

March 23, 2025

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

DRAWN TO THE CROSS ...

“Food and Drink That Satisfies!”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The people of the past were “under the cloud” of God’s glorious presence and power. The Lord went before them “in a pillar of cloud” (Ex. 13:21) and, at one point, the cloud moved behind them to protect them (Ex. 14:19). In other places of Scripture, such as Psalm 105:39, it says that the Lord spread “a cloud for a covering,” and in the New Testament we are mindful of the fact that the two men in white robes told the men of Galilee that Jesus will return in a cloud. The Lord Jesus was with the people of the past and they were under his deliverance and protection as they left the sin and death of Egypt. He is still with us.

The people of the past witnessed the plagues and ate the Passover and saw with their own eyes the parting of the Red Sea. They crossed over and their enemies were stopped in their tracks, and the people of God were sustained by bread from heaven and water from the rock - spiritual food and drink that was the Christ who was to come. Amazing things to consider. And then, like a blast of cold air in an otherwise comfortable room, the apostle Paul then writes in our lesson: “Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” We are sustained in the gospel and sacraments.

What will we do with the cross and empty tomb? What will we do with having been baptized with the baptism of Jesus? What will we do with the food and drink we receive in the New Covenant of the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins? Shall it also be said of us in the New Testament that God was not pleased, and we were overthrown and lost? Tough questions. Again, like a blast of cold air in an otherwise comfortable room. All of this begs the question: Just what exactly did the Israelites do to displease God and cause them to be overthrown in the wilderness?

Well ... there were a lot of things that they did that were problematic. But, when one traces their steps, one begins to see a pattern of rebellion that grew into greater rebellion until they were finally handed over to their unfaithfulness. They disqualified themselves. Paul goes on to say: “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” That is some reassurance for those of us who may receive such words. God recorded these things for us to enter by the narrow gate who is Jesus. Once again, we are **Drawn to the Cross**. The way is hard that leads to eternal life, and those who find it are few. In the cross is pardon and the death of sinful desires which are always trying to overturn the pardon. Paul focuses on the problem with great precision:

Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

By faith, there is an eating and drinking of Jesus that leads to the resurrection unto eternal life! On the opposite side, there is an eating and drinking and rising up to play which is to embrace and indulge in wicked self-love, which is putting Christ to the test. In 1990, *Enigma* broke through with their song:

*Principles of Lust: Sadness/Find Love/Sadness.* It's a mix of Latin Gregorian chant (which was popular at that time), French, and English. I am not suggesting you go back and listen to it for several reasons. But the lyrics of the song captures the problem of the Israelites and the dangers we face as Christians. Here is a portion: "The principles of lust are easy to understand ... Do what you feel, feel until the end. The principles of lust, are burned in your mind ... Do what you want, do it until you find love." *Enigma* has captured Satan in these words and the thinking of the sinful flesh. If we eat and drink the principles of lust and rise up to play, we do find wicked self-love. We also find death because the satisfying of the sinful desires is the negation of the true love that is centered in the principles of relationship that God has established between us and him and our neighbor. Love is the fulfillment of the law and not lawlessness.

As Christians, who are simultaneously saints and sinners, we feel the battle raging within us. The sinful flesh would have us believe that satisfaction is found in doing whatever you desire regardless of God's Word. But the new creation knows that desires which are contrary to God's Word are not true love but the negation of everything that love is. We know that love is found in Jesus who lived a clean life to cleanse us from sin. We know that real love is found at the cross where our Savior took to himself our sins and their consequences to release us from death and hell. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus is the full extent of God's love for us because it cares for us in such a way that we may live forever in true paradise.

The dominion of sinful desires is not paradise as Satan would have us believe. Sinful desires and satisfying them is not true love, for the sinful desires seek satisfaction at the expense of God and others. Sinful desires rise and play in wicked self-love with no consideration of the difference between right and wrong and the true forever needs of others. These things have been written so that we might consider the truth and run away from lies. "The end of the ages has come," Paul writes. That should put shivers up and down our spines. It means that eating and drinking the principles of lust and rising up and playing are going to come to their end in hell. Since the eager eating and drinking of sin are not who God is and his will for us as his creation, those who love and embrace sin cannot abide with him. We, as forgiven sinners who are still struggling with sin, are not to love and embrace the rebellion for which Jesus died.

Eating and drinking the principles of lust is death. Allowing sin to be in control of our lives is not an option for those who have been given the real food and drink of Jesus. He is love. He has done everything in his power to love us into true love through his powerful pardon and the hope of heaven. Paul goes on to write: "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Paul is not saying in these verses that the way to heaven is by being a good person. Rather, he is warning us of the real possibility of falling away from the love of God as the Israelites did long ago. We are all faced with temptation. There isn't any temptation that you have that is not common to your brothers and sisters who are here in this sanctuary this morning. They may be hidden. Pet sins may be different from one another. But there is one thing for certain - no one escapes being tempted by their sinful flesh, the world, and the devil.

Alexander Pope once wrote: “Vice is a monster of such frightful mien//As to be hated needs to be seen;//Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,//We first endure, then pity, then embrace.” We are living in a time when Satan is making a last and desperate attempt to turn us away from the true faith that saves. What folly and conceit it is if a Christian would rely on his own strength to stand. But Paul concludes our text with precious words of encouragement. Again, he writes: “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” Our victory lies with God.

First, God will not let us be tempted beyond our ability. It may feel that way from time to time. But, in every temptation, we are moved in our weaknesses to cry in prayer, asking that God would not allow us to become weary and faithless and to fall again into sin, shame, and unbelief. Moreover, in the gospel of the forgiveness of sins and the hope that it brings of heaven, God gives us power and strength to say “no” to sin and “yes” to everything that is forever ours in Jesus. Saying it in this way is not meant to make it all sound easy, for it is never easy to die to one’s own sinful desires. But, as the *Large Catechism* reminds us,

To feel temptation is, therefore, a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it. We must all feel it, although not all in the same way ... Therefore, we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be constantly attacked ... So, there is no help or comfort except to run [to prayer] ... If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space.

Prayer can prevent temptation from blossoming into doing sin. It can drive Satan back. It can extinguish the sinful desires of the flesh. Meditating on all things that are about Jesus, putting to death our sinful desires and rising in the cleansing pardon given in baptism, and receiving the food and drink of the Lord’s Supper is all the food and drink we really need to escape and endure. Jesus is grace that lifts us from these earthly things to heavenly things. He is the **Food and Drink That Satisfies!**

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott