



Overview for 1 Corinthians

Purpose: Paul's intent in writing to the Corinthian church was to expose evil that persistently threatened to destroy true Christianity. The Gospel was applied to a host of issues, including immorality, marriage and adultery, intellectualism, public worship, and spiritual gifts.

Author: Paul the Apostle

Date Written: About A.D. 55

Setting: Corinth was a large seaport city in southern Greece, and a major trade center. Its people were immoral and full of idolatry. The Christian church there was primarily made up of Gentiles.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, members of Chloe's household

Summary: Commerce was the source of Corinth's prosperity. The city was located on the narrow isthmus that connected mainland Greece with the peninsula called the Peloponnese. Traders found it more economical to go through Corinth as weather and rocks made it hazardous to sail around the Peloponnese. Therefore, most commerce going to Rome from Ephesus, China, or Egypt went through Corinth. Having seaports on two seas gave the city vast economic control and led to the great wealth of the city, which was the richest in Achaia. In addition, it was the capital of that Roman province.

The prosperity of Corinth led to luxury and immorality. A common saying among the Greeks was, "to Corinthianize," which meant, "to practice sexual immorality; to debauch." The city sponsored the Isthmian Games, which honored the Greek gods Poseidon (god of the sea) and Palaemon (a marine deity), and were second in importance only to the Olympic Games. There were also many temples in Corinth; the most notorious was dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Historic accounts report that a thousand female

slaves worked at the temple practicing ritual prostitution with worshipers (including sailors and tourists).

Toward the end of his three-year stay in the city of Ephesus, Paul began to receive disturbing news from the group in Corinth. What he learned caused him to write a letter instructing the Corinthian church not to associate with members who practiced fornication (1 Corinthians 5:9). Sometime later, members of the household of a believer named Chloe reported to Paul that the Corinthian church was splitting into factions, some following one leader while others followed another (1 Corinthians 1:11). Eventually, three representatives of the church body brought a letter to Paul which requested his advice on a number of issues (1 Corinthians 7:1 and 16:17). The messengers also reported to Paul the disgraceful actions such as incest, fornication, and idolatry of a few individuals that were having a disturbing effect on the church.

Divisions existed between church members. Some liked Paul's simple style of preaching while others preferred a more sophisticated and philosophical approach. Some thought "freedom in Christ" meant freedom to commit sin of every sort while others felt that Christians must strictly adhere to all the Jewish rules and regulations. Yet another faction over-emphasized certain gifts of the Spirit and considered themselves to possess a higher spirituality than those who did not claim these gifts. There were also unchristian feelings between the rich and the poor, as evidenced by their lack of generosity toward one another.

Paul addressed all these issues and also sent Timothy to help deal with these matters in person. The key emphasis that Paul made through this letter was love and its true meaning (chapter 13). The Book of 1 Corinthians is a pastor's guide in responding to problems within the church body, and is a source of some of our most valuable information about the Christian faith.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50	PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?		Jude martyred 72					
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48 50-52 53-57			Paul's trip to Rome 59				Rome destroys Jerusalem 70					
			Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41	James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44												
					Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57	St. Mark 58/60	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60	Philippians 61	St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64	Jude 65	Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68	Hebrews 68

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
 - A. The salutation (1:1-3)
 - B. The prayer of thanksgiving (1:4-9)
- II. Answer to reports (1:10—6:20)
 - A. The problem of church divisions (1:10—4:21)
 - B. The problem of social irregularities (5:1—6:20)
- III. Answers to inquiries (7:1—15:58)
 - A. Concerning marriage (7:1-40)
 - B. Concerning meats offered to idols (8:1—11:1)
 - C. Concerning matters in public assembly (11:2—14:40)
 - D. Concerning the doctrine of resurrection (15:1-58)
- IV. Conclusion (16:1-24)
 - A. The collection for the saints (16:1-4)
 - B. Personal plans (16:5-9)
 - C. Personal instructions about Timothy and Apollos (16:10-12)
 - D. Personal concluding exhortations (16:13-18)
 - E. Personal greetings and benediction (16:19-24)