

## CHAPTER 10



These ancient events have a modern - both for the Corinthians, and for us - importance: they are an example of how people can receive tremendous spiritual blessings from God, and yet still fall away from following Him (10:11, 12). Christians are not immune from temptation to sin, but God nonetheless empowers us to overcome temptation and remain faithful to Him (10:13).

After the strong rebukes he has given in most of the book to this point, St. Paul now demonstrates his affection for the Corinthians by calling them his "beloved" (10:14), and entreating them to flee from idolatry. The Corinthian Christians are believed to have continued attending pagan festivities after their conversion; here the apostle lovingly exhorts them to stop. Notice how he does this; while he previously referred to the Corinthian Christians as being spiritually immature (3:1-2), here he points out that he speaks to them as wise men (10:15). This is not contradictory: his point is that they have behaved like spiritual infants, but he knows they are capable of spiritual maturity and understanding mature apostolic teaching. Fr. Lawrence Farley notes that his exhortation is significant, because St. Paul now gives a deep spiritual reason for his specific exhortations: "They themselves can surely see that eating food offered to idols is incompatible with the sacramental Food they are already eating."

The Corinthian Christians have partaken of the Holy Eucharist, drinking from the cup of blessing and breaking the bread: these things are the blood and body of Christ (10:16), and they are the source of union with God and each other (10:17). Just as when the Israelite priests sacrificed at the altar and ate the sacrifices, thereby becoming sharers of the altar (10:18), Christians become sharers of the altar when we receive Holy Communion. Even though idols are not real gods (10:19), to eat food that was offered to them is to

share the altar with the demons who use the idols to deceive humans into ignoring the true God (10:21).

St. Paul pointedly asks the Corinthians why they partake of food offered to idols. Are they attempting to make God jealous, or show that they're stronger than Him (10:22)? Such an attitude, his question implies, would be absurd. St. Paul closes this argument by repeating his point from chapter six: it may be lawful for Christians to eat food offered to idols, but it is not beneficial (10:23). To eat food offered to idols indicates a lack of respect for God and Holy Communion (as he showed earlier in this chapter), and it is potentially harmful to other, weaker Christians (10:24; as he demonstrated in chapter six).

Whatever the Christian eats, St. Paul concludes, he or she should give thanks and glorify God (10:31).



### TODAY'S SPECIAL: CONTROL WHAT YOU SAY

If you think about it, your mouth is probably your most dangerous weapon. What you say can offend and hurt other people; it can even irrevocably destroy their reputations. There are times when the things you say can even come back to hurt you.

This may be the reason that, when St. Paul wants to show us that no person is truly good, he uses our mouths and words as examples of how evil we can be: "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "the poison of asps is under their lips"; "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Romans 3:13-14).

It is particularly easy for us to sin through our speech because, while it is difficult to believe that something like taking illegal drugs is a good activity, we can gossip about people or criticize them and convince ourselves that we are actually doing it for a good reason. St. Maximos the Confessor, a seventh century Christian, warns us, "Give no ear to the slanderer's talk nor let your talk run on in the fault-finder's hearing, by readily speaking and listening to things against your neighbor; otherwise you will fall from divine charity [love] and be found a foreigner to eternal life."

You can control your speech by relying on God to empower you to engage in helpful - rather than harmful - speech. For example, you can use your mouth to praise God instead of condemning others; remember the hymn you sing after Holy Communion, "Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that we may sing of Thy glory."

