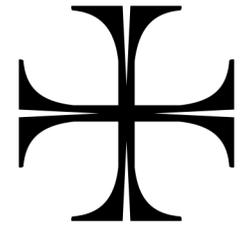


# KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



## 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

*Set Your Heart on Things that Matter*

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Whether you are young or old or somewhere in the middle, I think we would all agree that when we hear the Bible stories like the crossing of the Red Sea or the water coming out of a rock, we all think, “That would have been nice to see.” Who wouldn’t want to walk through the Red Sea with water on each side? It would be easier to believe in God if we saw that. Or what about seeing the plagues? Some would have been annoying to experience, but to see the display of God’s power would have been impressive.

Our text was written in the New Testament. A few thousand years had passed since the miracles during the Exodus, but the Jews still looked back to those events as important. They were right about that.

In our text, Paul focuses on a troubling truth about that time. The people who saw those miracles — who got what we think we want; they walked through the Red Sea — displeased God. They saw God at work; and then they rejected what they saw and didn’t believe. They grumbled; they disobeyed. In spite of what they saw and experienced, they didn’t trust God.

In the second paragraph of our text Paul wrote: **Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.** These stories teach us a sad, hard and important truth. Seeing the miracles didn’t protect those people from unbelief. Sin still tempted them and lured them away from the God they had seen act to save them.

The danger is just as real for us today. Sin is not any less powerful or any less common in our day. And so we must look at the warning so that we aren’t lured away from God into the darkness of sin.

The first time God gave the Ten Commandments, the Children of Israel stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and God spoke the Commandments. They heard God’s voice! Shortly after that, Moses went up the mountain to receive the other laws and the tablets of stone. The voice of God was still in their minds and do you know what they did? They built a golden calf to worship as an idol. Paul writes in our text, **“Do not be idolaters, as some of them were,”** warning us not to fall into the same temptation.

The idols of our day are much more subtle. We wouldn’t bow to a golden statue. That would be silly. But our priorities get just as mixed up as the people who forgot about God and worshiped a golden calf.

It is what happens when we push God aside for so we can have time to do what we want to do. That is idolatry! Money can quickly become an idol. So can free time or even a job.

Our text makes a clear point: If you don’t think that idolatry is a serious sin, look at what happened to the Children of Israel. The people God led out of Egypt all died before they entered the Promised Land. God was very unhappy with their sins!

The next sin on the list of Old Testament sins is sexual immorality. This sin is even easier to connect to our day. Living together before marriage is considered the norm. That is sexual immorality. Our TVs and movies can quickly become a sewage line of sin into our own homes. Immoral lifestyles and behaviors are portrayed as innocent and acceptable. Don’t think that that doesn’t wear a Christian down.

If you don’t think God is serious about sexual immorality, Paul points out that because of it 23,000 Israelites died in one day! Imagine that! A small town disappeared one day because of sexual immorality.

The list of sins goes on. **“Do not test the Lord.”** The result listed in our text is the story of the snakes coming into the Israelite camp. The unhappy Israelites didn’t like God’s plan. He responded by sending poisonous snakes into their camp. People died because they didn’t like God’s plan and wanted him to do something different.

The final sin is closely connected, grumbling. Numerous times the people grumbled about God’s ways and Moses’ leadership. They went so far as to suggest that their slavery in Egypt was a better option. This grumbling didn’t go unnoticed.

At times, we are no better or different. God often allows hardships into our lives. And we complain as if he’s unfair. After all, we envision ourselves as models of virtue who deserve nothing but good from

God. To do this, we ignore the lies we've told, the ungodly anger we've displayed, and the selfishness that has guided us. And then we imagine that we know more and better than God — and grumble that he's unfair and unkind to us. It happens, doesn't it? Maybe not openly, but in the hidden places of our hearts.

Jump ahead in history to our Gospel Lesson and you'll find another warning. The people were more interested in bread than in the spiritual treasures that Jesus had to offer them. We'll be reading from John 6 for a few more weeks. At the end of the account we will hear that **"many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."** Jesus didn't give them what they wanted and so they stopped following him.

That temptation is not far from any of us. Trials and hardships can lead us to turn away from God and blame him.

Paul makes the point that we dare not think we are better than the Israelites or immune to those temptations: **"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"**

This text is a challenging one for us to think about. The warning is strong. But make no mistake, there is plenty of hope in these words. **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.** God is not in the business of tripping you up. He does not want to see you fail. He just wants you to recognize the reality of the sinful world in which you live.

Your failures have been removed! The way out of sin is through the cross of Jesus. His death on the cross was the punishment for your sins. The payment was so perfect that even death is crushed — Jesus' resurrection foreshadowing the triumph of believers over their graves.

Jesus' death and resurrection are the reason that **God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.** His death and resurrection provides the **way out** that our text promises. Jesus died for you. Through the water of baptism and your faith in Jesus, God has made a personal claim on your for eternity. That is what guides his faithfulness.

But the way out that God provides more than just "hang in there" or "try harder this time." God has changed you through faith in Christ. You have a new heart because of Jesus. This is the reason for the internal struggle that you feel. But that struggle is a good sign. It shows that God has worked in your heart. Now you need to strengthen you new self — the Christian part — to battle against the many temptations you face.

The strength you need isn't to see miracles like the Old Testament believers did. Our text makes that point clearly. What they saw and experienced was not a safeguard against sin. What we need is what God has given us. We need his Word; we need to remember our baptisms; we need his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. These pour the grace of God into our hearts and assure us of God's love for us — in spite of our sins. In the Word and Sacraments we also find the strength to recommit ourselves to the struggle against sin.

Heed the warning of this text and don't **"set your heart on evil things as they did."** and cling to the promise. God will not leave you. His love for you will never leave you. With his strength, fight the evil and let his Word guide you to do what is good. Amen.

Pentecost 11  
August 9, 2015

