

**“Don’t be that Person”**

Someone pours themselves a glass of milk almost finishing the entire gallon of milk, except for a few drops, but they put the milk container back in the refrigerator anyway so that the next person who wants milk has to deal with the almost empty milk container. Don’t be that person. Someone is attending a sporting event and, in their opinion, the referee isn’t doing a very good job so they make a scene as they remind the referee throughout the game that they don’t think he or she is doing a very good job. Don’t be that person. Someone is driving down the highway in busy traffic, when it is hard to switch lanes, and they notice that the car in the next lane has their blinker on wanting to switch into their lane. Instead of letting them in the person speeds up to make it more difficult on the other person to switch lanes. Don’t be that person. As we live life and watch it unfold it is filled with situations like this and examples of people (and sometimes we are that person) who teach us and remind us to “don’t be that person.” Don’t be that person because it’s not good for you or others to be that person. Our Scripture lessons for today encourage us to take a general look at the nation of Israel in Old Testament times, the centuries before Jesus Christ lived on this earth. There are many people who lived in Old Testament Israel who are good examples for us to follow. However, in general, the Old Testament nation of Israel is a great reminder to “don’t be that person.” That wouldn’t be good for you or others spiritually and eternally if you are like them. Please give your attention to 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

**For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. <sup>2</sup>They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>3</sup>They all ate the same spiritual food <sup>4</sup>and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.**

**<sup>6</sup>Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. <sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” <sup>8</sup>We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. <sup>9</sup>We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. <sup>10</sup>And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.**

**<sup>11</sup>These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it.**

What a privileged group of people was the Old Testament nation of Israel. That nation witnessed some unbelievable acts of God’s love. One time in history when that was especially true was the group in Israel that was rescued from slavery in Egypt. Personally led by God through the Red Sea (on dry ground I might add) as God held back the destructive water on their right and left. Personally had their bodily needs taken care of as God dropped bread from heaven six days a week, provided water from unique places like rocks, and didn’t allow their footwear to wear out as they wandered in the wilderness for 40

years. Personally led by God to the promised land of Canaan with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Still more amazing is that Paul says, **“They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4)**. Their Savior God was personally leading them, miraculously providing for their bodily needs, and most importantly – took care of their spiritual needs for time and eternity through his goodness and mercy. Yet, what happened to that privileged people? **“Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:5)**. The only ones who were allowed by God to enter the promised land of Canaan were the children twenty years old and younger and two over the age of twenty – Joshua and Caleb. At the time God led Israel out of Egypt we estimate they were a nation of 2 million people. That would mean over a period of 40 years in the wilderness 1.2 million adults died. That would mean on average, there had to be 82 funerals a day for 40 years. Why? Because God was not pleased with most of them as they had become that “Don’t be that person” spiritually. Worse than the physical death they received as a punishment from God is this thought – how many people from Old Testament Israel are spending eternity in Heaven? As one reads Scripture you get the sense that this number is shockingly lower than one might think. Paul goes on to give several examples from Israel’s history of why God’s displeasure was justified, but for the sake of time I won’t share those details now. I would encourage you to do that at home as you make use of the “Taking This Home” insert found in the entryway.

Two thirds of your Bible is the Old Testament. The main reason that the Old Testament is recorded for us is to point us to our Savior Jesus. God kept his promise! Another important reason that the Old Testament is recorded for us is this. **“Now these things (historical events from the history of Israel) occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did” (1 Corinthians 10:6)**. Many in Israel had a complacency and focus problem. Instead of being vigilantly focused on the one true God’s Word and will they entertained as legitimate the false and dangerous philosophies being preached in the world and after some time those dangerous and false philosophies corrupted their belief system. Instead of being vigilantly focused on how God had blessed them they focused on what God had not given them and after a time they became a discontented bunch of whiners and complainers taking for granted the daily blessings he gave them. Instead of being vigilantly focused on following God’s commandments as they promised they would, trusting that this would be best for them and society, they let down their guard and gave in to their sinful cravings to rewrite God’s 6<sup>th</sup> commandment design for marriage and its gifts of companionship, sex, and children and they gave in to their sinful cravings to overlook the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment blessings that God grants through his representatives of authority on this earth like parents, teachers, pastors, police, government, and many more. In short, Israel’s words, actions, and attitudes did not stand out as different from the rest of society, but rather they blended in perfectly and paid the spiritual and eternal price for their lack of vigilant focus.

Like Old Testament Israel, we are a privileged group of people who have been given every spiritual advantage. We have been baptized into the Christian faith. We have many good versions and unlimited copies of the Bible written in our own language. We live in a country where we can freely believe and practice our Christian faith, including gathering with our fellow Christians around Word and Sacrament whenever we want. We have access to Christian education on every level. Many of us have been Christians our whole lives. And while the temptation to throw away our privileged status is strong it is not exceptional. **“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind” (1 Corinthians 10:13)**. The temptations that Israel faced are the same temptations we face today just packaged differently. If you and I are going to avoid the “Don’t be that person” history of Old Testament Israel, then we need to be vigilant and focused on spiritual matters as we live on this earth. Listen to Paul in the verses leading up to our sermon lesson for today. **“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict**

**training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that I...will not be disqualified for the prize”** (1 Corinthians 9:25-27). When the Apostle Paul wrote these words the Olympics had been a thing for about 800 years! And now, 2800 years later, we watch another Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. The athletes who are competing in the Olympics are not there by accident. They have been vigilant and focused in their training for years so that they can compete at this level. If you and I are going to avoid losing our Christian faith, spend eternity in Heaven, and be helpful proclaimers of the Gospel then we need to be vigilant and focused on spiritual matters. Don't be like Israel. Instead, every day, be vigilant and focused – **“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ”** (Colossians 2:8). Don't be like Israel. Instead be vigilant and focused – **“Godliness with contentment is great gain...Some people, eager for money (earthly pleasure), have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, child of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness”** (1 Timothy 6:6,10-11). Don't be like Israel. Instead be vigilant and focused – **“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral”** (Hebrews 13:4). Don't be like Israel. Instead be vigilant and focused – **“the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment,...This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority”** (2 Peter 2:9-10).

Scripture is clear. Our eternal salvation through Christ and even the ability to trust in Christ as our Savior are both gifts from God. God doesn't want any of us to sit around worrying about our faith in Jesus – do I have enough faith or have I sinned too much or too spectacularly that Jesus sacrifice on the cross couldn't pay the penalty for those sins? Don't be that person. Instead, remember, **“God is faithful” (1 Corinthians 10:13)**, he will keep his promise that those who are repentant and believe in Christ Jesus as their Savior, whether it is a mature faith or immature faith, are forgiven of all sins and will experience nothing less than heaven itself. At the same time, God doesn't want us to be under concerned about our faith in Jesus. **“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Corinthians 10:13)**. God doesn't want us to be spiritually complacent and unfocused, thinking that our faith in Jesus is something that can't be lost. Don't be that person either. As we live on this earth we can't avoid temptations that threaten our Christian faith, but don't worry - **“he (God) will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13)**. How much can we bear? How long can we endure? How far can we go? **“But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13)**. The answer to our ability to fight off temptation and the cravings of our sinful natures is not found in us, but in our all-powerful God! God doesn't eliminate temptation in our lives, but through Word and Sacrament he goes with us and does provide us with a way to endure it. God's help through Word and Sacrament doesn't weaken the temptation or make it go away – it just strengthens us to be able to trust God that with him helping us – no sinful temptation has to master us, keep us from doing his will, or rob us of our faith!

Learn from Old Testament Israel. Don't be that person. Stay vigilant and focused against temptation. Stay connected to Word and Sacrament and see God keep you humble in repentance, trusting in Jesus, and focused on impacting the world with the Gospel. Amen.