complain** about God's **blessings** and **ways**? How often DON'T WE FALL for those temptations! Jesus' words in the **gospel reading** apply also to EACH ONE of us, ***"Unless you repent, you too will perish."***

We can't escape temptations. We can't avoid **this world** or our **sinful natures**. But we can learn FROM OUR PAST…

III. Lessons about God's faithfulness.

"So let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall." There can be no room FOR COMPLACENCY in our hearts. **Faith** that is not growing is **dying**. To be content with the **way we are** – to think we don't need to CHANGE and GROW in our Christian faith and life – is the first step away from God. Then we are setting ourselves up for a BIG FALL.

God doesn't want us to fall! ***"God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability." "Faithful"*** - when God makes a promise He **always keeps** it. Jesus and His cross are the ULTIMATE PROOF of God's ***"faithfulness."*** AS PROMISED, Jesus died on that cross to ***"take away the sin of the world."*** AS PROMISED Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and we are now promised eternal life in heaven when we die.

Our ***"faithful"*** God promises NOT TO LET us ***"be tested beyond our ability."*** Oh, there will be times we will feel as if we've reached our BREAKING POINT. And WE WILL HAVE – **if** we are depending on ourselves!

God hasn't promised that we WON'T be tempted. But God HAS PROMISED to provide a way out. **Maybe** that way out is the two feet God gave us so we can WALK AWAY from the situation. **Maybe** the way out is the OFF BUTTON on our TV or computer. **Maybe** the way out is the two lips God gave us to KEEP OUR MOUTHS SHUT so we **don't gossip** – **curse** – **drink** too much. God's ways out are often RIGHT IN FRONT of us but we don't even see them or use them.

I hope these LESSONS FROM OUR PAST have whet your appetite to **read more** in the OT. **Read** it knowing that it was ***"written for us."*** **Read** it and see how faithful and good our God is. **Read** it, and LEARN THESE LESSONS from our past. Amen.

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