

Danger! Soft Edges!  
1Co 10:1-13. Luk 13:31-35.

Dr. Jerome Frank, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University said that Whenever he was flying and he engaged people in conversation a confession was almost always forthcoming when they find out he was a psychiatrist. Some years ago, before all of the modern security measures were installed at the nation's airports, a man he was sitting next to on a coast-to-coast flight told him, "You know, I used to be deathly afraid of flying. It all started after that man brought a bomb on board a flight to Denver to kill his mother-in-law. I could never get it out of my mind that someone on board one of my flights might also be carrying a bomb."

Dr Frank asked, "Well, what did you do about it?"

He replied, "Well, I went to one of those special schools for people who are afraid of flying and **they told me there was only one chance in ten thousand that someone would be on board my flight with a bomb.** That didn't make me feel much better. The odds were still too close. **But then I reasoned that if there was only one chance in ten thousand that one bomb would be on the plane, there was only one chance in 100 million that two bombs would be on board. And I could live with those odds.**"

So he asked, "But what good would that do you?"

He quickly replied, "**Ever since then, I carry one bomb on board myself--just to improve the odds.**"

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 365.

There are many people in this world who have a false sense of security.

Paul addresses the Corinthians and says, "Be careful where your confidence lies. Do not be so confident in yourself that you think you will never fall!"

+IFBP/1553

At the site of Dachau concentration camp near Munich is a museum containing relics from the camp and photos reminding of the grim years of war. A sign next to the exit reads...

"Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat its mistakes."

Paul has a similar idea in mind when he draws on Israel's history in the wilderness to make his point. **BE CAREFUL YOU DON'T REPEAT THEIR MISTAKES** (cf Psa 95 Do not be like Israel in the wilderness)

ISRAEL

Who crossed the Red Sea  
Who were God's people  
(baptised into Moses, followers of Moses.)  
Who ate food supplied by God (spiritual food)  
Who were accompanied by God

NEVERTHELESS GOD WAS NOT PLEASED WITH MOST OF THEM

they died in the desert and never saw the land

WHY?

Idolatry  
Sexual immorality  
They failed to trust God  
They grumbled constantly and wanted to go back.  
ie **THEY HAD BASICALLY REJECTED GOD.**

Paul Says **LEARN FROM THEM.**

You may be baptised  
You may take Holy Communion (Spiritual food)  
You can **DO** all the things that Christians are supposed to do.

**NEVERTHELESS - BE CAREFUL LEST YOU FALL.**

In our Gospel reading, Jesus laments over Jerusalem.  
There is an anguish in his words for the people he loves.

I once wrote an essay about the significance of Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel and in the last paragraph I wrote  
Jerusalem emerges as a city of paradoxes in Luke.  
It is a city that is looking for the Kingdom but does not recognise its presence amongst them;  
it expects a king but chooses a murderer;  
it represents the people of God but rejects His messengers;  
it is the centre of the worship of God but will not tolerate His Son;  
it is the place of death and yet through it, the place of accomplishment and fulfilment;  
it is the city under judgment while from it blessings will flow to the whole world, and finally it is a place which will be destroyed, though one for which there is still hope in the future.

The opposing sides of these paradoxes are related to the people who either accept or reject Christ, for both exist within the city, so that while Luke's picture of Jerusalem is predominantly one of rejection of Christ and judgment by God, we cannot overlook the remnant of disciples who do believe and make Jerusalem the starting point for the spread of God's Word.  
It is in this respect that Luke's Jerusalem becomes an example to, and microcosm of, the world both in this life and on the Day of Judgment.

We must heed the warnings of Paul concerning Israel.  
We must learn from the failings of Jerusalem  
It can be so easy to follow the same path  
Five ways in which we may fall:

1. You may have gone through the motions but never have committed your life to Jesus Christ.

2. You do something you are so ashamed of that you feel you can never go back  
It's not that God rejects us.  
It may not even be the church people who reject us  
We just find it difficult to face up ourselves, because to face God means facing our sin.

3. Something happens which turns you against Christians, or the church, or against God.  
An argument  
A rebuff  
A tragedy

4. You may have a commitment to Christ but other things seem more attractive and you give it away. You started to drift.  
+ You've seen the sign at the side of the road  
"Beware soft edges", and you know that if you get off the track you can get bogged.  
That's what it can be like in the Christian walk. We wonder off track, fascinated by something else, and we linger there so long that it becomes a way of life.

You hear people say  
about church or fellowship,  
"We moved house and I just stopped going".  
"When I got married I just stopped going to church"  
"We just became too busy"  
"We had to take the children to sport and we got out of the habit"

It starts in a small way and in the end you turn your back on Jesus.

See if you can guess who wrote this...

+BI

These were deep and sensitive thoughts for a 17-year-old, revealing spiritual wisdom that few attain. He had been baptized into the Lutheran church in 1824, at age six, and was confirmed at 16. Now, to graduate from high school, he had been required to write an essay on a religious subject. He chose to explore "The union of believers with Christ, according to St. John's Gospel (John 15:1-14), an exposition on its basic essence, its absolute necessity and its consequences."

"Our heart, reason, history, and the work of Christ convince us that without Him we cannot achieve our goal, that without Him we are doomed by God, and only Christ can save us."

So wrote Karl Heinrich Marx,  
but by 1844, nine years later, he had abandoned any Christian devotion he may have once felt.

It is so easy to be sidetracked...

But having said that, Paul wants to give the Christians encouragement. In God there is strength to overcome temptation. God is able to keep you.

+ Parent to child at the Royal Easter Show. "Keep close to me and you'll be OK. But the sideshows beckon and the little hand slips out of dad's and runs off. AND ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN."

Can you look back to a time in your Christian life  
when you were full of enthusiasm?  
when your heart ached for those who were lost?  
when you longed for God to be more and more real?  
When you eagerly shared for faith with others?

### **Keep your hand in the Father's. Walk with him.**

There are six things which keep our faith alive...

**Praying** regularly, especially for the Holy Spirit to fill you.

**Reading** the Scriptures

**Asking for forgiveness.**

**Meeting** regularly with Christians (to do both the above)

**Sharing** what you have received from God.

If you feel you are away from God today, then know that if you are willing to put your life in his hands, he can do more with you than you could ever expect.

+BI Over a hundred years ago, in a Scottish seaside inn, a group of fishermen were relaxing after a long day at sea. As a serving maid was walking past the fishermen's table with a pot of tea, one of the men made a sweeping gesture to describe the size of the fish he claimed to have caught. His hand collided with the teapot and sent it crashing against the whitewashed wall, where its contents left an irregular brown splotch.

Standing nearby, the innkeeper surveyed the damage. "That stain will never come out," he said in dismay. "The whole wall will have to be repainted." "Perhaps not." All eyes turned to the stranger who had just spoken. "What do you mean?" asked the innkeeper. "Let me work with the stain," said the stranger, standing up from his table in the corner. "If my work meets your approval, you won't need to repaint the wall."

The stranger picked up a box and went to the wall. Opening the box, he withdrew pencils, brushes, and some glass jars

of linseed oil and pigment. He began to sketch lines around the stain and fill it in here and there with dabs of color and swashes of shading. Soon a picture began to emerge. **The random splashes of tea had been turned into the image of a stag with a magnificent rack of antlers.** At the bottom of the picture, the man inscribed his signature. Then he paid for his meal and left.

The innkeeper was stunned when he examined the wall. "Do you know who that man was?" he said in amazement. "The signature reads 'E.H. Landseer!'" Indeed, they had been visited by the **well-known painter of wild life, Sir Edwin Landseer.**

God wants to take the stains and disappointments of our lives, even the backsliding and complacency, and not merely erase those things, but rather transform and develop them into a thing of beauty.

Have you put your hand in the Father's yet?  
Do you know that you are forgiven?  
Are you confident of reaching the homeland in heaven?

You CAN BE CONFIDENT  
- BUT YOUR CONFIDENCE CAN ONLY BE  
BY ONGOING FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

May we walk in that faith, filled with the power and enthusiasm of  
God's Spirit.