

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: October 21st 2018

Speaker: Sally Heath

Title: Meet the Corinthians: Free to Join In?

Introduction: In chapters 8, 9 & 10 Paul is answering a number of points that the Corinthians have made in their letter to him regarding the eating of food which has been offered to an idol. There seem to have been 2 main views among the Corinthian Christians: one (those who considered themselves to have 'knowledge') argued that since idols were made by humans and therefore were not real, it didn't matter if you ate meat that had been offered to them; the other view (who those with 'knowledge' accused of having 'weak consciences') said you shouldn't touch the meat. It is a confusing passage because Paul seems to sometimes agree with one view and sometimes with the other, and because he doesn't deal with the points they have made one after the other, but switches between them. He also has different answers to meat that is eaten within the pagan temple and that which has been offered to an idol, but has been sold in the meat market and is being eaten in a private home.

Review: Invite one or more who have heard the talk to give their own brief review.

Read: 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; 10:14-33

Reflect :

- Draw out the 4 points which the Corinthians have made to Paul which he answers in this passage: 8:1; 8:4 (2 points); 10:23.
- Draw out the ways in which Paul agrees with these points in 8:5-6; 8:8; 10:26.

However, Paul mainly disagrees with those with 'knowledge'.

- What does he say in 8:1 is more important than knowledge and why?
- Why is loving God and loving others so closely connected here and in other passages such as Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:19-21?

Those with 'knowledge' managed to separate the eating of the meat offered to idols from everything else that went on in the temple worship, even when they ate it in the temple. Those with 'weak conscience' couldn't do so and it seems they were tempted back to all the worship of the idols (8:7).

- What principle does Paul give to those with 'knowledge' in 8:9-13 and why? (See also Jesus' words in Matthew 18:6)
- What principle does Paul give to those with 'knowledge' in 10:23-24 and verse 33 and why?
- How are these principles relevant to us as we live in a culture which prizes individualism?

Leaders: feel free to be selective and creative with your use of these notes.

Don't feel you have to use all of the material, but do try to keep the shape of Review – Read – Reflect – Respond and **DO make room for the 'And Finally' questions!**

Thornbury Baptist Church:

Following the Way of Jesus: Loving God - Loving One Another - Loving Neighbour & World

In chapter 8:4-6 Paul agrees that 'an idol is nothing' but in 10:14 he warns them to flee from idolatry, including eating the meat offered to them. He gives 2 reasons for this: the Lord's Supper and what is behind the idols

- What reasons does he give in 10:16-17 and verse 21 from the Lord's Supper for this? (In idol worship it was believed that in eating the meat you were taking into yourself the god and were also binding yourself to those who ate with you; in the Old Testament sacrifices were seen to bring you into a covenant relationship with God and also with those who shared in the sacrifices with you).
- Read Ephesians 6:10-17 for some more teaching from Paul on spiritual forces opposed to God and so opposed to Christians.
- What does Paul warn the Corinthians will happen if they do participate in the 'table of demons'? What do you understand by his warning?
- In 1942 CS Lewis famously wrote, 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.' (Screwtape Letters). Do you think that is still true today?
- What places that we go or things that we do could open us up to the influence of evil forces opposed to God or draw others away from God towards them? (Sally suggested areas such as Halloween, the Christmas office party, some nightclubs, dodgy work practices and get rich quick schemes on the edge of legality, and books, magazines and websites - you could think about when these could do so and/or think of other examples.)

10:25-30 deals with meat that has been sold in the market (most meat in Corinthian markets would have been left over from the temple sacrifices) and eaten in a private home.

- How are Paul's instructions in this case different and when are they similar to his principles for meat eaten in the temple? Why do you think there was this difference in some cases?

10:31-33 is Paul's summary of the teaching in chapters 8,9 &10.

- Spent some time praying for one another for the ability to put these principles into practice in the next week.

And finally:

As you conclude, ask each person:

- What is the main thing you are taking away as an action point?
- How can we pray for you?
- Is there anything we can check on next time we meet?

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