

Our previous passage was in a sermon three weeks ago, so to continue the thought we need to remember that the beginning of this chapter was a warning to not fall for the same temptations that Israel succumbed to in the wilderness. They saw the miraculous plagues, and parting of the sea, and the provision of God, but that didn't keep them from turning back to idols. Experiencing those miracles was not enough to have them trust God instead of complaining. God's judgments fell on them. The more we know and witness, the more accountable we are (Luke 12:48ⁱ). This was all summed up in the verse preceding our passage for today, "*Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*" We need to always be looking to God with trust and faith (Hebrews 11:6ⁱⁱ).

¹³ 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. 1 Corinthians 10:13

When those tests of faith come, and they will come, we can know that verse 13 is true. Every test we face is one many others have faced. We are not in some special temptation that can't be resisted. God knows our limits. He is not going to allow us to be tempted beyond our level of maturity. We can never say a failure on our part was due to what God allowed. God faithfully helps us and gives us an escape if we don't yield to murmuring and despair. Look for that door that God has provided. We will all be discouraged and be taken to the end of ourselves at times in life. God is there with His hand held out to save us (Isaiah 50:2ⁱⁱⁱ; 1 Corinthians 1:9^{iv}).

I admit that I have sometimes wondered if something was too much, but in the end, He saw me through. I memorized this verse to remind myself of the promise, and I encourage you to do the same. I have seen others who were going through what I thought was unbearable. But I don't know the grace God has given them. We stand on the Word of God and not our own reasoning (Proverbs 3:5^v). Paul thought that his affliction, what I believe was his eye disease, was unbearable, but God said His grace would be sufficient for him. God's strength was perfected in Paul's weakness. It humbled Paul and kept him from becoming proud of all God was doing through him (2 Corinthians 12:9^{vi}).

Looking back at the theme that runs through this passage we can see a flow of Paul's thoughts. Jesus was right there with the Israelites, their source of water, their daily manna, dealing with their sin, providing a way out of every difficulty and trial, and even drawing them out of their own stubborn hearts. Yet they refused to enter the Promised Land. Twice Paul tells us to learn from their bad example (verses 6^{vii}, 11^{viii}). Their lives were a warning to us not to think we have arrived before we cross over Jordan, which is symbolic of our death and entrance to heaven. In every situation, God provides a way to bear with and through the trial, but we must endure and walk in the Spirit. We must resist our old nature and the enemy of our souls. And when we submit ourselves to God and draw near to Him, the devil *will* flee (James 4:7,8^{ix}).

It seems the Israelite older generation just would not learn from the many lessons. Let us not be like them, but instead learn from all God takes us through, and from His provision and His discipline. He is faithful to His Word (Titus 1:2^x). He will provide a way of escape to that we can endure it.

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:14 Remember Israel's sin and the consequences and learn the lessons. Idolatry destroys us. It keeps us

from reaching the Promised Land. It causes us to doubt God's Word. It will have us die in the desert. Run from it! Whether it is a thing you want to own, experience, or become, if it comes before God, you should see it as a poison, a poison custom made for you by the enemy of your soul designed specifically for the weaknesses in your old nature. **If your love for something other than Jesus defines who you are, that probably means you have not been converted.** Christians are defined by their love for God and others, which is obedience to the Great Command (Mark 12:30,31^{xi}).

The primary love or source of satisfaction for unbelievers changes over time and often becomes a mixture of a number of different things that they believe will meet their deepest needs. In that sense they are pantheists. Many atheists are really pantheists. Believers, however, can enjoy the good things of God without being enslaved by them (1 Timothy 6:17^{xii}). While we enjoy God's good gifts in moderation, we don't give ourselves to those things. We don't live for them. We live for God and have given ourselves to Him alone.

¹⁵ I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:15,16 Communion is participation in the new covenant sealed with Jesus' blood (1 Corinthians 11:25^{xiii}). That does not mean that the elements are transformed into His blood and body, but that in a symbolic act we declare He shed His blood and allowed His body to be broken for our salvation. We take Him as our life (John 6:53^{xiv}).

Paul is not changing topics. He is declaring that if we participate in communion, we are declaring our primary love, our highest priority in life. Our allegiance is to Jesus above all else, and that will exclude any competition for our hearts. If by taking communion I declare Jesus' body was broken and His blood was shed for me, and that I am a recipient of the forgiveness that is mine through His atoning death, how can I then give my allegiance to something else? This passage is showing us the seriousness of communion and why participation in it should keep us from idolatry.

Paul explained the weightiness of this in Romans 5. Romans 5:6-11 (ESV) *⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Someone might choose to die to save the life of someone else. That is admirable. It is the greatest display of love (John 15:13^{xv}). If it was for you, you would feel indebted to be the best person you could be to honor that life given for you. But Jesus did much more than that. You see, another person would die for your temporary physical life. They would do it because they thought you were worth dying for, a really good person. But Jesus is our Maker. He took on human life to reconcile us to Himself while we were living in rebellion toward Him. (See Romans 5:8 above.) He was saving not just our physical life in this world, but our eternal souls. And to do that He had to suffer the consequences our rebellion deserved (1 Peter 3:18^{xvi}). You may have heard it being like a

judge volunteering to serve the life sentence that he condemned you to. But a human judge didn't create you. Our rebellion was against our Creator and His generous goodness. The redemption by our Creator was much greater than a human judge's willingness to serve our sentence.

When we take communion, we are declaring that our merciful Creator loved us so much that He took the judgment we deserved. We eat the striped and pierced bread to remind us of His body pierced and torn for us. We drink the juice to remind us His blood was shed for our rebellion against Him (Leviticus 17:11^{xvii}). We, wretched, hopeless sinners, place all our filthiness on the spotless lamb of God who out of love came into this world to redeem our sin sick souls (John 1:29^{xviii}). How then could we love something He created more than Him? How selfish would we be to ignore that great a love and give our hearts to created things, turning them into idols!

17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:17 In the symbolism of the bread and wine we are all declaring our participation in the price Jesus paid to set us free from the enslaving power of sin. That is our uniting factor. That is the most basic Christian belief. All of us who hold that truth are no longer of this world (John 15:19^{xix}). We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are the family of God (Ephesians 2:19^{xx}). We may understand some Scriptures in a different way, or disagree about certain doctrines, but our faith in the atonement of Jesus makes us one family (Galatians 6:10^{xxi}). That is why the authors of the Bible refer to believers as brothers and sisters.

I have tried to emphasize this here at Wayside because I see such a lack of it in the American church. There are other churches that experience this relationship where you see the love for one another. Remember, Jesus said the world will know we are Christians by our love (John 13:35^{xxii}). When people move away from Sedona and ask me what to look for in a new church, I tell them to look for Biblical teaching and love. If either is missing something is wrong. In my youth I was in a cult that had brotherly love, but the teaching was not Biblical. Or you can have Bible teaching without love. It can be all mental.

I remember emphasizing this familial love and oneness in a series of sermons and being accused of trying to start a cult. We Americans are so independent that we tend to downplay this basic Biblical teaching that we are one in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12^{xxiii}; Romans 12:5^{xxiv}). We are the family of God. The Jews were the children of Israel. Paul teaches that we are children of Abraham by faith (Galatians 3:29^{xxv}). That implies that we should be involved in one another's lives and help when help is needed. We should forgive offenses. And as Paul said in Philippians 2:3^{xxvi}, we should count others more significant than ourselves. If we live this way, we experience a foretaste of heaven.

18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? 1 Corinthians 10:18 This unity was foreshadowed by children of Israel and their sacrifices at the altar. They shared the same faith, with the same hope and the same promises. Just as they all ate the sacrifices from the one altar (Leviticus 7:15^{xxvii}; Hebrews 13:10^{xxviii}) so we all partake of Jesus from the altar of the cross. We share the same faith in His atoning blood. We have the same hope of heaven and His work in us being completed (1 John 3:2^{xxix}). We cling to the promises of God throughout the Scriptures.

19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I

do not want you to be participants with demons. 1 Corinthians 10:19,20 Here is what Paul is getting at. Christians sometimes obtained meat from the pagan altars. They are free to do so as the food won't defile them, and the idol is just stone. But the picture presented is that those who do so are partaking along with those who worship demons that the idols represent. In doing so it appears to others that they are one with them in demon worship! Whether the idol was a fertility goddess or the healing god Aesculapius, they are demons who try to take credit for the gifts of God.

This is why the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:29^{xxx} gave the believers the four requests, each of which had to do with idolatry and what went on in pagan temples. Their instruction was to not eat food offered to idols, or with the blood of the animal (because pagans did not drain the blood as the Jews did), or what has been strangled (another pagan way of killing an animal for sacrifice), or from sexual immorality which often followed the sacrificial feast in pagan temples. I once thought it strange that they would ask them to keep a couple of Jewish laws such as not eating animals that were strangled or had the blood in them until I realized that would be animals sacrificed in pagan temples. But Paul is adding to that if purchase meat in the market and you don't know if it was from a pagan temple, don't ask. Some see this as Paul contradicting the Jerusalem council. I see it as Paul clarifying that the Jerusalem meant not to obtain the meat at a pagan temple.

We don't have many pagan temples where this kind of thing occurs, and we have plenty of butchers for meat. But the concept is just as true, and the temptation is as seductive today. We have invitations to worship at other altars and all promise us satisfaction, but none tell us the inevitable price we will end up paying (Romans 6:23^{xxxi}). They are altars of money, lust, sports, fame, entertainment, and a million more. When unbelievers see us worship those things with them, we have misrepresented Christ.

²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²² Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 1Corinthians 10:21,22 Communion or idol worship - you can't do both. This is probably one of the New Testament's clearest prohibitions against syncretism, which is mixing faith in Jesus with faith in something else. Let your testimony be without question. Don't give the wrong impression to others, especially in something involving a worship ritual which is so symbolic (2 Corinthians 6:16^{xxxii}). I was challenged with this at my father-in-law's Shinto funeral. I could not lite the incense and that could have been offensive, but it told the family I would not compromise my faith. You don't want to provoke the Lord to jealousy. You won't win that confrontation! Look to Jesus and live. We see Him giving Himself to us in communion. He is our escape from the constant temptations of idolatry. Keep your eyes on Him!

In Hindu and Buddhist cultures it is a temptation to avoid persecution by just adding Jesus to your other gods, but Jesus is not one of many gods. We have the same temptation. If He is just one of many ascended masters, and not THE way and THE truth and THE life, then people won't be offended (John 14:6^{xxxiii}). But Jesus will not accept our denial of His supreme authority (Mark 8:38^{xxxiv}; Philippians 2:10,11^{xxxv}). God's jealousy for our worship is not like man's jealousy. Man is jealous because he wants something all for himself and does not want to share it. God's jealousy is because He has so graciously given Himself for our good and yet sees us seeking to give ourselves to

something that is destructive to our souls. God is jealous for His glory which is also for our good (Exodus 34:14^{xxxvi}). Man is jealous for his own good.

Paul's exhortation in this passage is reminding us that we can be just like the Israelites in the wilderness, never satisfied with all the goodness and grace God is showering on us. We, of all people, who have such abundance need to take this lesson to heart. God hasn't just given us manna from heaven and quail, but 50 varieties of bread to choose from, meat and fish in so many varieties, running water in our homes, and enjoyable things the children of Israel couldn't have dreamed of. Our old nature is no different from theirs, that is why we can so easily get caught up in complaining or seeking satisfaction in some idolatrous thing (Romans 5:12^{xxxvii}). Most advertisements are telling us to worship something, and then we will be happy. We face it continually.

The Bible calls idolatry adultery (Colossians 3:5^{xxxviii}). That is because in Christ we become the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32^{xxxix}; 2 Corinthians 11:2^{xl}), and idolatry says we have another lover. It is unfaithfulness to the One who is always faithful to us (2 Timothy 2:13^{xli}).

We can either thank God for all the goodness and abundance He gives us and worship Him for His grace and mercy on our souls, or we can let those good things He created become our idols. **One test to determine if we are slipping into idolatry is to ask ourselves what we think about most of the day.** When we are working, it is necessary to have our minds on our occupation, but when we are not working, where does our mind wander? Is it to His Word? Is it singing a song of praise? Is it to fellowship or communing with God? Or is something else dominating our thoughts, something that promises satisfaction outside of God (Psalm 73:25^{xlii})?

If we can say the former, we are warned to take heed lest we fall. Thank God for His grace. Persevere! But if it is the later, talk to God about it. Repent, which means to make a commitment to go the other way by the grace of God. Paul has told us in this passage to run from it. Share with someone you can confide in. Make a plan to change that by scheduling your time with things that will help you draw closer to God. The only way to flee from idolatry is to draw near to God in worship.

Let me give you one more uncommon suggestion. Sit down with Jesus and celebrate communion as often as needed until your habits become godly. You don't have to have a pastor bless it. Take a cracker and a little grape juice or wine and think about what Jesus has done for you. Visualize it. Recognize the greatness of that love, for love produces love in the one who is loved (1 John 4:19^{xliii}), and love of God results in worshiping Him alone.

Questions:

- 1 What is the warning in verses 1-12?
- 2 What is the promise in verse 13?
- 3 How do atheists become pantheists?
- 4 Why is communion such a sacred event?
- 5 What makes us family? 6 What is our altar?
- 7 Why did Paul discourage eating with pagans in their temples?
- 8 What did the Jerusalem council ask of Gentile believers? Why?
- 9 Why is syncretism forbidden to Christians?
- 10 How can we test ourselves to see if we are becoming idolatrous?

ⁱ **Luke 12:48 (ESV)**

⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

ⁱⁱ **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Isaiah 50:2 (ESV)**

² Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst.

^{iv} **1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)**

⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

^v **Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

^{vi} **2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)**

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

^{vii} **1 Corinthians 10:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

^{viii} **1 Corinthians 10:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ 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.

^{ix} **James 4:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

^x **Titus 1:2 (ESV)**

² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

^{xi} **Mark 12:30-31 (ESV)**

³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

^{xii} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xiii} **1 Corinthians 11:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

^{xiv} **John 6:53 (ESV)**

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

^{xv} **John 15:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

^{xvi} **1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

^{xvii} **Leviticus 17:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

^{xviii} **John 1:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

^{xix} **John 15:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

^{xx} **Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

^{xxi} **Galatians 6:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

^{xxii} **John 13:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

^{xxiii} **1 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)**

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

^{xxiv} **Romans 12:5 (ESV)**

⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

^{xxv} **Galatians 3:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

^{xxvi} **Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

^{xxvii} **Leviticus 7:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning.

^{xxviii} **Hebrews 13:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

^{xxix} **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

^{xxx} **Acts 15:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

^{xxxi} **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{xxxii} **2 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

^{xxxiii} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xxxiv} **Mark 8:38 (ESV)**

³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

^{xxxv} **Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)**

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

^{xxxvi} **Exodus 34:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

^{xxxvii} **Romans 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

^{xxxviii} **Colossians 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

^{xxxix} **Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

^{xl} **2 Corinthians 11:2 (ESV)**

² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

^{xli} **2 Timothy 2:13 (ESV)**

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

^{xlii} **Psalms 73:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

^{xliii} **1 John 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.