

Get Right Church & Let's Go Home!

"THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS"

Introduction

AUTHOR: PAUL, the apostle (1:1; 16:21)

PLACE OF WRITING: EPHESUS (16:8)

TIME OF WRITING: Probably in the spring of 57 A.D., shortly before the Jewish feast of Pentecost (16:8), during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-41).

BACKGROUND OF THE CITY OF CORINTH: Corinth was situated on the Isthmus of Greece (called Achaia in the Bible) between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea, above the Mediterranean Sea. About 50 miles to the east was the city of Athens.

The Corinth of Paul's day was relatively new. The old Corinth (which was famous and powerful in the days of the Peloponnesian War) was burned in 146 B.C. Because it was a city devoted to the gods, a hundred years were required to pass before the city could be rebuilt. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar rebuilt the city, populated it with a colony of veterans and freedmen, and named it Julia Corinthus. It soon became a very important commercial center.

With a population of 400,000 and being a prominent center of commerce in the Mediterranean world, it was a place for all sorts of vice. An example of its immorality was found in the temple of Venus (Aphrodite), which hosted 1000 priestesses dedicated to prostitution in the name of religion. The city's close proximity to the city of Athens probably added the problem of intellectualism. As

noticed in the epistle, such an environment had its effect upon the church in Corinth. It is amazing that a church existed at all in such a city.

BACKGROUND OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH: The establishment of the church occurred during Paul's second missionary journey. It is recorded by Luke in Ac 18:1-18, which can be divided into three sections:

1) Abiding with Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers; reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 18:1-6).

2) In the house of Justus, abiding there and teaching for a year and six months (Ac 18:7-11)

3) An incident before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Ac 18:12-18)

Paul's writing to the church shows that the church was adversely affected by the immoral environment found in the city. Thus the church was one beset with problems and questions that needed to be answered:

- Pride caused division in the church and disruption in the services (1Co 1-4, 11).
- Immorality and immodesty found its way into the church, which gave it a bad reputation (1Co 5).
- The brethren were taking their personal problems with each other before the heathen courts instead of working them out among themselves (1Co 6).
- Questions about marriage (1Co 7)
- Meats sacrificed to idols (1Co 8-10)
- Women in ministry (1Co 11)
- The use of spiritual gifts (1Co 12-14)
- The resurrection from the dead (1Co 15)
- The collection for the saints in Jerusalem (1Co 16).

PURPOSE OF WRITING: The bad news concerning the problems at Corinth had reached Paul in Ephesus. It seems that this news came from at least two sources: 1) the household of Chloe (1:11); and 2) a letter sent to him (7:1), possibly by the hands of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17).

Therefore, in answer to these reports Paul writes:

TO CORRECT SINFUL PRACTICES AND REFUTE FALSE DOCTRINE

THEME: 1 Corinthians 1:10

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

OUTLINE (adapted from Dextor Sammons)

INTRODUCTION (1:1-9)

I. PROBLEMS REPORTED BY THE HOUSE OF CHLOE (1:10-6:20)

A. FACTIONS IN THE CHURCH (1:1-4:21)

B. SEXUAL IMMORALITY (5:1-13)

C. LAWSUITS AMONG BRETHERN (6:1-11)

D. MORAL DEFILEMENTS (6:12-20)

II. PROBLEMS MENTIONED IN THE LETTER FROM CORINTH (7:1-16:9)

A. MARRIAGE & CELIBACY (7:1-40)

B. EATING MEATS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS (8:1-11:1)

C. WOMEN PRAYING AND PROPHECYING (11:2-16)

D. THE LORD'S SUPPER (11:17-34)

E. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:1-14:40)

F. RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD (15:1-58)

G. COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS (16:1-4)

CONCLUDING REMARKS, INSTRUCTIONS, AND BENEDICTION (16:5-24)