

## Handout: 1 Corinthians Lesson 4

In Chapters 8-10, Paul continues to address the Corinthian church's questions, focusing on right Christian behavior:

1. First, he addresses the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols by introducing the topic of concern for the spiritual welfare of fellow Christians (Chapter 8).
2. Then, he appeals to them to follow his example of giving up his rights for the sake of the Gospel (chapter 9).
3. Finally, he addresses the sin of idolatry directly by appealing to the sacrificial meal that is proper to all Christians, the Eucharist (Chapter 10).

On the question of Christians eating meat sacrificed to idols, there were probably several different attitudes among the Corinthians concerning this issue:

1. Jewish-Christians may have regarded the meat as unclean and pagan.
2. Gentile converts might think back to their former union with pagan gods.
3. Other Christians probably reasoned that since false gods are truly false, what could be wrong with the meat?

In chapter 9, Paul defends himself against his accusers and bases his defense on two points:

1. His rights as an apostle (verses 4-12a, 13-14).
2. His refusal to make use of those rights (verses 12b, 15-18).

In 10:1-5, Paul refers to “the cloud,” “the sea,” the “spiritual food,” and “the spiritual drink that came from the rock.” See Ex 13:21-22; 14:10, 19-22; 16:4, 31, 35; 17:1-7; Num 20:2-23.

1. The cloud was the “Glory Cloud,” the manifestation of God that led the children of Israel on their exodus out of Egypt.
2. The sea was the Red Sea that God parted to allow the children of Israel to escape the Egyptians by passing through the waters to become a redeemed people who began a new life, freed from the bonds of Egyptian slavery.
3. The spiritual food was the manna God fed the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land.
4. The spiritual drink was the miracle of the abundant water that God caused to flow from a rock to save the lives of the Israelites; the “rock” was the pre-Incarnate Christ.

God provides the generations of the New Covenant in Christ with even greater gifts than the liberated Exodus generation:

1. The Israelites, led by the manifestation of God, were “baptized into Moses,” passing through the waters of the sea to emerge as a free people. But in the Sacrament of Baptism, Christ, the manifestation of God in the flesh, liberated us from slavery to sin and restored us to “new life” in the Spirit of God.
2. God fed the Israelites manna in the desert journey to the Promised Land. But in the visible form of bread, Christ feeds us His Body on our journey through this life on our way to the Promised Land of Heaven.
3. Jesus Christ is the “rock” of our salvation who provides the spiritual drink of His Precious Blood, giving us life and strength for our journey.

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“Rock” was a title for God in the Old Testament (for example see Dt 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31; 2 Sam 23:3). Paul identifies Christ as “the rock” of Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:2-23 in 1 Corinthians 10:4.

In 10:14-22, Paul uses two forms of the Greek word *koinonia*: in the singular when referring to Christians receiving the sacred meal of the Eucharist and in the plural when referring to pagan sacred meals. Some Biblical translations render it as “participation,” while others as “sharing” or “communion.” The use of the word *koinonia* in secular literature and by Paul:

1. It was a word used to express the intimacy of the marital relationship (3 Mac 4:6; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.304).
2. It could mean a special union with another person, as Paul used the same word in 1 Corinthians 1:9, referring to the Christian’s union with the Son of God.
3. In his letter to Philemon, Paul used the same word referring to the common sharing of Christian faith (Phile 6).
4. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul used this word to refer to a common sharing in sufferings (Phil 3:10).
5. In 2 Corinthians 8:4 and 13:13, Paul used the word for Christian participation in a work of service through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 10:14-22, Paul uses *koinonia* in the sense of:

1. a common sharing or participation in the Body and Blood of Christ,
2. an intimate union with the Person of Jesus Christ, and
3. the unity of the community and the universal Church brought about through sharing the Eucharist.

Paul’s point is that our union with Christ may begin with our Baptism, but it is in the Eucharist that we become what we eat; we become one Body with Christ.

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