

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL
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Worship Series: *Crushed*

Service Theme: *False Security Is Crushed by Faithful Presence*

**Sermon Theme: History Lessons (March 20, 2022)
1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

In a 1948 speech to the British House of Commons, Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said, ***“Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”*** Do you understand the point Churchill was making? We need to pay attention to our history lessons! It’s important to learn from the mistakes of our forefathers, so we don’t repeat them!

But some might think that’s an unnecessary piece of advice. Because I think there’s a little bit of generational conceitedness in all of us. What I mean is, I think people naturally consider their generation to be far more advanced, and so much better and smarter than the generations that have come before them. And therefore, we sometimes think we don’t have any lessons to learn from the past, because obviously we’d never make the same mistakes that our forefathers did! Because obviously, the terrible things that happened in their generation could never happen in ours!

And yet, 80 years after Churchill uttered those words, the leader of one of the countries that once fought to prevent Hitler’s unprovoked invasions now leads his military in a very similar invasion! While we might think of our generation as far more advanced and morally superior than the Aztecs and Incas who sacrificed their children to their gods, do we not see that our “advanced generations” have also sacrificed millions of children to their preferred god of self?

We might be tempted to think we could never fall for the same temptations that the previous generations did. But as sinners living in a sinful world, we’re just as ripe to fall as any generation before us!

That’s why we must pay attention to, and learn from our **History Lessons**.

That’s what the Apostle Paul is teaching to the fledgling Christian church in the city of Corinth, and the Christian church in the city of Jacksonville, in our sermon text from 1 Corinthians 10-- a cautionary history lesson. Warning them and us, to learn from the mistakes our spiritual forefathers, so we aren’t condemned to repeat them!

Out of all the generations in history, the people of Israel, especially during the time of the exodus from Egypt, arguably received more spiritual blessings and evidence of God’s loving presence than any other. Not even counting the miracles and plagues God used to free the Israelites from their Egyptian masters, Paul gives us a laundry lists of reasons the Israelites should have trusted fully in God. First, Paul tells us ***“that our ancestors were all under the cloud.”*** After the Israelites were freed from Egypt, they didn’t need a road map. ***“The LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way.”*** They could literally see God guiding and directing them.

And Paul says that ***“they all passed through the sea.”*** After God led the Israelites out of Egypt, pharaoh gave chase, eventually cornering them on the shores of the Red Sea. But God miraculously parted the waters, allowing all of the hundreds of thousands of Israelites to pass safely through the sea on dry ground.

And Paul states that all the Israelites were also ***“baptized into Moses,”*** meaning God connected them to a strong spiritual leader in Moses. As if God himself leading them wasn’t enough, he also gave them Moses, one of the great heroes of faith to be their human leader.

The Israelites also ***“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.”*** God provided miraculous bread—manna—that appeared on the ground every morning. On multiple occasions, God made miraculous water pour out of solid rock in the middle of the desert to quench their thirst. But

above all, their true rock, Christ, was with them. Just as he is with his Church today, constantly providing for their spiritual needs.

And these spiritual blessings, this visible evidence of God's presence, love, providence, and protection were given to everyone in Israel. Four times Paul emphasizes "all." There was literally no reason for any of the Israelites to wonder if God was with them, or that he loved them!

However, despite all of God's faithfulness to them, they were unfaithful to him. They committed sexual immorality with foreign women, which God had forbidden. Just after God brought them safely through the Red Sea, they became idolaters, worshiping a golden calf! Although God had led them and given them trustworthy leaders, they challenged God and Moses' authority. And although God nourished their bodies with miraculous food and water, they grumbled that it was detestable. And we see the result. As Paul graphically depicts, ***"Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness."***

Heartbreaking, isn't it? And a little mind-blowing! After everything they'd seen and experienced, how could they possibly act this way? Well, those Israelites fell because they developed a false sense of security. They were reminded of God's faithful presence so often that they became unimpressed with it. Reminded of God's faithful presence so often that they thought they were standing firm, even though they were walking off a spiritual cliff. They treated God's faithful presence like a security blanket that ennobled them to live however they wanted. After all, they were God's chosen people! He was with them! What could possibly go wrong? But their problem was, rather than treating God's faithful presence as encouragement and motivation to draw closer and cling tighter to him, they used it as an excuse to drift further from him, and to cling tighter to their own sinful desires.

So Paul tells us we need to learn from this history lesson! ***"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us."*** But do we really need those warnings? I mean, certainly we could never fall like that! Especially if God gave us the

kind of visible assurances of his faithful presence that the Israelites got!

But are we any better than the Israelites, that we don't need this warning from their history? Far from it, actually. If you pay attention, it's impossible to miss the way Paul connects them and us in the New Testament Church. ***They all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses. They ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink.*** Just as God revealed his gracious, loving presence to the Israelites through these actions and experiences, God also shows his gracious, loving presence to us through the Means of Grace—through his Word, and through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper! Saving us through water. Feeding us with miraculous food and drink!

While it might seem like the Israelites saw more amazing things than what God shows us, think about it! Through something as simple as water, connected with God's powerful word, in Baptism God washes away our sins, and creates eternally saving faith in people's hearts! In the Lord's Supper, along with common elements like bread and wine, Jesus miraculously, supernaturally gives us his true body and blood! And through it, God forgives our sins, and strengthens and empowers us to live our lives in that forgiveness! Every time you hear, or read, or study God's Word, the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit is at work on your faith! And time and time again, day after day, week after week, we get to see and experience these visible reminders of God's faithful presence!

But like the Israelites in the wilderness, don't we become far too easily unimpressed by them? Don't we lose sight of the fact that a miracle takes place every time we're in the book, or at the font, or at the Lord's table? And like the Israelites in the wilderness, don't we also sometimes also let these visible examples of God's faithful presence give us a false sense of security?

"Well, I was baptized as a child," or "I got confirmed," so we're excused to not have to practice any Christian discipleship now, right? Or you had your child baptized, or brought them for 2 years of

Confirmation instruction, so that means you don't need to encourage them in their spiritual lives anymore, right? Or, "I go to church every Sunday, and I take communion every other Sunday, so that pretty much gives me carte blanche to live like a functioning atheist Monday-Saturday.

Do you feel excused to let sin continue in your life, because "I'm a Christian, so letting sin creep into my life won't affect me." Or "God loves me, so he wouldn't want me to not follow the desires of my own heart!" Honestly reflect. Is your life saturated by the Gospel? Or do you live a life of "cultural Christianity," just going through the motions of a Christian life to convince yourself that you're standing firm, while in reality you're edging closer to a spiritual cliff?

Brothers and sisters, we need these history lessons! They're like the blind-spot warning indicators on vehicles. They serve to warn us of the dangers that we're not seeing by ourselves. So, listen to this history lesson, and heed Paul's warning, ***"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"***

But these history lessons aren't only meant to check our blind spots, and remind us how serious God is about sin. They also remind us how seriously God loves us! Just think about this. While God was carrying out his judgment against the unrepentant Israelites, he had you in mind. He inspired Moses and Paul to record these warnings in his Word, so that you, listening to this sermon nearly 3,500 years after they happened, could receive this warning that you need to hear. That is faithfulness!

Paul further describes God's faithfulness to sinners on the verge of falling. ***"God 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."***

What's the way out God provides to temptation? He gives us visible reminders of his faithful presence! He gives us baptism, and the daily reminder of what that baptism means for our eternity. He gives us his body and blood in this special meal, in which he is faithfully present with us. He gives us his Word, so that we might have constant reminders of his faithful presence with us, for us, and in us! And through all of these means, he gives us forgiveness for the times we fall!

So, instead of treating these means of grace as excuses for false security, instead, let's use them to crush our false security and feed our faith in that which gives us true and lasting security—the rock-solid foundation on which our hope stands, our rock and our redeemer—Jesus Christ.

Like Churchill said, let's learn from our history lessons, and not follow the path of the Israelites and their false security. Instead, learn from our history lessons, and stand firmly on the one whose faithful presence crushes our false security—the one who has made your sins...history.