

Let the Reader Understand: Interpretation That Sanctifies

1 Corinthians 9:24–10:14 | 10.09.2016 | Body Life @OBC

Shortly after graduating from college, I was working as a church janitor and deeply desirous of paying my college debt.

I lived less than a mile from the church where I worked and I began thinking, I wonder if I should sell my car.

I reasoned: “I don’t really need it . . . I could save on insurance, gas, upkeep . . . and I could make a few thousand dollars from the sale.”

So I prayed . . . Lord, give me wisdom. Help me know if I should sell.

That morning I turned to my Bible reading and I opened to Proverbs 19 . . .

Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity
than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.

Well . . . there it is: God’s authoritative word to sell the car. Right?

Maybe not . . . even then I knew that verse could not support selling the car.

It wasn’t a passage describing personal possessions, but a call to walk in integrity.

But how easily . . . it would have been to misread that passage.

And I wonder . . . how often God’s children do that . . . because they misread Scripture.

Ask: How important is biblical interpretation?

Well, consider how many evils have been done in the name of Jesus.

I'm not talking about decisions to buy or sell cars . . .
. . . although I know Scripture has been misused that way.

I'm talking about . . . the ways Scripture has been abused . . .

To champion vicious crusades; to defend slavery
To persecute the Jews; and to prop up wicked rulers.
Or now . . . To support same sex marriage

As a friend once said . . . if you torture it enough, you can make the Bible say anything.

Countless are the times I have talked to someone who chooses to remain in sin or cannot find victory over sin . . . b/c they have a false view of God and his Word.

In fact, I don't think is not too much to say the human race fell under God's wrath because Adam accepted Satan's interpretation of God's Word . . .

“Did God really say, ‘you shall not eat . . .’” questioned God's good word.

“You surely won't die . . .” denied his life-protecting truth.

In their place, Satan gave another interpretation . . . that God was preventing Adam from being like God himself.

Satan took God's Good word and twisted it to destroy the human race.

After the fall . . . and apart from Christ

We use words like the bricks of Babel . . . to make a name for ourselves.
Instead of using words to know God... we use them like fig leaves to hide from him

This was part of the problem in Corinth . . . they misused their great knowledge.

Instead of growing in love . . . using their knowledge to serve others . . . they used spiritual truth to pursue idols and personal gain.

In response, Paul combats false words with truth . . . but instead of using his own words . . . he turns to the Old Testament to do his heavy lifting.

In the first 13 vv of ch. 10, Paul makes at least 10 references to events in Israel.

While only quoting one verse from the OT, Paul weaves a tapestry of events from Exodus and Numbers to show God's judgment upon his chosen people –

He does this to show the Corinthians that unless they change, they too may face a similar judgment.

In the flow of 1 Corinthians, Paul's Scriptural argument builds on his final point in ch. 9 –

Ch 9 ends – “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Ch. 10 begins w/ the word “for” (*gar*), indicating a natural bridge between ch. 9-10

Paul has not started a new section, or a new idea. Rather, he is continuing to address the concern of **Christian liberty** that is leading to **practical idolatry**.

In chapter 9 he appealed to his own example, now in chapter 10 he looks to God's dealings with Israel to instruct the church.

Which brings us back to the question: **How important is biblical interpretation?**

AND . . . How do we interpret the OT and apply it to the life of the Church?

. . . It is my conviction that in order to feel the power of Paul's words, we must get a handle on the Old Testament Paul is citing.

. . . Only when we see how he is reading Scripture, can we feel the weight of his argument.

. . . an argument meant empower us to flee idolatry and pursue God's way of escape when temptation comes.

So . . . we have two questions to answer

1. How does Paul read Scripture?

2. What does Paul do with Scripture?

How does Paul read Scripture?

To answer that question, we need to learn three words

They are CONTINUITY . . . DISCONTINUITY . . . TYPOLOGY.

CONTINUITY is the concept that sees a spiritual unity between Israel and the church.

DISCONTINUITY, by contrast, sees differences—large or small—between I & C

Historically,

Different schools of thought and different theologians have emphasized CONTINUITY or DISCONTINUITY . . . to the exclusion of the other.

But as we will see today . . . there is both continuity and discontinuity between I & C

And we need to see both to understand the Scripture and how it applies to our lives.

Three Marks of Continuity

1. Paul speaks of “our fathers” in verse 1.

Comprised of Jews & Gentiles, it is a shocking Paul would identify the patriarchs as the church’s fathers. Yet, this reveals how he thinks of the church.

To him, the church is not a community of faith disconnected from the saints of old. Rather, the church is the natural extension of God’s covenant people.

In Christ, a faithful remnant of **Jews** has been saved. Like the OT promised, the nations have found a blessing thru the son of David and the children of Abraham.

Therefore, Paul identifies the fathers of Israel as the fathers of the church. So at the front of his argument, he connects the church to the long history of Israel.

2. Paul connects Israel’s experience in the wilderness with the church’s two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Look at verses 3–4: Paul goes out of his way to speak of Israel’s experience in terms that the Corinthians could appreciate.

The fathers went “under the cloud” and “passed through the sea,” just like the Corinthians were baptized when they identified themselves with Christ.

He also speaks of “spiritual food” and “spiritual drink.” Just as the Corinthians ate the Lord’s Supper, a spiritual meal with Jesus, so the Israelites had received food and drink from the Lord.

3. Paul relates Israel and the church by way of typology.

We’ll talk more about typology in a minute, but for now look at verses 6 and 11.

In these two verses, Paul says Israel’s experiences were “examples for us.” Or, at least that’s how most EVV translate it. It would be better to translate it “**types of us.**”

The word underneath “example” is *typoi*, or types. This word means more than merely an example. It is technical term for an historical person, event, or institution that God ordained to prefigure or foreshadow Christ and his church.

In other words, because God created historical types in Israel to prepare the way for his Son . . . there is a natural connection (= supernatural connection) that unites Israel to the church . . . as both are linked to . . . even created by God the Son.

In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that the rock that watered Israel was **Christ** (v.4)

So . . . in all these ways, we see continuity between I & C . . . but there’s also discontinuity.

Three Marks of Discontinuity

1. Israel is the type; the church is the fulfillment.

I.e., Israel and the church are not one and the same. **Verse 6** makes that clear. Israel fell in the wilderness as a **type** for the church to learn from.

The change in pronouns indicates discontinuity, but so does the orientation of type and fulfillment. Israel looked forward to the coming of Christ; the church looks back.

Likewise, **verse 11** speaks of the multi-national church of Corinth as the people on whom the end of the ages has come.

All that the OT promised in the New Covenant – forgiveness of sins, direct access to God, and the power and presence of the HS – were now given the church.

2. The church has the spiritual ability to flee from idolatry that Israel did not have.

The New Covenant promised that the Spirit would be poured out; and God would cause his people to walk in holiness – Ezekiel 36:26–27

Pentecost recorded this outpouring and the rest of Acts records the power of the Spirit drawing the nations to faith. In this, the church as God's eschatological people enjoy a spiritual power that the nation of Israel never did.

To be sure, Paul speaks of the Israelites eating and drinking *spiritual* food and drink (1 Corinthians 10:3–4), but this speaks of its origin, not its power. If anything, Paul is correcting the notion that the Lord's Supper has some magical power.

For the church in Corinth, the good news is that they have been made alive by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11) and thus are not destined to die in the wilderness like the Israel's who did not have the Holy Spirit.

3. What Israel experienced was recorded for the church.

One of the most unexpected statements is what Paul says in v. 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

What happened to Israel, Paul says, was written down *not for Israel*, but for those on whom the end of the ages has come.

Paul distinguishes Israel from the church, by saying two things: (1) what happened to them was for us . . . (2) their Scriptures were written for us.

In this way, Israel again functions as type for the church . . . which leads us ask . . .

What is Typology?

For our purposes, let me outline 3 aspects of biblical typology . . . they're all grounded in history.

1. Types “are not . . . ideas or general truths, but *events*” – historical events in the OT (280)
2. Types share a “historical correspondence between the OT events and the NT realities” – the NT reality is sometimes called the anti-type (280)
3. The NT antitype is “not identical with the OT events,” rather, “the NT realities involve . . . historical progression,” or escalation. (281)

So, types must **be** historical events, **have** historical correspondence, **demonstrate** historical progression. **We could say more . . . but's a good starting place:**

So . . . there is nothing mystical or allegorical here . . .

. . . allegory takes a historical event and turns into a non-historical principle.

Biblical typology is the way God works in history, preparing the way for his Son / Church

That being said . . . it is also . . . a significant way in which God shapes his people . . .

Just as the historical types of Israel . . . reflect the Spirit of Christ at work in the OT

So . . . men and women born again by the Spirit of Christ will reflect their Lord.

Therefore . . .

It makes sense that the Spirit would use the larger-than-life events of redemptive history

. . . to free us from our puny idols . . . and conform us into the image of Christ.

This is the goal of 1 Corinthians 10 . . . it answers the Q: What is typology FOR ??

Look at verse 11 . . .

. . . The first thing Paul says . . . the events of history happened to them as **types**

. . . Then he says . . . and they have been written down for our **instruction**

Typology is for **INSTRUCTION** ... **Instruction** that excites imagination / brings motivation

. . . Rightly understood . . . typology leads to sanctification

. . . Why?? Because it reveals to us Christ . . . and WHO we are to be in Christ.

What does Paul do with Scripture?

This is what Paul is doing w/ Scripture . . . and we need to SEE what his WORDS are picturing.

1. INDICATION . . . What is the problem?

The first thing to observe is how Paul is using Scripture to **indicate** the problem.

On Friday I got an oil change because the indicator light told me I needed to.

On my calendar I had an oil change scheduled for Nov, not Oct. I didn't even know my car had such an indicator. But when I checked the fluid ... sure enough . . . I needed one.

Scripture does the same thing . . . it indicates idols in our lives. It brings to light patterns of thinking and living that are killing us . . . whether we know it or not.

In this case . . . Scripture indicates a triple problem.

1. The first is **disqualification**. Paul has just said in 9:27 he disciplines himself that he would not miss the prize of Christ.
2. The second problem is **misusing freedom**. Throughout ch. 8 – 9, Paul has highlighted the way in which the Corinthians have used their freedom selfishly.

Whether they know it or not, this kind of living will ultimately lead to devastating results . . . it will either prove these men and women are not alive in Christ, or prove that their spiritual endeavors are made of wood, hay, and stubble.

Either way: he turns to Israel to show there was as whole generation of the redeemed who did not receive their inheritance, b/c they continued to worship **idols**

3. Which is the root of the problem. **Idolatry** isn't just one sin among many, it is the root of every sin –

. . . Idolatry was the first sin . . . when A & E exchanged the Creator for creation

. . . And it is the nature of every sin . . . to prize things you can see and acquire,
. . . over the One who is invisible.

. . . In fact, every sin springs from this stream of idolatry??

. . . If you read Scripture . . . esp. OT . . . you'll see it. But if you're **not reading** the Word . . . you won't have the indicator light to expose your idols.

And what happens then . . . **use your IMAGINATION.**

What happens if you refuse to heed a dashboard indicator light? You might get stuck on 95 in heavy traffic.

What happens if you refuse to heed an indicator light of God's word?

Let's READ v. 1–4 – Paul recalls Israel's blessed privilege of know God's saving power.

The **cloud** . . . is a reference to the pillar of fire that led Israel in the wilderness.

The **sea** . . . is the Red Sea that God parted when Moses lifted the staff

The **baptism into Moses** . . . is a way of saying these historical events identified the Israelites with their God-given savior, Moses.

(Each of these events can be found in Exodus . . . chapters 12 – 14)

The **ROCK** . . . was the place where the LORD, YHWH, gave water.

. . . It is first seen in **Exodus 16**, where Moses struck the rock. It is next and last mentioned in **Numbers 20 – 21** . . .

. . . the inference that Paul makes is that the Rock – a name given to the Lord in **Deut 32** – was present with the people of Israel throughout their wanderings.

He can say that the Rock is Christ . . . because he's already established the fact in 8:6 . . . **Christ is the LORD** . . . and shares in the identity of Yahweh.

In these verses, he says the people of Israel ate the spiritual food and drank from the well of the Lord, who is Christ . . . in this way they fully experienced God.

Yet v. 5: "w/ most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

This is an understatement . . . because of their rebellion . . . everyone in the older generation perished in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb.

To be sure . . . some (like Moses) perished with saving faith . . . but many (if not most) died in under the wrath of God . . . a testimony confirmed here & in Ps 95.

Again . . . typology is necessary to understand what we see.

Paul says they were baptized into Moses . . . not into Christ.

IOW . . . Moses saved Israel as a type and shadow of later, greater salvation . . .

The Red Sea was a type of baptism, but it wasn't the baptism of the Spirit.

So, the point Paul is making is those who were physically delivered thru Moses experienced God in powerful ways . . . but such experience did not ultimately save them from God's wrath.

This is implied by in verse 5 . . . and brutally depicted in verses 7–10.

This is where biblical propositions require sanctified imagination . . .

What happens to those who have tasted the goodness of the Lord and still fondle their idols?

For starters . . . they are cut in two with the swords of their brothers!

Verse 7 quotes Exodus 32:6 . . . a passage describing the idolatrous worship of the golden calf. Maybe you remember how that ended, maybe not . . .

Exod 32:26–27: Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the LORD’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and **each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.**’”

Put yourself into that verse: “**kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.**”

How serious is idolatry? It resulted in 3,000 people dying at the hands of their brothers.

Did the Israelites learn? NO . . .

Verse 8 takes us to Numbers 25 . . . where the people of Israel are again committing sexual immorality with the woman of Baal-Peor.

Paul recalls the death count this time. Death by plague. Thousands and thousands falling dead . . . one at a time falling . . . growing sick and infecting others. Dying.

All this because the people refused to obey God’s Word. And how did that end?

It ended when Phineas broke into Zimri’s tent as he was in the act of intercourse and impaled both Zimri and his concubine. God’s Word: **Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped. (v. 8)**

Do you see the horror of sexual immorality? Do you see the wickedness of adultery? Pornography? Lust? What about complaining and questioning God?

Verse 9 recalls how Israel tested the Lord; **Verse 10** speaks of Israel’s grumbling.

To the first, God sent legions of deadly snakes in Numbers 21 to judge Israel for their failure to trust God . . .

To the second, God destroyed an entire generation of Israelites in Numbers 14 because they grumbled against the Lord.

And the result . . . snakes! Lots and lots of deadly snakes!

Do you see it?? . . . You need to see it. I need to see it. This is why Paul writes. It’s not enough to hear about it God’s judgment . . . We have to see it.

Why . . . because unless you see the horror of idolatry . . . you won't obey verse 7 & 9

Verse 7 commands . . . Do Not Be Idolaters . . .

Verse 9 commands . . . Do Not Grumble

These are simple commands to hear . . . but oh how hard they are to obey!

The power and desire to destroy idols and abide in contentment . . . comes

As we see the horror of sin . . . and the undeserved grace of God!

And what gives you that vision ??

A Spirit-enflamed imagination READING the Word of God!

This is why we need the Old Testament . . . It gives us more than rules to follow

It gives us a vision of God's holiness and sin's wretchedness that brings us to X !!

And this brings us to what we need most – **The INTERVENTION OF GOD**

Before we can obey the commands “Flee from idols” and “Don't grumble”

We must feel our utter helplessness . . . and cry out for mercy . . .

We need to see that the solution to the problem . . . is the **Intervention of God**

When God sent snakes to destroy Israel for their sin . . .

He also commanded Moses to put a bronze serpent on a pole, so that snake-bitten sinners could turn to it and be saved from God's wrath.

God is not simply a cosmic judge . . . he's a loving father who has made a way of salvation for idolaters who deserve death.

Jesus himself spoke of the serpent-on-a-pole to describe how you must look to X.

It is not an indifferent glance . . . or a sideways look as we fix our eyes on sin!!

No . . . it is a full-on, heart-pounding gaze . . . pleading for God's intervention.

This plea . . . this LOOK to Christ is the KEY to our obedience and our endurance.

Indeed . . . if we are going to obey God's imperatives . . . we must look to CHRIST

As Paul shows us . . .

1. We must see the problem Scripture INDICATES
2. We must read Scripture with IMAGINATION that impels faith.
3. We must cry out to receive God's gracious INTERVENTION in Christ

All this puts us IN Christ . . . It IDENTIFIES us with Christ, which then enables us.

4. To obey God's IMPERATIVES.

Ultimately, this is why Paul brings up Israel . . .

His goal is not typology that leads to secret knowledge . . .

But typology that leads to sanctification . . .

Which is why Paul concludes by saying:

¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No 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.

His concluding imperative "TAKE HEED" literally says . . . **Look, Behold, Watch Out**

To the Corinthians who are blind to their own patterns of idolatry . . . he brings the ghosts of Israel to awaken them.

Like the ghost of Xmas past who showed Ebenezer Scrooge the horrors of his sin,

. . . Paul shows the inconsistency of claiming to be a follower of God . . . while clinging to idols or grumbling against God.

. . . He says . . . do not think that you are above falling . . . but rather, see the temptation and turn from the temptation . . . lest you fall like Israel of old.

Only he adds . . .

God is faithful!

The good news here IS NOT . . . some secret promise that God will never give you more than you can handle. That's a straight up lie.

The good news is Godward . . . GOD is faithful and as the cross demonstrates, he has made a way of escape.

Christ is the way of escape!

Endurance comes from Him . . . AND it comes through him.

True Freedom is experienced as you commune with Christ in the Word of God.

To a people who believe freedom is found in eating and drinking however they choose, Paul says . . . no freedom comes in feasting on Christ, as his table

. . . Which is the very next subject he will consider!

For us today . . . we need to see that temptations will come . . . they are coming!

But Praise God . . . escape has already been provided . . . in the Word of God.

And more than the Word in general . . . It is X working by his Spirit in the Word.

And it is what distinguishes the church from Israel.

Israel did not have the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling them.
You do . . . if you are in Christ.

Though we battle sin (within and without) . . .

We have all we need . . . to resist the devil and his schemes . . .

In Christ . . . our sins have been paid for in full. We are new creatures in Christ.

In the Spirit . . . Christ dwells with us to sanctify us, convicting us of sin,
conforming us into Christ's image

In the Word . . . we have been given strategies to see our sin, to loathe our sin,
and to trust in Christ . . . and to walk away from idols with joy in our hearts.

Oh Friends: This is our way of escape . . . take heed! See it, savor it, learn to walk in it!