



freedom

1 Corinthians 8-11
SCPC term 3 2008

sunday 7th september 2008

study 7 FREE TO HONOUR 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

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

Hi all, Steve here—back writing leaders' notes and grateful for Pete's efforts with them in recent weeks, as well as the fantastic job all the guys have done with the preaching in that time. It was a real privilege for our family to come to church and sit under God's Word and to have the great gospel of Jesus minister to our hearts. Whatever the situation, it is *always* the gospel we need to hear isn't it?

As we have seen in recent weeks, 1 Corinthians 8-11 is all about FREEDOM. Not the worldly freedom of doing what you like but the true freedom of getting caught up in and passionate about what God likes. Unfortunately the Corinthians had a lot to learn about true freedom, too often settling for worldly counterfeits—as we do. This week we see that played out in the important matter of gender roles. We have already seen in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul having to urge those who are married to work on their marriages—the 'stay where you are' principle rather than seeking independence (worldly freedom). This issue re-emerges here in chapter 11—the real issue beneath all the discussion of head coverings and so on is pride and independence (see verse 11 and 12). Note in verse 12 the issue isn't just that the Corinthians are inappropriately declaring independence from each other but from God himself. We need to get beneath the specific actions being discussed (which we may not fully understand or relate to) to the principles at stake: the women are dishonouring their husbands, and the men are dishonouring Jesus!

some notes on questions

Q1-2. We will discuss in some detail the customs of the day and their significance in the Bible talk, but clearly this action of uncovering her heads by a Corinthian woman is dishonouring to her 'head' - her husband (verse 3). Whatever we can't understand about the significance of the action in their context, Paul regards it as a clear action of pride and defiance.

Q3. While the customs as such that Paul is talking about may not hold the same significance for us, we cannot simply dismiss this passage as some quirky 1st century phenomenon: the underlying principle of male headship is grounded in creation, not the 1st century, and still needs to be worked out in practice by us today (see further below).

Q4. It's worth recalling here the divisions of chapter 1... and also looking ahead to the body image in chapter 12-14 (see especially 12:21 for example) ... it's not just in gender roles that the Corinthians are valuing independence where they should be valuing *interdependence*. This passage is just another outworking of a fundamental problem.

Q5. Most especially focus on the example of Christ—he is indeed the example to both men and women—he models us godly submission (with the Father as his head); AND (as the head of man) sacrificial servant headship.

Q6. This helps us all the more to realize that Paul has far deeper concerns than 'heargear' in itself—we need to see what is at stake—which will help us reach for true not superficial application of this part of God's Word.

Q7. note also that 1 Cor 5:3 may be a key to understanding this strange reference to the angels. Fallen angels will be judged for not accepting their place in God's order—the very issue here.

Q8. for the men: please add a follow-up question here about the importance of men showing the way in marriages and in how we honour Jesus as a church family also.