

Lent 3 / March 23, 2025

1 Corinthians 10:13

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man; God is faithful."

God is Faithful

Trial, temptation and testing are woven into so many stories in the bible. The bible begins with testing and temptation. The Lord plants a garden in Eden, forms humans, one from the dust of the earth, one from the body of the other. He breathes into them the Spirit of life. He gives them as food, the fruit from every tree in the garden save one, saying, *"In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Significantly, He gave them the ability to choose. The ability to choose was both a blessing and a danger. It was a blessing, because it gave them a relationship with the Creator different from any other creature, except the angels. God created angels and humans to live with Him in love; and with that the ability to choose not to live with Him in love. What choice would they make when their love was put to the test?

At a certain point a third of the angels chose not to live with God in love, turned away and became devils. At a certain point one of those fallen angels put the love of the humans for God to the test. We know how that went. God condemned the fallen angels eternally in their separation from Him. God did something different with His human creation. He gave them hope of reconciliation. He promised a Redeemer to save them, their descendants and all of us from our sins. A Saviour to release us from the control of the devil, the bondage of our sinful nature and to lift from our heads the condemnation of eternal death. God is faithful. In our separation He seeks our reconciliation. In our sins, He works for our forgiveness and salvation. God is faithful in Christ our Saviour!

Even in a state of perfection, angels and human beings turned away from God. How much more now that sin has infected our hearts and broken the perfect relationship our ancestors had with the Creator. Temptation, testing and sin are part of the human experience. Paul writes, *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to human beings."* This is even more so in the believer's experience with God. God is faithful to provide a way of escape when we are tempted. God is faithful to provide a means of forgiveness when we fall and fail the test. God tests us and allows the devil and our sinful nature to tempt us, so that we remember His faithfulness. Seek His strength in time of testing and return to Him for mercy when

we fall into temptation and fail the test. God is faithful even when we are not. Trial, testing and temptation expose the weakness of our fallen human spirit. Most importantly, they highlight the faithfulness of God, who expresses His faithfulness, love and forgiveness most magnificently in Christ our Saviour.

God tests our faith so we rely on His power. The devil, the world and our sinful nature tempt us to mistrust God's faithfulness and to despair of His forgiveness when we fail the test and fall into temptation. In our text St. Paul speaks of God putting us to the test and of us putting Christ to the test. God tested Israel in the wilderness with hardship, feeding them with bread from heaven and water from a rock. Bread and water, even if they have a miraculous source, are bread and water. Nothing fancy, just enough to meet the necessities of daily living. He tested their faith so they would see their weakness and draw closer to Him for strength. He tests us through leanness and hardship to draw us closer to Him in faith, believing His promise and trusting that He will provide for our needs of body and spirit in time and especially for eternity. During Lent some Christians reduce their intake of food and drink to the bare minimum to focus on our most important spiritual needs for God's grace, forgiveness, favour and the heavenly nourishment He provides to meet those needs in Jesus our Saviour. God is faithful.

God tests us, but on the other hand, Paul warns against putting Christ to the test. Israel in the wilderness tested God's patience by grumbling about the provision He gave and the leadership He provided through Moses and Aaron. Worst of all they wished God had not redeemed them from slavery and had left them in Egypt. They may have been slaves, but they ate well. Israel tested God's patience by despising the provisions He provided for them and by longing to return to slavery. Israel tested God's patience by repeatedly violating their relationship with Him, by worshipping false gods and engaging in the sexual immorality associated with their worship. Yet God is faithful. He patiently endured Israel's sins, both in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. He fed them with water from a rock and bread from heaven. He brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey. He continually called them to return to Him in faith and walk with Him in faithfulness through His prophetic word. In the fullness of time, He sent through them, Jesus our Saviour. God is faithful!

God patiently endures the sin in our lives. He continually calls us to come to Him to receive forgiveness and His Spirit that we may walk with Him more fully in Christ. Israel tested God in the wilderness and in the Promised Land so often that sometimes His patience came to an end. Sometimes we need a strong call to

repentance. He sent snakes to bite them in the wilderness. He gave them healing and forgiveness when they returned to Him. He allowed the Assyrians and the Babylonians to disperse and deport them from the Promised Land. He promised His Spirit would go with them. He promised He would restore them. Most importantly, He promised Jesus, whom He sent through them to draw them, us and all people to Himself in repentance through faith in Him. God is faithful.

God uses hard times and difficult circumstances to draw us closer to Him. Paul had an affliction which He referred to as a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of the devil sent to harass him. He pleaded with the Lord to take it away. There are lots of things in our lives we would like the Lord to take away. The Lord let it remain. It served a three-fold purpose. First, to keep Paul humble. He was by nature a proud man and by character a proud Pharisee. Second, it made him compassionate towards the weakness, sinfulness and sufferings of others, so that He dealt with them according to the kindness of God's love in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, through this thorn, this messenger of the devil as he experienced it, God drew Him close to His heart, teaching Him to rely on His grace in Christ Jesus. In all things Christ is faithful to us as our God and Saviour.

God values faithfulness, make no mistake. But first and foremost, He values faith. The letter to the Hebrews was written to encourage faithfulness among Jewish Christians who were being tempted to abandon Jesus and return to the rituals of the Jerusalem temple. The author urged them first and foremost to cling to Jesus in faith. He is our great high priest. He fulfilled the service of the high priest and temple, by offering Himself as the sacrifice to atone for our sins. In Jesus we have a high-priest who is sympathetic to our weaknesses, having Himself experienced the temptations common to humans. He overcame temptation and passed the test in our place. He gives us strength to remain faithful in testing and to stand firm in temptation. More than this, when we fall and fail, He raises us up in the grace of forgiveness. God is faithful to forgive, restore and heal all who come to Him for grace. Jesus calls us to come to Him so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in every need.

No one was tested more than father Abraham. The Lord promised him a land as an inheritance, which he would receive through a people who would be born through a son he waited decades to receive. When he finally received this son in his great old age, The Lord asked him to sacrifice him as an offering. Who could trust God in such a thing? Abraham could, because through the challenges of so

many tests He knew that God would provide an offering in place of his son. God provided. No one suffered after falling into temptation more than St. Peter. With his own lips he promised to be faithful to Jesus, even to death. With his own mouth he denied knowing Jesus when his faith was put to the test. In His remorse he remembered the most important thing about God, that He is faithful to forgive when we fail the test and fall into temptation. God is faithful. No matter what we must endure, how far or often we fall, He is faithful to raise up, strengthen, heal and forgive. God is faithful in Christ our Saviour. God the Holy Spirit bless us with faith to receive and grace to believe. In Jesus' name. Amen