

There are several things that need to be said concerning this passage. The apostle uses the word “example.” This is the word from which we get “type,” which means a pattern. For instance, in Romans 5, Adam is said to be a “type” or a pattern of Christ. As Reformed Christians we tend to be very modest and temperate in the use of types. That there are types is without question, that the Bible is not to be interpreted by an unrestrained imagination is also without question. The bible does hook our imaginations in such passages as Psalm 23, where the Lord is called “My shepherd,” and where Jesus calls Himself the “Good shepherd,” but this does not mean that we are to take wild flights of imagination.

The word is used twice in I Cor. 10, in verse 6 and verse 11. That the manna and the rock are types of Christ is without question, and Christ refers to Himself and the water of life, and the bread of life. These figures are very rich indeed. But because of the very nature of imagination, whatever we may think we learn from the figures must be subjected to the rule of consistency with the rest of Scripture and the rule of faith. It also must be subjected to the rule of language. What ever Jesus meant when He said He was the Good Shepherd is tied to the words “good” and “shepherd.” Conceivable, it could not mean that He is a skillful soccer player.

This word is also used in Hebrews 8:5, when the things that Moses prepared for the tabernacle in the wilderness are said to be made after the “patterns” of things in heaven. This is the reason such strict injunctions were given to Moses to be very careful how they prepared the things, because they were types of heavenly things—that is of spiritual things—are Moses was to be very careful he did not distort the meaning. For the same reason, we must be very sober in our interpretation of these figures that we do not go beyond that which is intended by Scripture. The figure must be permitted to say what it says, but it must not be stretched beyond what God actually said.

The word is also used in I Peter 5:3, and I Thess. 1:7 where ministers are called to be examples to the flock. Ministers are called to pattern Christian obedience to the people of God. Again, we must not push the figure beyond the rest of Scripture, as if Christ were not the only express image of God.

It is important for us to realize the nature of the figures. The things referred to in I Cor. 10 are things in the history of Israel that are figures of the things of Christ. It is not the other way around. I have often said that Christ did not come to lead us to Moses; but that Moses came to lead us to Christ. Once you have found the treasure that the pirates buried, it might be curious to look over the topography in order to understand the map better, but why? The map has filled its purpose when the treasure is found. So the Scriptures are to be our lifelong study—not simply that we know what they say, for the Jews did this—but that we know who Christ is and love and follow Him. In heaven, when our knowledge of Christ is complete, we will have no further need of the Scriptures.

But let us go to the passage before us.

I. Verse 18: Israel after the flesh: they are partakers of the altar, by eating of the sacrifices. In this verse we find out where Paul was going in the references above. He established the relevance of the Old Testament worship in order to make some applications to our worship in Christ. Calvin says:

That such is the nature of all sacred observances, that they bind us in a kind of fellowship with God. For the law of Moses admits no one to a feast upon a sacrifice, but the man who has duly prepared himself. I speak not of priests merely, but of those among the common people who eat of the remains of the sacrifice. Hence it follows, that all who eat of the flesh

of the sacrificed victim, are partakers with the altar, that is, of the sanctification, with which God has set apart his Temple, and the sacred rites that are performed in it.

It is instructive to read the nature of Old Testament worship, because we can learn from it. Over and over again, Israel is called to holiness because God is holy and the temple is holy. The holiness of the temple was to direct the life and the doctrine of the people of Israel.

He says “Israel after the flesh...” The holiness of the temple was certainly the holiness of Christ, for Christ shines in all the ordinances and figures of the Old Testament, as Paul so clearly tells us here. Because of this, every injunction and every commandment of the Old Testament is to be seriously considered by us. Hence, the Rock was not to be struck twice, for Christ is not to be offered in sacrifice again. Being struck once, there is sufficient water for all the people of God.

The sanctification required in the Old Testament is not the same kind as that of the New Testament, for in the Old there was much more emphasis on ceremonies, as we read in Hebrews 9:8-10: The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

The Jews never understood that the ceremony was not the thing itself, but a figure of the thing.

II. Participation in the ceremony, does indicate, however, a real participation in the reality.

- A. It was true of Israel. They that ate of the altar truly participated in the holiness of the temple, and thus by faith in Christ. It was not an empty ceremony if they believed.**
- B. It is also true of idol worship. Those who inwardly participate, do really participate in the worship of devils—they are not empty ceremonies and Christians are to have nothing to do with them. Vs. 19-22**
 - a. Idolaters sacrifice to devils—to spiritual beings—evil spiritual beings. We are not to have fellowship with devils.**
 - b. The idol is nothing: but the ceremony is something. Calvin again says:**

He answers, that he does not look to the idols themselves; but rather has in view the intention of those who sacrifice to idols. For that was the source of the pollution that he had indirectly pointed out. He confesses, therefore, that an idol is nothing.

- c. It is what is in the heart: An idol or a wicked ceremony cannot corrupt me if I have no intention to worship the idol. I cannot be polluted because of the ceremony if my heart has no participation in the idolatry. That much is certainly true.**
- d. But, there are two caveats:**
 - i. I am weak and prone to all manner sin. He that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. You better not attend such places because of a healthy fear of the power of sin that yet remains in you. You are prone by nature to hate both God and your neighbor, as our catechism puts it. Therefore you should flee idolatry.**
 - ii. Other people only know what is in my heart because of the things that I do. It would be a terrible thing if I attended such ceremonies and caused other to think that I am agreeing with the evil doctrines.**

- e. **As an abstraction: an idol is nothing. But idolatry never exists in abstraction: the devil is in the details. And the two important details are these: the weakness of my flesh, so I must walk in the fear of God; and the communication of our faith to others; that idolatry is wicked and evil before the Lord.**

III Participation in the Lord’s Supper is a real participation or communion in Christ. You either believe or you do not. If you do not, then you are guilty of hypocrisy and deceit, and wrath will come upon you because you do not believe. If you come in faith, then you are called to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. It is a very serious thing for you to come to the Lord’s supper.

- A. **Christ is the bread of life, and to eat of the Lord’s Supper in faith is to commune in His body and His blood.**
- B. **The church has an obligation that the people of God understand the meaning of the Lord’s supper.**
 - a. **That the message of the supper be not distorted and confused.**
 - i. **Christ is not divided. Shall you despise His ordinances and His government of the church. Have you been baptized? Have you subjected yourself to the rule of the church, in its elders and form of government?**
 - ii. **Christ’s church is to live decently and in order—are you a rebel against that order? Are you of that one bread? We have such an obligation.**
 - iii. **Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. It is the message of the Lord’s Supper that counts. Is Christ a partaker of iniquity and idolatry? Is He a minister of unrighteousness. We are not to become busybodies and meddlers in the lives of people, but people whose lives bring a wrong message to the world. The message is this: we are a people whose sins are forgiven and who are new in Christ. We love Jesus Christ and abhor our sins, but find mercy and grace in Jesus Christ, and in Christ have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit. Many things of the Holy Spirit will be considered in the next chapters, and its examination will be very fruitful. Do not miss these messages.**
 - iv. **Attendance: If the meaning of the supper is in the message of the supper, then it is necessary that the people of God be faithful in the hearing of the preaching of the word of God. Faithful ministers do not preach because they like to flap their gums—there is a burden that rests upon them to speak the truth that is in Jesus Christ.**
 - b. **That the people of God are not corrupting the supper by also participating in idolatry.**
 - c. **That the people of God understand their responsibility to each other in the body of Christ.**
- C. **What? Are you stronger than God. Will you use subterfuges to turn evil into good, and good into evil.**