

All the information being shared these days says that if your family has a close family member with cancer you need to be watching out because you're at a higher risk. Children who live with alcoholic parents are more likely to become heavy drinkers and potentially alcoholics. Children who see parents smoking will often grow up to be smokers.

I don't think anyone is shocked by these statements. Certainly if you know that you're in a high risk category for anything you're going to be diligent in looking out for signs. You may go to regular checkups. You may screen yourself regularly. You wake up to the reality that history matters. If you're looking at history but not learning from it you're a fool.

Today we look at Israel's history. Paul writes to the Corinthians so they realize they aren't that different from the ancient Israelites. They fall into the same traps and often look like they're walking into the same sins. They need a wakeup. Paul could list off their sins specifically, and in other places he does. But to make his point he turns to ancient Israel. They need to learn some lessons from Israel's history. We go along with Paul to see if we can't....

Learn from history
You could fall into sin away from God
You will never fall away from God

If you lived in Wisconsin in 1967 it's likely you were at this game, or at least say you were. As one of the greatest sporting events in history, the Ice Bowl has a legend surrounding it. Of the 50,861 people who were actually at Lambeau Field for the NFL championship, probably 250,000 claim they were. Everyone wants to be part of history. As the greatest event in Israelite history, every one remembered the Exodus from Egypt as if they were there. The walls of water pushed back at the Lord's command as they crossed the Red Sea and the protection offered by God's presence in the cloud. The heavenly food received every morning and the miraculous water provided for them. No other people in the world could claim a history like that, saved by the Lord's personal protection.

No question Israel was God's special chosen people because of God's protection and mercy. **"Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert."** While enjoying God's protection, the Israelites grew careless. They felt God granted them these privileges so they were insured salvation. They started messing around with sinful behavior. They worshiped the golden calf and they committed sexual sins with the captured Moabite women. 23,000 people lost their lives because of that one. They went on to test God's patience and received poisonous snakes. Finally they complained against God and over 14,000 were swallowed up by the ground.

What can we learn from their history? **"They were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."** **"We were therefore buried with Jesus through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life."** They had baptism which made them part of God's family. We have baptism which makes us part of God's family. **"They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink."** **"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?"** They received spiritual bread and water to drink. We participate in spiritual eating and drinking when we attend the Lord's Supper. They had privileges and so do we. They had God's grace and so do we.

But history repeats itself. Though we have similar privileges we have committed similar sins. We're self serving, thinking financially we need to hold back for ourselves the first and best the Lord asks for from our blessings. We use our time to further our own interests spending huge amounts at sporting events, reading the sports pages, and participating in sports blogs. We work to make this world a paradise. Same privileges, repeated sins. Like the Israelites we deserve death for our idolatry of self, our revelry in pleasure, and our worship of this world instead of God.

God's warning is not to be taken lightly. **"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"** We must be convinced at all times that at any moment we could fall into sin. Maybe it's already happened. We walk in danger all through life. We need assurance it hasn't happened. We need convincing we haven't fallen away. So we run to the protection of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. There we find our Savior Jesus and the grace of God.

Tomorrow will be 70 degrees. Oklahoma State will win the NCAA basketball tournament. This church and school will always exist. These are bold predictions. But it could be 50 tomorrow or 80. Oklahoma State might not even make the tournament or they might. This church and school could be struck by disaster or be forced to move. The bold promises could fall off track in a thousand different ways. How can I be so bold predicting the one track they will take? If you receive a promise that you'll never fall from faith, that's a bold promise. But your faith could fail you in a thousand different ways. What guarantees us staying on the right path? **"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."** 'You won't fall from faith' isn't the bold prediction of someone with no control. It's the bold promise of a God who sent Jesus. And Jesus backs that promise up with his death and resurrection.

“But such a promise only encourages sinful behavior. It’s like a get-out-jail free card,” you might say. If you were only half paying attention you may have thought Pastor was saying it was okay to do whatever you want because you’ll never fall away from God. Paul is not encouraging sin and neither am I. Note Paul says, **“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.”** The temptations we face and the sins we commit are faced by all human beings. But because they’re common not everyone has fallen into them. Not everyone is sinfully greedy or lost in hopelessness. Not everyone is stuck in a pattern of using bad language. Some escaped these common temptations or stood up under their crushing weight. Maybe you’re one of them. But it wasn’t their escape abilities or their strength. **“God is faithful.”**

So when the temptations do press down on you or are threatening to take you away from God’s family, look for God to provide a way out. Look for it. Pray for it. Or at other times God in his wisdom allows us to be crushed so that he can provide strength. You’ve felt that crush. Maybe you’ve felt it went beyond what you could bear. Then listen to words we’ll be singing in a short while. **“In God my faithful God, I trust when dark my road; though many woes overtake me, yet he will not forsake me. Though heavy griefs are pressing, he’ll turn them into blessing. My sins assail me sore, but I despair no more. I build on Christ, who loves me; from this rock nothing moves me.”** You are stronger today in Jesus having faced the temptation. Jesus won the victory. God’s promises are in Christ, and nothing moves you from Christ. You will never fall away.

We stand in a great position in the timeline of history. Many people have come before us and many of their mistakes are clearly visible to us. From the tragedies of our own parents and grandparents to those of ancient Israel we have history to learn from. We have sins they committed and temptations they faced to learn from. We have the two sided warning and promise of God. Always be watching because your fall from God’s family could come at any time. Take the warning seriously. But take the promise just as serious. You will never fall away. God’s grace is with you and Jesus still holds the victory. He is faithful.