

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 2ND, 2022 // BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

### INTRODUCTION (1 CORINTHIANS)

#### THE AUTHOR

Paul (Saul) was born in Tarsus (modern Turkey). He was a Roman citizen of Jewish descent.

- He was a highly educated Pharisee (religious leader) who persecuted Christians all the way up until his own conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-21).

Paul goes on to lead three missionary journeys where he would plant churches and minister to the Gentiles.

- He would go on to write 13 letters to these churches and leaders, which make up almost half of the books contained in the NT, before being executed in Rome by Nero.

#### ARRIVAL IN CORINTH

On Paul's 2nd missionary journey, he arrived in the capital city of the Roman Province of Achaia (Greece).

- Corinth was a port city and an economic center with all levels of society but mainly consisted of those who were neither rich, wise, nor of noble birth. Most of the population would have been considered "working class."

#### FAME OF CORINTH

Romans destroyed Corinth in 146 B.C. and rebuilt it 100 yrs. later under Julius Caesar. When Paul arrived in 50 A.D., the city would have been well known for 100's of yrs. before he was born.

- Corinth was known for athletic games, pottery, and the worship of Greek gods. However, they were especially known for their partying, drunkenness, and loss of sexual morals.

#### TIME SPENT IN CORINTH

Paul had a vision (Acts 16:9) that led him to Corinth, where he preached the Gospel and started a church that we can read about in Acts 18.

- Paul left Corinth after 18 months with Aquila and Priscilla (18:18), leaving them in Ephesus, where they met and trained Apollos to go back to Corinth and lead.

#### LETTER TO CORINTH

Paul would continue his travels planting churches. While on his third missionary journey, he received word of issues back in Corinth as well as letters of concerns from the church.

- 1 Corinthians is Paul's response and correction to the Church in Corinth concerning their questions and issues.

1 Corinthians is the 2nd letter written to the church. The first is mentioned in 5:9, but a copy of this letter does not exist today.

- The lost letter spoke to the issue of sexual immorality and is essentially duplicated in 1 Corinthians, where he also addresses divisions, sex, food, the gathering of the church, and the resurrection.

#### STATE OF CORINTH

Paul wrote Romans 1:18-32 while in Corinth and was most likely describing what he saw around him, giving us a good view of what it was like in Corinth.

- Paul describes a prideful people, depending on human wisdom and adopting the lifestyle and practices of the world.

#### PURPOSE OF WRITING

1 Corinthians was written to encourage the Corinthian church to **acknowledge the Lord's ownership of them.**

- Once they embraced their identity in Christ, Paul wanted the Corinthian church to see how **the truth of who they belong to should affect every facet of their lives.**

#### GREETINGS (1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-3)

##### FAMILIAR FORMAT

Paul starts his letter in a way that was common for him as well as in the ancient world. He identified who the letter was from and who the letter was intended for.

- This is like an envelope in our day. Before you open a letter, card, or package, you can look and identify exactly where it came from and who it belongs to.

##### MENTIONS HIMSELF AND A BROTHER

Paul starts by establishing that he is a "called apostle by God's will." Qualifications for an apostle include having been with Christ during his ministry, personally witnessed Jesus after his resurrection, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles or signs.

- Paul states that it was God's calling and will that he be placed with the 12 apostles.

Paul also mentions a brother, Sosthenes, in the introduction of his letter. They would have known this resident of Corinth as the Jewish leader of the Synagogue, who replaced Crispus after he and his household became believers (Acts 18:8).

- This man, who was once beaten by the Gentiles after an attempt to persecute Paul (Acts 18:17), is now a believer traveling with him.

## THANKSGIVING (1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9)

### PRAYER OF THANKFULNESS

Paul says that he is always thankful for the believers in Corinth. This expression of thankfulness comes at the beginning of a letter that the bulk is spent rebuking sin and correcting error.

- Paul does this as a display of God's grace. Only by personally experiencing the depths of God's grace is he able to show it to these believers who are dependent on grace.

### PRAISE WITH CORRECTION

Though there were problems and struggles that needed to be addressed, Paul points out the **strong characteristics** this church had.

- He essentially says, "these believers despite the shortcomings, **proclaim Jesus, know about Jesus, are displaying supernatural gifts of God, and are excited about the return Christ.**"

### CONFIDENCE

These believers had their strengths and weaknesses. Paul praises God for their strengths and expresses his confidence that God will work on their weaknesses and "strengthen [them] to the end, so that [they] will be blameless in the day of our Lord."

- Paul tells us that **the source of his confidence is God's faithfulness.**

### THE REMEDY

Notice that Paul mentions Jesus Christ a total of 11 times in the first 10 verses.

- Paul places this emphasis on Jesus by mentioning him at least once in every verse to establish the only way to rectify all the problems experienced by the Corinthians: **getting your eyes off self and on Jesus.**

### DIVISION (1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17)

#### PLEA FOR UNITY

Paul says that he has received word from "Chloe's people" that there is division among them, so he pleads with them to be unified as believers.

- Instead of tearing apart the body of Christ, Paul urges the church to "be united together in the same understanding and the same conviction."

#### WEAKENED BY DIVISION

The church was suffering because it was divided among itself (Mark 3:25). There were "cliques" or "factions" that were forming under the different leaders within the church.

- One group claimed to be "right with God" in following Paul, while others claimed to follow Apollos, Cephas (Peter), and Christ. All pridefully claimed superiority over the others.

#### PREFERENCE IS NOT WRONG

The issue was not that people had a preference to one leader over the other, but that they began to look down on those with a different preference and divide into cliques behind one minister or another.

- We are not bound to sit under the teaching of every minister, but **we are bound to respect every minister with a Holy call.**

#### FOOLISHNESS OF DIVISION

Even as foolish as it was for people to divide under the name of Jesus, Paul points to how absurd it is to divide under the name of a man.

- Apparently, there were some who were claiming superiority because they were baptized by a particular leader, so Paul expresses his thankfulness for not baptizing more people, therefore adding fuel to the debate.

#### "NOT SENT TO BAPTIZE"

Paul is not speaking against baptism, nor is he speaking about it being essential to salvation.

- Paul is saying that he was sent "to preach the Gospel." Through teaching and discipleship, he would raise up those who will go out and fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

#### AN INEFFECTIVE GOSPEL

Paul warns against a type of teaching that **empties the cross of Christ of its effect.** He is making it clear that it is possible to preach the gospel in a way that makes it of no effect.

- This is a warning against a type of teaching that is **reliant on man's knowledge** and **eloquent speech, therefore losing the effectiveness to change lives.**

#### TENSION BETWEEN CHURCH AND CITY

- Where do we get our standards from? Is it societal or scriptural?
- Are we disciples that are making disciples that make disciples?
- Do we strive for unity?
- Is the church influencing the city, or is the city influencing the church?