

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians

Introduction: 1 Corinthians is a story of human sin, its effect on the Church of Jesus Christ, and guidance for how to negotiate life as a Christian in a hostile, pagan culture

In other words, it is written to us

Author: : Paul, the Apostle. It is one of the least disputed Pauline letters along with 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon

Date: AD 55-56 from Ephesus, (possibly Spring, 55 AD)



Gallio Inscription



Recipient(s): To: “The Church of God at Corinth” -- made up of chiefly newly converted Gentiles but has some Jewish members as well.

Context: The Church at Corinth was planted during Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey. In 146 BC the Romans had destroyed the city (the battle of Corinth was a decisive victory for the Romans against the Greek Empire). In 46 BC it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and was made the capital of Achaia







Delphi •

Cephissos River

Thebes •

Lechaeum

Corinth •

Cenchrea •

SALAMIS

Athens •

Argos •

Epidauros •

Sparta •

Arctas River

Purpose (s): Paul received word from members of the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:17) that it was having internal difficulties.

Additionally, the church had sent a letter to Paul asking some pointed questions. He writes this letter to address the issues and answer their questions

The Corinthian Correspondence

1 Cor. 5:9 “I wrote you in my letter...” The lost letter”

Paul receives a letter from the Corinthians, (1 Cor. 7:1)

1 Corinthians is Paul’s response to that letter and to reports he received from members of the congregation and “Chloe’s people”

2 Corinthians is a 3rd letter from Paul to the Corinthians

Themes and Characteristics

The central theme is the love of God expressed in the Gospel and the implications of that love, i.e., how to live out the Christian life.

Characteristics: It is written like a conversation

Paul has this way of addressing the Issues:

- He describes the problem,
- Responds with a Gospel principle,
- Tells them how they are not living it out,
- Teaches them how to live out the Christian life for that issue

The Epistle

1. Introduction 1:1-9

- A. The greeting ID's Paul as the author and called Apostle of Christ Jesus (validation of his Apostleship)
- B. In 1: 2, Paul makes 3 observations:
 - It is of God,
 - It is sanctified in Christ Jesus
 - Its members are called to be saints
- C. Paul gives thanks for the Church and how God has gifted them

The First Problem

Ch. 1:10 - 4:21 – Divisions in the Church

Describing the Problem: The divisions don't appear to be over doctrine or major issues, but rather which leader was preferred

Responding with the Gospel: This is not a popularity contest...you are not separated groups; you are a community of people centered on Jesus

An Application: 1 Cor. 3: 1-3 and Answer to the Issue:

**Spiritual Maturity: 1 Cor. 1: 31
“Let Him who boasts, boast
in the LORD!”**

2nd Problem, Chapters 5-7:

Immorality issues

Describing the Problem(s):

- a) A man in the church is intimate with his step mother (his dad's wife)

Responding with the Gospel

Your body is the temple of the HS
you were bought with a price and you are to glorify
God in your body (6:19-20)

2nd Problem (cont)

Describing the Problem(s):

b) The people are suing each other in civil courts

Responding with the Gospel

Paul reminds that we will judge the world and the Angels

The basic principle is the principle of Love 6:7:

Why not rather suffer wrong?

3rd Problem, Chapters 8-10:

Dealing with food sacrificed to idols

Describing the Problem: How do I respond when offered a meal that includes meat that has been sacrificed to idols?

Responding with the Gospel: 8:9: *“...take care that this right of yours does not become a stumbling block to the weak...; 9:12b: “...but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ” 9:22: “to the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some...”*

The core principle is to love others more than the right to exercise freedom in Christ

Ch. 10 gives strong warnings regarding idolatry:
The great passages are VV. 13 and 31 that teach us
to trust in and serve God as our primary goals in
life..."No temptation has come upon man that is not
common to all...God has provided a way of escape;"
"And whether we eat or drink, or whatever, do all to
the glory of God."

4th Problem, Chapters 11-14:

Questions about Proper Worship

Describing the Problem: Chaos in Congregational Worship; a difference of opinion on head covering for women; how Fellowship and the Lord's supper were being conducted, and the nature of Spiritual gifts

Responding with the Gospel: What is the purpose for the gathering?

Chapter 13

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

5th Problem, Chapter 15:

Questions about The Resurrection

Describing the Problem: There were some folks that didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus and were apparently saying that it didn't matter while others were adamant about Paul's teaching

Responding with the Gospel: VV. 3-4: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The resurrection is indispensable to the Christian Church. If it isn't true, 15:16-19:

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied”

What about the afterlife?

15:42-48: “So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

The resurrection is the reason that:

- 1) Paul can call for unity where there is division**
- 2) It is the motivation to overcome immorality**
- 3) It is the power to love others more than self**
- 4) It is the promise of victory over death**

Chapter 16: Closing salutations, some Instructions, and travel plans

16:13-14: ¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love

16:22: "if anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed

The Book of 1 Corinthians

Introduction:

1 Corinthians is a story of human sin, its effect on the Church of Jesus Christ, and guidance for how to negotiate life as a Christian in a hostile, pagan culture

- I. **The author:** Paul, the Apostle. It is one of the least disputed Pauline letters along with 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.
- II. **Date:** AD 55-56 from Ephesus, (possibly Spring, 55 AD). The Delphi inscription.
- III. **Recipients of the letter -- To:** (1:2) "The Church of God at Corinth" made up of chiefly newly converted Gentiles but has some Jewish members as well. Timothy probably delivered the letter to the Corinthian Church (4:17).
- IV. **Historical context:** Acts 18:1-18 tells in some detail how Christianity came to a city like this.

V. Purpose (s):

The Corinthian correspondence:

- A. 1 Cor. 5:9 "*I wrote you in my letter...*" This is referred to as "the lost letter" although some ingenious folks hypothesize that fragments of the letter are captured in 1 Cor. 6:12-20 and 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1. That hypothesis is not widely held today by commentators.
- B. Paul then receives a letter from the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 7:1.
- C. 1 Corinthians is Paul's response to that letter and to reports he received from members of the congregation and "Chloe's people."
- D. 2 Corinthians is a 3rd letter from Paul to the Corinthians.

VI. Themes and Characteristics

1. **Theme:** The central theme is the love of God expressed in the Gospel and the implications of that love, i.e., how to live out the Christian life.

The underlying foundation of the letter is centered on the Cross and tells us how to live out the social implications of belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There is a strong emphasis on the Lordship of Christ.

2. **Characteristics:** It is written like a conversation.

Paul has this way of addressing the issues, he:

- Describes the problem,
- Responds with a Gospel principle,
- Tells them how they are not living it out,
- Teaches them how to live out the Christian life for that problem

VII. The Epistle of 1 Corinthians

1. Introduction 1:1-9

- A. The greeting ID's Paul as the author and called Apostle of Christ Jesus (validation of his Apostleship)
- B. In 1: 2, Paul makes 3 observations about this Church:
 - 1) It is of God
 - 2) It is sanctified in Christ Jesus
 - 3) Its members are called to be saints
- C. Paul gives thanks for the Church and how God has gifted them

2. 1st Problem, Ch. 1:10 - 4:21 - Divisions in the Church

Describing the Problem:

Responding with the Gospel:

Paul taught them that they were not living out what they had come to believe. He speaks of baptism, of wisdom, of dependence, of pride.

He teaches them the Gospel principle of Jesus' cross and mediated salvation for them all.

He mentions that wisdom of God is foolishness to those who are perishing, and that God's foolishness in man's wisdom (1:18, 25)

He turns the world's ideas of strength and power on their heads by showing that man is strongest when he acknowledges his weakness, his dependence on God (1:27-29)

He straightens out their pride with "Let the one who boasts, boast in the LORD." (1:31)

He teaches them about the human leaders...they are servants of the Lord. They are not worthy to be divided over...Jesus is the Center of everything.

In all this, Paul is trying to be a peacemaker and is helping them to see the true nature of fellowship.

Application: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

So the answer is _____ (1:31).

3. 2nd Problem, Chapters 5-7: Immorality issues

Describing the problem:

Responding with the Gospel:

Paul gives spiritual advice on marriage, divorce, being single, etc.

A 2nd problem described: they were taking each other to court over legal issues.

Responding with the Gospel, Paul reminds that we will judge the world and the Angels (6:2,3).

The basic principle again, is the principle of _____ (6:7): *Why not rather suffer wrong?*

4. 3rd Problem, Chapters 8-10: How to deal with food sacrificed to idols

The Problem:

Paul's response again goes to Gospel Principles:

Chapter 10 has strong warnings against idolatry using the Israelites in the wilderness as the great example. The great passages in Ch. 10 are vv. 13 and 31 that teach us to trust in and serve God as our primary goals in life..."*No temptation has come upon man that is not common to all but God has provided a way of escape;*" "*And whether we eat or drink, or whatever, do all to the glory of God.*"

5. 4th Problem, Chapters 11-14: Questions about Proper Worship

The Problem:

Paul's Response

The basic principle for operating in the body of Christ is Chapter 13 – The Love Chapter.

6. 5th Problem, Chapter 15: Questions about the Resurrection.

The Problem:

Paul responds with the Gospel again as usual. VV. 3-4: *For I delivered to you as **of first importance***

He speaks of the afterlife and the resurrection body we will have (15:42-58)

7. Chapter 16: Closing salutations, some Instructions, and travel plans

The outline is meant to be a guide through the letter not to interpret it. This is a very simple outline as studied:

Outline of 1 Corinthians

I.	Greeting	1:1-9
II.	Problems in the Church	1:10-14:40
	A. Divisions	1:10-4:21
	B. Immorality Issues	5:1-7:24
	C. How to deal with food that was sacrificed to idols	8:1-10:33
	D. Questions about Proper Worship	11:1-14:40
	E. Questions about the Resurrection and afterlife	15:1-58
IV.	Concluding Salutations, instructions, and Travel Plans	16:1-21