



freedom

1 Corinthians 8-11

SCPC term 3 2008

sunday 27th july 2008

study 1 FREE TO BUILD 1 Corinthians 8

KEY VERSE FOR SERIES: "nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" 1 Corinthians 10:24

Hi folks, Pete here. Well... life just isn't straightforward is it! I'm sure that we've all been reminded of this fact over and over this week as we've processed the news about Ros' cancer and many would be aware of other situations in our church family where suffering and uncertainty abound. At times like this it's essential that we turn together to God for whom nothing is a surprise, and to his word which contains all that we need to know for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

1 Corinthians 8-11 is all about FREEDOM. But it's not about the sort of freedom that the world loves and idolizes—the freedom to do whatever we feel like. It's about the freedom that we have in Christ—freedom from our slavery to sin—and about what to do with that freedom—live as slaves of Christ. Paul returns to the Corinthians' mantra—"everything is permissible for me" - and in a bunch of different areas, shows just how far this thinking is from the logic of the gospel. In chapter 8 which we come to this week, Paul shows that mere knowledge is an inadequate guide for our actions. Just because we know something is right (or permissible) in and of itself, doesn't mean that we are free to do it. Our actions must be constrained by love if they are to honour God and build his kingdom.

some notes on questions

Q1. The first three verses are a bit tricky the first time you read them but their purpose is to introduce the ideas that Paul will unpack in the rest of the chapter and indeed in the rest of the letter—the key idea being the importance of LOVE as God's most excellent way (1 Cor 12:31) and as the guiding principle for all our actions.

Q2. It's important to know that Paul isn't down on ALL knowledge. Knowledge, especially moral knowledge of what is right and wrong, has it's place but it must be tempered by humility (verse 2) and love. Otherwise, it just "puffs up" (because we think we're better than the one who doesn't know) rather than "builds up". Just think of the empty, clanging gong of chapter 13 and you'll get the picture pretty clearly.

Q3. The gospel frees people from superstition and allows them to see things as they truly are, without fear. So an idol is just that—a figure of stone and wood with no power whatsoever. For this reason, eating food sacrificed to idols is permissible for Christians. But is it beneficial? Will it build up the church? This is God's bigger concern.

Q4-5. The light of the gospel does not always shine bright and clear into every corner of our lives the moment we come to believe. In fact I would venture to say that it never works that way. There are always old habits that die hard—habits of thought, word and deed that have such a hold that they have to be lovingly challenged and brought under the rule of Christ one step at a time—There is a place for correcting each other's faulty knowledge. BUT, in the meantime, what matters is that each of us, IN LOVE, consider how our actions will impact our "weak brother" and ensure that we do nothing that will cause them to sin.

Q6-9. Use these questions to bring the focus back to the cross and a consideration of what the cross teaches us about how to love each other. Question 8 would be a good one to explore in terms of practical application but try to think more broadly than the most obvious examples like drinking. Let me know what you come up with!