

Trust Our Faithful God

✠ **Accompanied by Christ** (vv.1-5)

✠ **Warned across the ages** (vv.6-10)

✠ **Encouraged in temptation** (vv.11-13)

In the name of Christ, our Rock, dear trusting children of **Our Faithful God**:

One of the TV shows that almost makes cable worth the cost is *Digging for the Truth* with Josh Bernstein. His skill at wilderness survival and love of archaeology and the outdoors are most popular on the History Channel. Recently, the cameras were aimed back 3000 years to the most powerful Pharaoh, Rameses II. He may not be the Pharaoh of the Exodus, but our lesson today needs you to know why Rameses II has more statues to his name than any other Pharaoh. Earlier Pharaohs had their names and cartouches embossed by stone masons who carved away the background to make raised letters. Rameses' men skillfully leveled the old carvings and engraved his name deep into the stone as if to say, "You won't remove me as I did those other guys!" This Pharaoh wanted to carve an eternal name for himself in stone.

Remember those deep impressions today as the gracious Holy Spirit carves God's saving Word deep into our hearts and souls. We live in the grace and mercy of no earthly ruler, dead and gone. Christ, our King, lives and rules eternally. His Name is above every name. He engraves His truth for us to **Trust Our Faithful God** through all the deserts of life to the Promised Land of heaven, all the way...

✠ **Accompanied by Christ** (vv.1-5)

Some say, "Ignorance is bliss," but it's deadly in spiritual matters. That's why the Apostle Paul must teach the wayward Corinthians: *"I do not want you to be ignorant..., brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and...all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all 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."*

We need to understand what happened to the Israelites with Moses in order that we too may be **Accompanied by Christ**. Remember that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, the Second Person of the Trinity, eternally active in world history before He was born of the virgin Mary to suffer under Pontius Pilate, to be crucified and rise again. Long before He took on human flesh and blood, Jesus was making His Presence known to comfort, guide and bless God's people bound for the Promised Land. After ten plagues convinced Pharaoh to let God's people go, Christ was *"the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, [who then] withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long."* (Exodus 14:19f NIV) Christ was protecting God's people in front and behind.

Do you see your "rear guard" surrounding you with love and protection? *"Your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard."* (Isaiah 58:8 NIV) Ancient Israelites were *"baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,"* but we have been connected with Christ in our Baptism to be blessed as His responsibility. Whenever we hear God's Word we drink *"from the spiritual rock that accompanie[s us], and that rock [is] Christ."* The more challenging your life, the more deeply you need to drink. Hard times drinking from Christ are healthier than wandering life's sands alone.

With such advantages **Accompanied by Christ**, why was *"God..not pleased with most of them [that] their bodies were scattered over the desert"*? Ah, deep impressions pounded into our souls to be...

‡ Warned across the ages (vv.6-10)

“Now these things occurred as examples,” carved like deep letters, “to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.” While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving God’s Ten Commandments, the Israelites were on fire with desire down below worshiping the golden calf. If not for Moses’ pleading, the LORD would have destroyed them all right then and there. Later, near Moab, their *“sexual immorality”* worshiping in Baal orgies *“in one day [got] twenty-three thousand of them”* killed. They thought they could *“test the LORD,”* but only got more Israelites *“killed by snakes.”*

Christians who have heard all this before are yawning about now. You can almost hear our self-righteous, careless hearts going off like cell phones all over the place: *“We’re not at Mount Sinai. We don’t worship golden calves. And we steer clear of orgies. Who’s Baal anyway?”*

This only proves how badly we need to be **Warned across the ages**. For instance, is worship the highlight of the Lord’s day or is it something else when we’re finally done? (Amos 8:5) Sports, electronic toys or your favorite hobby? Is it the next dance, your last date or nasty things said about you? Anything crowding out God’s Word chains you to your idol. It may have a different face than Baal, but good or bad, whatever draws my mind and heart away from a passionate love of God’s Word, needs to be dumped on the garbage heap of contrition and repentance, lest it drag me down and damn me with idolaters of old.

And just in case any of us think we’ve escaped being **Warned across the ages**, Paul has one more: *“And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.”*

‡ Encouraged in temptation (vv.11-13)

He’s not just talking about children grumbling about their food. It also angers God when adults are not thankful for His blessings. So your wife makes a great spaghetti with those grainy wheat noodles. Do you thank the Lord for His blessings, or grumble? So your husband isn’t around as much as you’d like. Do you thank the Lord you have a faithful husband and make the best of your times together – or grumble? Do you grumble you’re not bigger and stronger, smarter and prettier, richer or more popular – or give thanks to God for two good legs and every gift to glorify Him? All of us are sorely tempted to grumble. We constantly fail to give thanks. That’s why, *“these things happened to them as examples,”* *pounded deep impressions, “and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”*

Jesus died for all our sins of idolatry and grumbling. So don’t be too quick to give up. Instead pray, praise and give thanks. Doesn’t He promise? *“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”* (Isaiah 65:24 NIV) Even in little things He cares for you. Years ago I prayed for help to cut the raised panels on my oak desk. I walked over to my bookshelf and pulled off a magazine. Years earlier God gave me the explanation. When I asked, God showed how He had already answered.

In our suffering we forget our Lord Jesus always suffers with us. When you feel alone, remember, *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.”* Or as Peter says, *“Your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”* (1 Peter 5:9 NIV) Quit feeling sorry for yourself and get busy praying for them too. Then be **Encouraged** because Christ prays for you.

You don’t need to chisel away everyone else’s accomplishments to carve a name for yourself. God put His Name-reputation on you at your Baptism. In Christ you’re famous! Your name is written in heaven. God cannot forget you because He carved your name on the palm of His hand. He never stops thinking about you, watching over you and helping you. So if your life feels like a burning building, listen. He’s coming in Word and sacrament. Don’t try to escape your problems by grabbing the hot handle and running into the fire. Be patient and wait by the window because *“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.”* It is God’s glory for His children to succeed in time and eternity. **Trust Our Faithful God.** Trust in Christ alone. Amen.