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The Thing Designed in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Is the Communion of Christians in the Body and Blood of Christ

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

1 Corinthians 10:16

The scope of the apostle from the beginning of chapter 8 to the end of chapter 10 seems to be to dissuade the Corinthian Christians from eating things offered to idols. The case with those who were converted to Christianity in Corinth was this: they dwelt among the heathen who made up the far greater part of the city. And the heathen inhabitants were wont publicly to celebrate festivals in honor to their gods, which were times of feasting and mirth among them; they were wont to invite their friends to those feasts where they ate things sacrificed to idols.

So the Christians who were scattered about among them by this means had a notable temptation laid before them, for their heathen relations and acquaintances would sometimes invite them to their feasts. And there were some among them who pleaded for the lawfulness of going and eating things offered to idols at such feasts. They argued that it was a part of their

Christian liberty, and that, since the Ceremonial Law was abrogated, all things that were fit now for the body were lawful to be eaten, that having been offered to idols did not change its nature to make it unclean, and that the scrupling of it was a needless and ignorant scruple.

But the apostle argues in chapter 8 that it is not fitting in such cases to eat meats offered to idols for the sake of others who see them because it will be a visible worshipping of idols. If they see 'em at feasts eating things offered to idols, they won't know nor have opportunity to know but that they eat it as offered to idols and with conscience of the idol as the heathen do—and so the Christian name will be greatly dishonored, and their weak brethren may be drawn by their example to do the like against their consciences. And the apostle tells 'em that, rather than make a brother to offend, he would eat no meat while the world stands.

And that they might not think it hard to put themselves so much out of their way for the sake of their brethren, he tells 'em in chapter 9 how much he denied himself of lawful liberties for the sake of others in much greater instances than not eating things offered to idols, in refraining from marriage, in taking no wages for his labor in the ministry, which he might challenge if he would, in becoming to the Jews as a Jew.

In the beginning of this chapter the apostle uses another argument to dissuade them from it, taken from the accounts that the Old Testament gives of the dreadful judgments of God against idolaters amongst the Israelites in the wilderness.

And here, in this part of the chapter wherein is our text, he begins another argument. He shows that eating things that are known by them, and by others who see them, to be things offered to idols is a visible joining in the worship of idols from a parallel drawn between the Holy Supper of the Christians and the Mosaic sacrifices of the Israelites and the sacrifices of the heathens.