

# THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE

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From Dust to Destiny  
NT Epistles

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- Paul’s Epistles to the Corinthian Church
  - 1 Corinthians: Christ, the wisdom of God to us
  - 2 Corinthians: Christ, the comfort of God to us
  - 1 Corinthians: The Gospel and its ministry
  - 2 Corinthians: The Gospel and its ministers
  - 1 Corinthians: Wisdom in Christ (*sanctification*)
  - 2 Corinthians: Triumph in Christ (*consolation*)



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- Nature of NT Epistles
  - Pauline Epistles + 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John are “REAL LETTERS”
  - Modern Components:
    - Date, salutation, body, closing, and signature
  - Antiquity Components: (CF. ACTS 15:23-29 – COUNCIL LETTER)
    - Name of writer (e.g. ‘Paul’)
    - Name of the recipients (e.g. ‘to the church of God in Corinth’)
    - Greeting (e.g. ‘Grace and peace...’)
    - Thanksgiving or Doxology (e.g. ‘I always thank God for you...’)
      - excluding Gal., 1 Tim., Titus; Doxologies in 2 Cor., Eph., 1 Pet., Rev. 1:5-6
    - Body
    - Final Greeting or Farewell (e.g. ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you...’)

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Nature of NT Epistles**

- **Types of Letters (Subgenres):**

- Modern Types:

- Look at a Hallmark shelf (thank you, sympathy, encouragement, get well, thinking of you, wedding, birthday, holiday, etc.)
- Most of our correspondences are based on an occasion, right?



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- Nature of NT Epistles
  - Implications for Interpretation:
    - ALL NT Epistles are *occasional documents*
      - arising out of and intended for a specific occasion to address individual audiences who were facing unique problems
    - Almost all NT Epistles were occasioned from the recipients' side
      - Philemon, James, and Romans are the exception

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- **Nature of NT Epistles**

- Most interpretive challenges arise from these documents being occasional in their nature
  - Example: listening to a phone conversation and trying to figure out who is on the other end and trying to formulate the conversation without actually hearing it in order to get context
- We have the answers but don't always know what the questions or problems were that prompted them



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- Nature of NT Epistles

- Types of Letters (Subgenres):

- NT Subgenres:

- *EXHORTATIONAL* (1 Thessalonians)
- *DIATRIBE* (Romans 1-11)
- *LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION* (Philemon)
- *APOLOGY/ LETTER OF SELF-COMMENDATION* (2 Corinthians)
- *FAMILY LETTER* (Philippians) – unique subgenre of antiquity
- Also look for types of rhetoric and rhetorical devices used by author (e.g. propositions or thesis statements around which a case will be built, narrative or background and facts of the case, etc.)

# From Dust to Destiny

## “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- Paul’s Use of Diatribe in Romans

Passage	Question	Answer
3:3	“What if some do not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness?”	“Not at all!”
3:5	“Is God unjust in bringing his wrath?”	“Not at all!”
3:9	“Are we (Jews) any better?”	“Not at all!”
6:1	“Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?”	“Not at all!”
7:7	“Is the Law sin?”	“Not at all!”
11:1	“Did God reject His people?”	“Not at all!”



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Nature of NT Epistles**

- **Individual Forms: (not as many as in Gospels)**

- Creeds/Hymns

- Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16
- 1 Pet. 1:18-21; 2:21-25; 3:18-22

- Domestic Code (husbands/wives; children/parents; slave/master)

- Col. 3:18-41; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Pet. 2:13-3:7

- Corinthian Slogans

- 1 Cor. 6:12, 13; 7:1; 8:1; 10:23

- ‘Vice and Virtue’ Lists

- Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 13; Gal. 5:19-23; Jas. 3:17-18; 2 Pet. 1:5-7
- Arr. lesser to greater/greater to lesser (first & last items often most import.)

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Nature of Paul’s Epistles**
  - Paul’s purpose in his epistles (letters) was to shape Christian identity.
    - What does it mean and look like in everyday life to live as people of God here in Corinth, Rome, elsewhere?
  - Paul’s aim as an apostle and missionary was to establish Christian congregations and to strengthen them in doctrinal truth.
    - His letters act as a proxy, a surrogate, for his personal presence in lieu of his physical absence.



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching the Text**
  - First, read and re-read
    - Develop the habit of reading a whole letter through in one sitting.
    - Use different translations (NASB; ESV; HCSV; NKJV)
  - Second, get the historical context
    - Consult Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries.



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching the Text**

- Third, reconstruct the setting and/or problem

- What did you notice about the recipients of the letter? (e.g. Jew, Greek, both; wealthy or slave; problems; attitudes; etc.)
- What is the author’s attitude throughout the letter? Does it change? If so, where?
- Does the author mention details as to the specific occasion of the letter?
- Did you notice natural, logical divisions as you read (e.g. outline)
  - Today we would say, one thought per paragraph. Where are the shifts in thought? Look for repetition of key words/phrases at major sections

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching Corinthians**

- **Historical Background....**

- 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in empire (approx. 700K)
- Social melting pot w/ large immigrant population (2/3rds slaves)
- Relatively young city
  - 94 years old at time of Paul’s writing
- Capital of Achaia (27 BC)
- Strategic port city (main sea highway)
- Cosmopolitan, wealthy, patron of the arts
- Isthmian Games
- Religious (at least 26 temples/shrines)
  - Temple to Aphrodite which, at one time, employed 1000 “sacred prostitutes” both male and female “Corinthian girl”





**MACEDONIA**

**THRACE**

**EPIRUS**

**Pindus Mountains**

THASOS  
SAMOTHRACE

Mt. Athos  
IMBROS

LEMNOS

TENEDOS

Troy

**MYSIA**

**ASIA MINOR**

Mt. Olympus  
Dodona  
Sesklo  
Dimini  
Iolcus

**THESSALY**

SKYROS

LESBOS

CHIOS

Phocaea

**LYDIA**

LEUCAS

CEPHALLENIA

ITHACA

Orchomenus  
Delphi

**BOEOTIA**

**EUBOEA**

Thebes

Eleusis

**ATTICA**

Athens

Colophon

Ephesus

**CARIA**

ZACYNTHUS

Olympia

Corinth  
Mycenae  
Tiryns  
Lerna

Asine

**AEGINA**

KEOS

ANDROS

TENOS

ICARIA

SAMOS

Miletus

**PELOPONNESUS**

Pylos

Sparta

Vaphio

CYTHERA

SERIPHOS

PHYLAKOPI

MELOS

PAROS

NAXOS

AMORGOS

COS

Thera

RHODES

**Cretan Sea**

CARPATHOS

Cnosus  
Gournia  
Hagia Triada  
Phaestus  
Zakro

**CRETE**

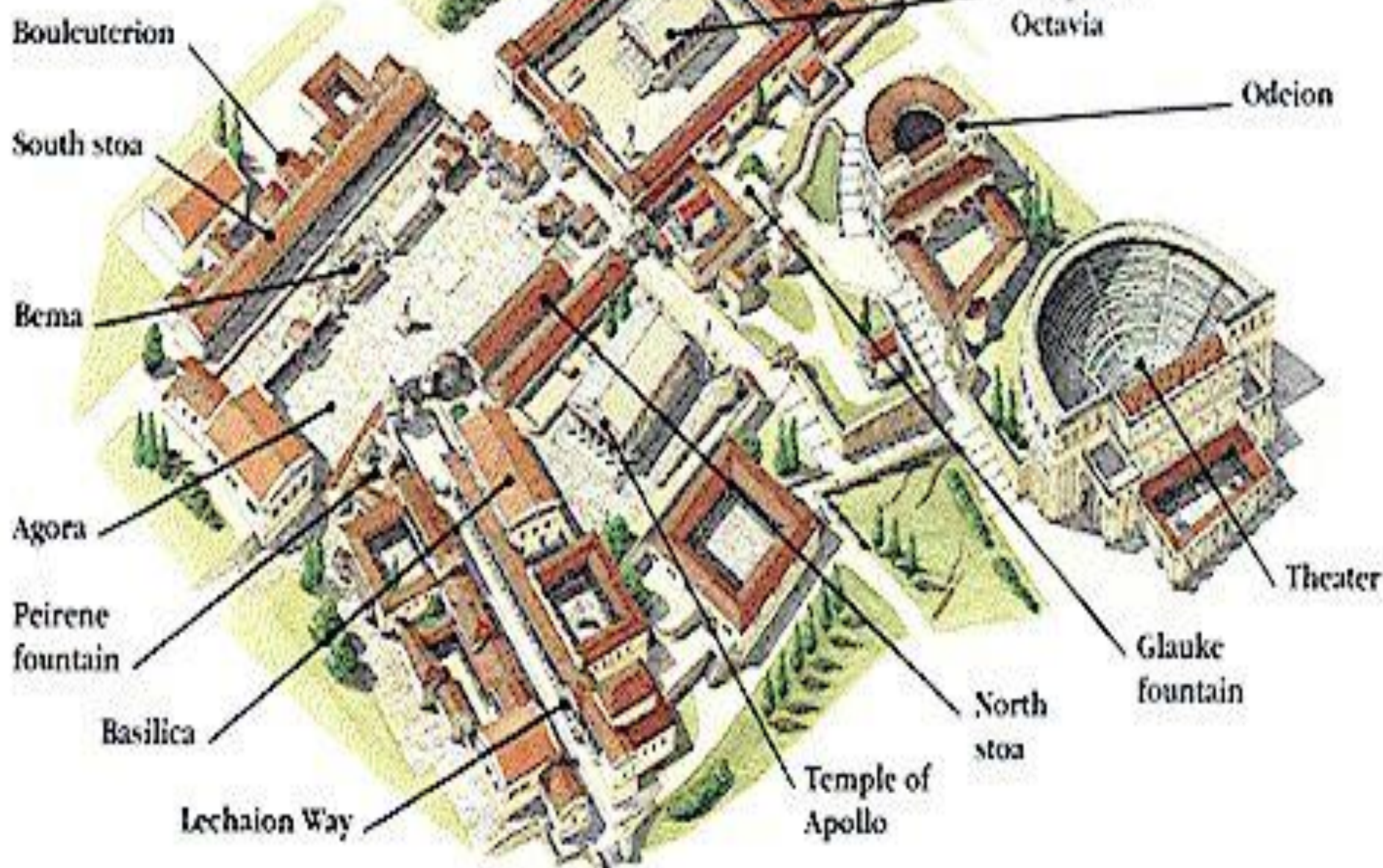
100 MILES  
100 KILOMETERS

**Mediterranean Sea**

**Black Sea**



# RECONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT CORINTH (c.AD 100)





# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching Corinthians**

- What we notice....
  - The Corinthian believers are chiefly Gentile, though there are some Jews (6:9-11; 8:10; 12:2, 13); they love wisdom and knowledge (1:18-2:5; 4:10; 8:1-13); they are proud and arrogant (4:18; 5:2,6) even to the point of judging Paul (4:1-5; 9:1-18); and have a large number of internal problems that Paul is addressing.
  - Paul’s attitude toward the Corinthians is predominantly a stern tone but fluctuates between rebuke (4:8-21; 5:2; 6:1-8), appeal (4:14-17; 16:10-11), and exhortation (6:18-20; 16:12-14).

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching Corinthians**

- Concerning the occasion of the letter...

- Paul states that he has been informed of things going on by Chloe’s household (1:11); he also mentions a report to him of immorality (5:1) – *things reported to Paul*
- A letter seems to have been sent to Paul containing questions that he is now answering (7:1); notice also the repetition of ‘now about’ (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12) – *things written to Paul*



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Outline**

- Introduction: Salutation & Thanksgiving (1a)
- Answer to the Report of Divisions (1b-4)
  - The Report: Divisions Among You (1b)
  - The Reasons: Disregard for the Cross, Spirit (1c-2)
  - The Results: Distorted Growth, Forfeited Reward (3)
  - The Restoration: Correct View of Leadership, Self (4)
- Answer to the Report of Disorders (5-6)
  - Incest: Remove this Wicked Man (5)
  - Litigation: Resolve Your Own Lawsuits (6a)
  - Immorality: Restrain from Sexual Impurity (6b)

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Outline**

- Answer to the Letter of Questions (7-15)
  - Marriage: Celibacy, Divorce, Service, Remarriage (7)
  - Liberty: Food Offered to Idols (8-10)
  - Public Worship: Women’s Submission, Lord’s Supper (11)
  - Spiritual Gifts: Uses and Abuses (12-14)
  - Resurrection: Certainty and Victory of the Resurrection (15)
- Conclusion: The Collection, Exhortations, Greetings (16)



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **The Church @ Corinth**

- Purpose/Theme of 1 Corinthians

- 1 Corinthians was written as a pastoral corrective to the news Paul had received to the many problems and disorders in the church there. (practical theology).
- The problems included divisions in the church (1:11), trust in man's wisdom or that of the world rather than God's (1:21-30), immorality (chap. 5; 6:9-20), and a number of questions regarding marriage and divorce, food, worship, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection.

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- The Church @ Corinth

- Purpose/Theme of 1 Corinthians

- **CHRISTIAN CONDUCT:** The basic theme of the letter is how the Christian's new life, sanctified in Christ and saints by calling, is to be applied to every situation of life.
- Paul appeals to the “fleshly” Corinthians on the basis of the counter-order wisdom of the **Cross** to forsake their claims to superior wisdom and spirituality, and, instead, express their unity, given them by the Spirit, in love.



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **The Church @ Corinth**

- Purpose/Theme of 1 Corinthians

- The theme of Christian conduct is everywhere related to the Cross of Christ. It is commanded on the basis of the Lordship of Christ over the Church which is His.
- This new life in Christ calls for a new way of living through the Holy Spirit (3:16, 17; 6:11, 19-20). God’s wisdom manifested to us in Christ is to change believers on both the individual and social level.

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

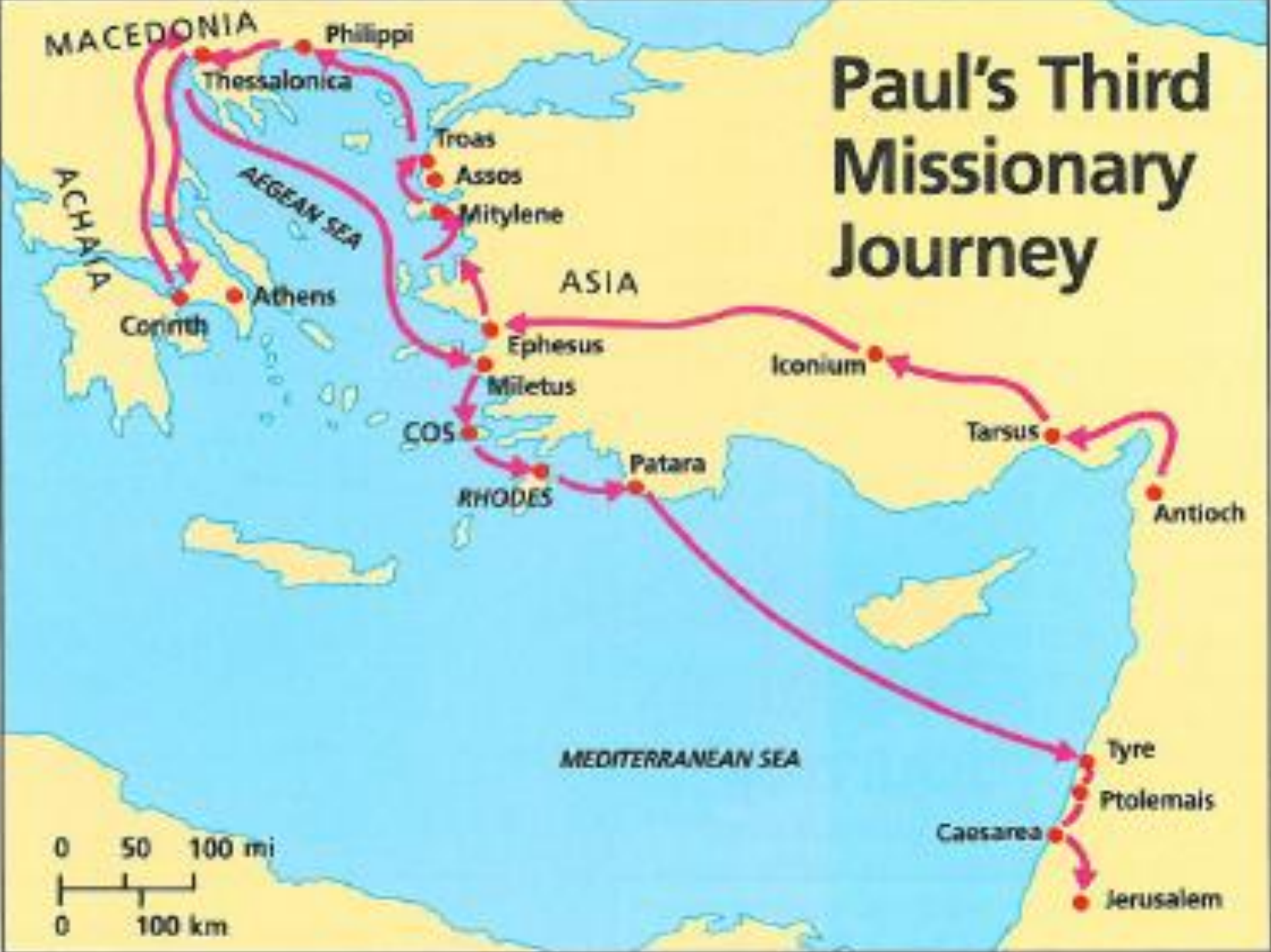
- **Approaching Corinthians**

- Paul's Ministry @ Corinth....

- Paul arrives during 2MJ after preaching in Athens (Acts 18:1-2)
- Crispus, the synagogue ruler believed (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14)
- Lived with Aquila and Priscilla & worked as tentmaker
- Stayed 18 months (Acts 18:1-17; 1 Cor. 2:3)
- Apollos' ministry ratified (Acts 18:27-19:1; 1 Cor. 3:1-9)
- Paul's final visit (Acts 20:1-5)
  - “Previous Letter” (55 – Paul in Ephesus)
  - 1 Corinthians (55 – Paul in Ephesus)
  - “Harsh Letter” (56 – Paul in Ephesus)
  - 2 Corinthians (56 – Paul in Macedonia)



# Paul's Third Missionary Journey



MACEDONIA

Philippi

Thessalonica

Troas

Assos

Mitylene

ASIA

Ephesus

Iconium

COS

RHODES

Patara

Tarsus

Antioch

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Tyre

Ptolemais

Caesarea

Jerusalem

0 50 100 mi

0 100 km

ACHAIA

AEGEAN SEA

Athens

Corinth

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Approaching Corinthians**

- **Corinthian Correspondence**

- Founding visit to Corinth during 2 MJ (49-51 AD)
- Initial letter, now lost, likely addressed sexual immorality and idolatry (1 Cor. 5:9-10)
- Letter from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:1; 16:15-17)
- Paul’s reply (Corinthians A - 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians) 55 AD
- Possible subsequent “painful visit and severe letter” (2 Cor. 2:3; 7:8)
- Letter in response to Titus’ report (Corinthians B – 2 Corinthians) 55-56 AD – about 6 months after 1 Cor.
  - Paul likely sent Titus w/ harsh letter to Corinth and rendezvoused back up with him in Macedonia to get the report of their response. He then sent Titus again of his visit w/ 2 Cor.



# From Dust to Destiny

## “The Corinthian Correspondence”

1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Objective and practical	Subjective and personal
Insight into the character of an early church	Insight into the character and ministry of Paul
Deliberate instruction	Impassioned testimony
Warns against pagan influences	Warns against Judaistic influences

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **The Church @ Corinth**
  - Theme of 2 Cor.
    - The Comfort and Grace of God in the Christian Ministry
    - **Christ** our comfort (1:5), triumph (2:14), Lord (2:4), liberty or freedom for a new life (3:17), light (4:6), judge (5:10), reconciliation (5:19), gift (9:15), owner (10:7), and power (12:9).



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **The Church @ Corinth**

- Four-Fold Purpose of 2 Cor.

- Prepare for Paul’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Visit to Corinth (2 MJ, ‘painful’ visit)
- Express his joy and thanksgiving at the favorable response of the church to Paul’s ministry (1-7)
- Remind the believers of their commitment to the collection for the Christians in Judea (8-9)
- Rebuke a minority and defend his apostolic authority (10-13).

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Outline**

- Introduction: Salutation & Thanksgiving (1a)
- Paul’s Consolation (1b-6a)
  - Circumstances of Paul’s Sorrow (1b-2b)
    - Attacked in Ephesus (1b)
    - Accused in Corinth (1c-2a)
    - Alone in Troas (2b)
  - Confidence in Paul’s Sorrow (2c-6a)
    - God Leads Us Triumphantly (2c)
    - God Uses Us Gloriously (3)
    - God Enables Us Supernaturally (4)
    - God Motivates Us Powerfully (5)
    - God Strengthens Us Adequately (6a)



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Outline**

- Paul’s Reconciliation (6b-7)
  - Reconcile Yourselves to Us (6b)
  - Remove Yourselves from Unbelievers (6c-7a)
  - Be Assured of My Joy Over Your Repentance (7b)
- Paul’s Solicitation (8-9)
  - Examples of Giving (8)
    - The Macedonians (8a)
    - The Lord (8b)
  - Exhortations for Giving (8c-9)

# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- **Outline**

- Paul’s Vindication (10-13)
  - His Apostolic Meekness (10)
  - His Apostolic Marks (11-12b)
    - His jealousy for the church (11a)
    - His sufferings for the church (11b)
    - His revelations for the church (12a)
    - His signs to the church (12b)
  - His Apostolic Mandate (12c-13b)
    - Appeal for Repentance (12c)
    - Statement of Plans (13a)
- Conclusion: Greetings, Benediction (13b)



# From Dust to Destiny “The Corinthian Correspondence”

- The Church @ Corinth

- Paul's Opponents

- Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-5, 18-21 – opposed to Paul, not just preferring Apollos
- 2 Cor. 10-13 – false teachers
- Claims: pure Jewish descent, brandishing letters of recommendation, true apostles, “servants of righteousness” (e.g. servants of Moses (Law))
- Charges: Paul is big on words but little in presence; ineffective speaker; coward, unreliable, embezzler, not a true apostle, mentally off