



freedom

1 Corinthians 8-11

SCPC term 3 2008

sunday 24th august 2008

study 5 FREE TO FLEE 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

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

The key to getting the most out of this passage is to see the broader issue of idolatry rather than just the particular issue confronting the Corinthians—the question of eating at idol feasts. BUT, as always, we must first do the hard work of understanding the particular historical issues in their original context in order to make sure that we apply Paul's teaching appropriately to our own situations.

In these verses Paul is also painting a very vivid picture of the power of symbols. The symbols themselves may be nothing but they point to things that are very real. God is real and demons are real and by participating in symbolic meals, we may also be uniting ourselves spiritually through the symbols to what they symbolize.

some notes on questions

Q1. To answer this question you will need to consider how the sins that Paul has confronted the Corinthians about are, or relate to, "idolatry". We need to see that idolatry has both a narrow definition (i.e. the worship of an object or image) and also a broader definition—putting anything or anyone other than God in 1st place in our lives. In this sense every sin reveals an underlying idolatry as we say no to God and yes to someone or something else.

Q2-3. "participation" is a very rich theological word. In these verses Paul's point is that something very real takes place when we eat a symbolic meal, whether the Lord's Supper or an idol feast. Just because it is a spiritual reality rather than a physical one (i.e. we are not physically united with Christ through the Lord's supper) doesn't make it any less real.

Our participation can also be viewed from a number of angles. As the OT parallel of the temple sacrifice demonstrates (v. 18), we participate in Jesus' death because he is our **substitute** (vividly depicted by the OT practice of placing one's hand on the head of the animal to be sacrificed cf. Lev. 4) and also our **representative**—in his death, we also die and in his resurrection we also live. Flowing on from this, we also participate in all the blessings that come from the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus. There is also a very real corporate dimension to our participation in Christ—we participate in all these things **together**.

Q4. Be careful here. An idol is nothing BUT a demon is. Demons are the spiritual reality behind the physical symbol just as Jesus is the spiritual (& physical!) reality behind the symbols of drink and bread.

Q5. Proverbs reminds us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom and the 1st and 2nd commandments state clearly that God is the one true God. His jealousy is entirely appropriate and we are fools to think that he doesn't care when we put other things in his place.

Q7. If you haven't done so already, you may need to discuss the broad definition of idolatry and worship in order to help members get to the bottom of their idolatry.

Q7-9. These questions cover both the personal and corporate response to the passage. Try to answer both.