

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

While waiting to begin...

1. What was the church in Corinth like? Is this a church you would like to be part of?
Read 1:10-11, 4:18, 5:1, 6:6-7, 8:9, 10:21, 11:20-21, 14:20, 15:34

Where's Corinth?



- shipping and business, travel and culture... diversity
- ideas and philosophies... and oratory
- sexual immorality: “to Corinthianize...”

Paul and the Corinthians...

His first visit:

see Acts 18:1-17...

in Corinth for 18 months... probably 50-51 AD

Writes four letters:

- (1) Earlier than 1 Corinthians (see 1 Cor 5:9)
- (2) Then 1 Corinthians
- (3) The “tearful/severe” letter (2 Cor. 2:4, 7:8)
- (4) Then 2 Corinthians

Paul writes 1 Corinthians...

from Ephesus (see 16:8)...

probably in early 55AD (cf. 16:5-9 and Acts 19:21-22)

Why write 1 Corinthians?

Because of what Chloe’s people said (1:11, also 5:1)

Because of their letter to him (7:1a)

... like listening to one side of a phone call!

The profile of the Corinthian church

Read 1:1-9 → sanctified / set apart / called to be holy
→ united with all believers
→ gifted by God's grace, enriched

Problems!!! E.g. 1:10-11, 4:18, 5:1, 6:6-7, 8:9, 10:21, 11:20-21, 14:20, 15:34
= immaturity... impurity/worldliness... disunity

Four "buzz" words indicating areas of controversy

- i. Spiritual – *pneumatikos* – 2:13,14,15, 3:1, 9:11, 10:3-4, 12:1, 14:1,37, 15:44,46
- ii. Wisdom – *sophia* – 1:17,19,20,20,21,22,24,30, 2:1,4,5,6,7,13, 3:19, 12:8
- iii. Knowledge – *gnosis* – 1:5, 8:1,7,10,11, 12:8, 13:2,8, 14:6
- iv. Power – *dunamis* – 1:18,24, 2:4-5, 4:19,20, 5:4, 6:14, 12:10,28,29, 14:11, 15:24,43,56

The message of 1 Corinthians in one sentence

**** The gospel requires God's holy people to mature in purity and unity¹ ****

This term = chapters 1-4 = "The danger of DIVISIONS"

1:1-9 The reality of the "church of God" in Corinth. Unity. Centrality of Jesus.
1:10-17 Confronting divisions – which are especially focused on church leaders
1:18-2:5 The centrality of the gospel of the Cross, and of the Cross to the gospel
2:6-16 The real division: those with and without the Spirit.
3:1-4:21 The nature of true Christian ministry – and therefore of gospel spirituality

Challenges:

- (1) Do we *really* understand the Gospel?
- (2) Does it impact how we think about ourselves... or other church members... or Christian leaders?
- (3) Do we help to solve conflicts... or enflame them?