

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 1ST - 2ND, 2022 // BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

## THE AUTHOR: OUR OLD FRIEND PAUL

- Jewish-born near the border of Lebanon in modern day Turkey.
- Also, a Roman citizen.
- A highly-educated religious leader and Pharisee that persecuted Christians until his dramatic conversion around 35 A.D.
- Ministered mostly to non-Jews.
- Executed by Nero in 68 A.D. in Rome.

## THE SETTING: CORINTH

- This letter was written around 54-56 A.D. from Ephesus during Paul's 3rd journey.
- Paul planted this church in the capital of Achaia, a Roman province, on his 2nd journey.
- A seaport city of international commerce.
- This was a diverse church from all walks of life, but the majority were mostly common lower-and middle-class Romans and Greeks.

## THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PURPOSE

- The Corinthians had begun to place too much value on worldly principles, mainly Greek philosophy, and were neglecting the Word.
- Because of this, a slew of problems began: **division in the church, sexual perversion, neglecting the community, abuse of spiritual gifts, and a lack of love for God and others.**

## GREETINGS (1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9)

### THE APOSTLE PAUL

An apostle is one commissioned by Jesus to teach. Paul was a literal apostle in the fact that he literally saw and was sent by the resurrected Christ.

- **This means his writings were to be taken as God's direct commands and words.** Sosthenes, a disciple and secretary to Paul, traveled with him on this trip.

### "CALLED AS SAINTS"

As Paul begins this letter, he wants to remind the recipients in Corinth that they are not normal people but people that belong to God and represent Him in their area.

- **Because they had been set apart and "enriched in Him in every way, in all speech and knowledge," they should be leading pure and holy lives.**

### I DO THIS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU

Before Paul addresses a long list of problems in this church, he assures them that he is thankful for them and that he loves them.

- He also affirms the giftings and blessings that God had given the Corinthians. As we will learn, this church was very spiritually gifted by God. We will also learn that **pride crept in and abuse followed.**

### TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL BECAUSE OF CHRIST

Though the Corinthians had gotten off track, Paul knew that God not only loved them but the fact that He had gifted them so much gave hope that they would turn the situation around.

- He also warned them that **flagrant and repetitious turning from the truth would prove their faith to be in vain.** Paul's hope lay in God's grace, not the Corinthians.

### DIVISIONS (1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-12)

#### FACTIONS

After his greeting, Paul turned his attention to one of the dominant problems. Instead of loving and serving each other, **the church had divided into factions that thought they were superior to the other segments of the church.**

- People will always find tribes, but **it is the arrogance of thinking we are better that is the problem.**

#### "I URGE YOU"

Paul respectfully but forcibly appeals to the church to agree with each other on major doctrines, eliminate divisions, and be united in understanding and conviction.

- **We can disagree on non-salvation issues, but when it comes to the major doctrines and commands of the Word, all Christians must agree.**

#### "CHLOE'S PEOPLE"

We know very little about Chloe, but because he refers to her by the first name and takes her perception of the problems of the church to heart, she must have been a respected and influential person in the Corinthian church.

- This is a subtle reminder of the unique spiritual insight often given to women and their important contribution to the church.

### CELEBRITY CHURCH CULTURE

The heart of the divisions was the division of the church based on well-known Christian leaders. In other words, **they expected leaders to do their spiritual maturation for them.**

- Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter), were all godly men, but they made them more of a focus than Christ. They also claimed allegiance to a group more than to Jesus.

### OTHERS DIDN'T VALUE HUMAN LEADERSHIP AT ALL

On the other hand, others said, "I belong to Christ," meaning they didn't need human leadership because they had Jesus. In other words, "I can be a Christian without church."

- There is a **balance** between both views. **We need church and pastors, but we must also know the limitations of people, therefore ultimately depending on God.**

### THE GOSPEL (1 CORINTHIANS 1:13-17)

#### "IS CHRIST DIVIDED?"

Paul asks several questions to respond to the strife and division within the church. The first pointed to the unity that is Christ.

- When Christ was resurrected, He was not dismembered, so the body of God (church) should not be either. Also, Jesus is part of the Trinity, a harmonious community that makes up God.

#### WAS I CRUCIFIED FOR YOU?

The second question pointed to the fact that though Paul loved and led them, he was not their savior. This is why people were not baptized under any other name than Jesus.

- Again, shepherds are vitally important, but no human can ever spiritually save another. **Our job is to point people to the Savior, disciple, and baptize them in His name.**

#### PAUL WAS AN ADVOCATE FOR BAPTISM

Paul was pro-baptism. The reason Paul was thankful that he didn't baptize many people was because he didn't want to become too much of a focus in the local churches.

- Just like Jesus taught and delegated baptism to His disciples, Paul did a similar ministry. This was instrumental in making more leaders to minister.

#### LETTING THE WORD DO THE WORK

Paul said his job was to "preach the gospel-not with eloquent wisdom so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect."

- **The Bible is the ultimate wisdom.** Paul is saying the Word of God contradicts human "wisdom." So, Paul **doesn't have to use manipulative human tactics to "sell" the good news. It "sells" itself.**

#### WHAT IS THE "EFFECT" OF THE CROSS?

The effect of the cross is salvation by no other means than the blood Jesus shed for us on the cross. This simply means **we cannot save ourselves from destruction.**

- **Salvation comes from a relationship with Jesus that begins with us acknowledging the atonement** (reparation for wrong doing) for our sins.

#### WE'RE CALLED TO A HIGHER STANDARD

- **If we claim to be Christians, there is a high standard we are called to live by.** This standard is outlined in the Bible and confirmed in our spirit by conviction.
- Though at times we will make mistakes, **the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to live righteously if we have a relationship with Jesus.**

#### UNITED ON THE MAJORS

- We can disagree on non-salvation issues (minors), but Christians cannot disagree on major doctrines.
- Some major doctrines include the exclusivity of Jesus, the cross and resurrection, sin and repentance, baptism, discipleship, community (church), serving, and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- We will never get unity completely right on this side of life because we are humans prone to being prideful.
- The goal is to unite on majors, show grace, not be competitive with other Christians/churches, and **to advance the gospel to non-believers instead of wasting time fighting with other Christians.**

#### ARE WE LETTING THE GOSPEL DO THE WORK?

- Are we reading and learning from the Word? **Do we truly believe the teachings and principles in the Bible work?**
- If we apply the teachings of the Bible to our lives, they will not only transform us they will positively affect those around us. **The key is trusting God and His Word and letting the Spirit do the work.**