

## TEXT – 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Introduction: Life is not easy. Here are some famous quotes to help us handle life. We could call them life lessons. Carl Sandburg once said, “Life is like an onion: You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep.” Grandma Moses is quoted as saying, “Life is what you make of it. Always has been, always will be.” Mark Twain said, “There has been much tragedy in my life; at least half of it actually happened.” Will Rogers had this to say about life, “Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.” Winston Churchill stated, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” These are certainly some valuable life lessons that we could put into practice. But there is something missing. Such life lessons might accurately describe the life we live or how we should live but they do not capture the true essence of life, which is our spiritual life in Christ our Savior. Today we want to focus on PAUL’S SPIRITUAL LIFE LESSONS, which are 1) Know and live your faith and 2) Stand firm in your faith.

### I. Know and live your faith

- We can learn quite a bit about our spiritual life from God’s Old Testament people. Paul encourages us to think back to the Israelites who were guided by the pillar of cloud and fire as God led them through the wilderness. By God’s almighty power they passed through the Red Sea on dry ground, while Pharaoh’s army was destroyed when God brought the wall of water down on them causing them to drown.
- God’s people, Paul says, were baptized into Moses, that is, they submitted to him as their leader, as the prophet of God. As the Israelites journeyed through the desert led by Moses they ate manna, bread that came down from heaven. They also drank water that Moses brought out of rocks. Yet it wasn’t Moses who really did all this. It was Christ. Paul states that Jesus was the true rock that provided for all Israel’s needs. It wasn’t just their physical needs either. Jesus also provided for their spiritual needs as they looked to him in faith as their Savior.
- Even with Jesus himself accompanying God’s people through the desert, many of those Israelites died in the desert because God was not pleased with them. They died because they had turned away from God and abandoned their faith in the Rock, Christ himself, who accompanied them. Those who died in the desert never made it to the Promised Land of Canaan.
- At one time those Israelites knew their faith and put their trust in the LORD, their Savior God. Did they take their faith for granted? Did they think that once baptized under Moses leadership they would always be saved? Do we think that since we are baptized and even confirmed in Christ that we are done growing and maturing in our faith? Do we think that as long as we belong to a Christian church or think of ourselves as Christians we will be saved?
- We can learn from Israel’s major mistakes. We need to know our faith and get into our faith, striving to learn more and more each day. If our knowledge of God’s Word is slipping, that’s a sign that our faith may be slipping away too. There is no guarantee that if we continue to neglect our faith we will always have faith.
- Peter urges us, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We want to eat our spiritual food, to feed on Jesus, the Bread of Life, through the Word. We want to drink of his spiritual truths as Peter writes again, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”
- Paul wants us to learn from Israel’s mistakes so that we not only continue to grow in our faith but also that we continue to live our Christian faith. Israel’s history is filled with ungodly living. They made and worshiped the golden calf while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai. They also worshiped the god of the Moabites and engaged in sexual immorality. The Israelites grumbled and complained and were killed by snakes and the destroying angel.
- This is a life lesson on how not to live. Our life is to be lived as a reflection of what we believe. When our life doesn’t line up with our beliefs, when our life betrays what we believe, we know something is seriously wrong. The Christian life we live is the fullest expression of what we believe in our hearts about Christ.
- It is idolatry when our source of joy and happiness is not Christ but cars, houses and other possessions that use up our time and cut into our offerings to the Lord. It is idolatry to put our kids or their activities ahead of worship and serving the Lord. What lesson are we teaching our kids? We’re teaching idolatry. Sexual immorality is rampant in our society condoning sexual activity outside of marriage that even Christians tolerate while it continues to destroy God’s gift of marriage. How many Christian young people have already defiled their bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit and are no longer pure for their future spouse?
- All the grumbling and complaining we do should have us already struck down by God. What right do we have to complain about anything? We are so blessed to have a merciful God who does not treat us as our sins deserve. It’s still a slap in the face to God to complain or grumble and not trust in him who has promised to work out everything for our good.

- We can learn something from the Israelites because we fall into the same temptations. It is Paul's spiritual life lessons that take us back to our faith in Jesus Christ. We sin but we also know that Jesus came to take away the guilt and punishment for our idolatry, our sexual immorality, and our grumbling and complaining.
- Paul reminds us in Colossians, "God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." Through faith in Jesus we are free from the condemnation that our sins deserve. We are free to know our faith even better and to strive to live our faith in a way that pleases our Savior.

Transition: Paul by his spiritual life lessons teaches us to know and live our faith in Christ. He is also teaches us to stand firm in our faith.

## II. Stand firm in your faith

- As we look at Israel's history and all the things that happened to God's people there are plenty of warnings for us. One of the major life lessons Paul wants us to learn is when he says, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" There are plenty of examples in the Bible of those who fell from faith.
- King Saul turned away from God and eventually committed suicide. King Solomon let his heart be led away by sexual immorality with foreign women and turned to other gods. Even King David let his guard down and committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah murdered. Judas is another example of someone who was even close to the Lord as his apostle but then betrayed him and committed suicide.
- To consider all of these examples and somehow think that it could never happen to me is dangerous, eternally dangerous. Pride does go before the fall. No sinner is immune to the power of the devil, world and our own sinful nature to lead us away from our faith in Christ. There will be people in hell who were believers in Christ at one time and then they fell away, maybe family members. Paul reminds us, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."
- These words are a warning to us as sinners with a sinful nature. It's a warning never, ever to take our faith for granted even for a moment. Paul encourages us in Philippians 2, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Paul is speaking to those who already have salvation, encouraging us not to lose what we have through our own negligence.
- How do we preserve our salvation in Christ? We use the means God has given us to strengthen our faith, that is, the means of grace – the gospel in Word and sacrament. Read your Bible. Take communion, the body and blood of Christ for the assurance of your forgiveness. Live your baptism every day by repenting of your sins and being assured that your sins are washed away by Jesus' blood. Through these means of grace the Holy Spirit is working in you, strengthening your faith in Christ so that you can continue to stand firm in your faith.
- After the warning to us as sinners with a sinful nature Paul turns to the comfort we have as his children. He reminds us, "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."
- Even though we have been unfaithful to God because of our sin, God is faithful. He is faithful to his promise to forgive. He is faithful to his Word that he will give us the strength to overcome temptation and remain faithful to him through Christ our Savior. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God."
- What the devil sends as a temptation is at the same time a test from God to remain faithful to him. When we are unfaithful and give in to temptation, God is faithful to forgive our sins. When we break our promise to remain faithful to him, God keeps his promise to forgive us for Christ's sake. God promises not to give us more than we can bear, but he always gives us a way out of every temptation or test as we look to Christ our Savior. Through Christ and his forgiveness we will stand firm in the faith.

Conclusion: Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." On the more humorous side an unknown person said, "Live everyday like it was your last, and eventually you'll be right." Paul's spiritual life lessons touch on much deeper issues. He reminds us that what happened to God's O.T. people serve as a warning to us not to take our faith for granted. Rather we are encouraged to know and live our faith and to stand firm in our faith knowing that God is faithful and will not give us more than we can bear. There are plenty of spiritual truths or life lessons from Proverbs that we can use. Paul's spiritual life lessons could be summed up by Proverbs 3:5-6 which says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Amen.