



Walking Thru The Bible

1 CORINTHIANS

Introduction

"First Corinthians" *Pros Korinthos*, is one of several letters Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. We have two of those letters. A reference to another letter can be found in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

The background of the church at Corinth can be found in Acts chapters 18 and 19.

Author: Paul's name is given several times (1:1, 12-17; 3:3-4, 22; 16:21). The style and language are Paul's and the contents harmonize with what we know of Corinth in Paul's time.

Date: Paul gives the place from which he was writing as Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8). It was probably written during the latter part of his stay in Ephesus (Acts 19) about AD 57.

Historical Setting: The city of Corinth was strategically located on the isthmus of land that connects the lower peninsula of Greece with the mainland. Descriptions of Corinth found in ancient writings state that there were many temples in Corinth, some devoted to Egyptian deities. There was a temple to Venus (Greek= Aphrodite) where a 1000 female slaves gave themselves in prostitution to the worshippers. They had engraved on the soles of their sandals an inscription that left the words "Follow Me" imprinted in the sand. The term "corinthianize" became synonymous with drunken and immoral debauchery. The materialism of the city left lives empty, but Christianity could fill that need.

To Whom Written: Paul came to Corinth for the first time on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17), with much weakness, fear and trembling (2:3), and established the body of Christ. As is so often true, the local culture threatened to affect the church more than the church could affect the culture.

Corinthian Christians were "saints", the "church of God," but they were engaged in things contrary to the Christian life. Reports had been delivered to Paul concerning their conduct and irregular behavior with regard to unity, attitude, life, and worship. Paul therefore wrote to rebuke, correct, and challenge the saints, and what he writes is of great importance to the church in every age.

The Message: The names "Jesus" and "Christ" appear in 1 Corinthians 85 times. The title "Lord" appears an additional 61 times. For Paul, everything is founded in Jesus "through whom all things came and through whom we live" (8:6).

The core of Paul's message is Christ. He insists that the most important topic he discussed with these Christians was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (15:3-8). When he sums up the essence of his message, it is "Christ crucified" (1:23). Paul likes to show how the cross-- which seems to be evidence of weakness and appears so foolish to many-- is really evidence of great power (1:18) and wisdom (2:6-8; 1:18-2:16; 3:18-20; 8:1-3).

Background: It appears that after Paul established the church in Corinth about AD 50 and left them that he wrote the church a letter which has not been preserved by the Holy Spirit. In turn, Paul received disturbing news about the disciples at Corinth along with a letter from them about a number of questions they wanted him to answer about the Christian life.

The city of Corinth was as wicked as any city today and like so many churches now the Corinthian church had allowed the world to enter. One writer wrote of them saying:

"They were carnal, immature, immoral, selfish, proud, heretical, and divisive. They were enamored with human philosophy. They identified with little cliques which followed different spiritual leaders. They tolerated sin, fornication, and incest. They took each other to court, abused God's intended role for men and women, and were gluttonous and drunken at the Lord's Supper. They allowed pagan worship ritual to be brought into their own worship, perverted and abused spiritual gifts, and [didn't understand]... the resurrection. They had managed to drag into the church all the old practices of the world. They had not made a clear distinction between the holy and the profane!"

With so many problems at Corinth the letter serves to show us how a church can deal with such problems in the lives of Christians today. It is therefore, an important practical letter for churches in our time.

Outline: Because of the background of the letter noted in the previous paragraph and Paul's response, we want to outline the book in terms of their problems and Paul's response.

Problems In the Church at Corinth

Introduction:	1:1-9
Greeting	1:1-3
Expression of thanks	2:4-9
1. Division in the church	1:10 - 4:21
a. The fact of division	1:10-17
b. The causes of division	1:18-2:16
c. The consequences of division	3:1-4:5
d. The example of Paul	4:6-21
2. Scandal--the man who married his step-mother	5:1-13
3. Members going to court	
against members before heathen judges	6:1-20
4. Questions of marriage and/or celibacy	7:1-9
5. Question of divorce/separation from a non-member	7:10-38
6. Question about remarriage	7:39-40
7. Question of eating meat offered to idols	8:1 - 11:1
a. Inquire... eat?	ch. 8
b. Example of Paul	ch. 9
c. Exhortation	ch. 10
8. Problem of women's behavior in worship (veils)	11:2-16
9. Problem with incorrect observations of	
the Lord's Supper	11:17-34
10. Use and misuse of spiritual gifts	12:1 - 14:40
Doctrinal problems:	
11. Problem of understanding the resurrection	15:1-58
12. Regarding the collection on the first day	
of the week	16:1-4
Closing	16:5-24
Paul's plan to visit	16:5-9
Exhortation, greetings, and benediction	16:10-24

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23-33

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

1. A **memorial feast**, Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:25b.
2. A **communion** with Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16
3. Surpasses wisdom of men-- contains only two elements.
 - a. **Bread**, the staff of life, (Psalms 105:16) represents his body, Matthew 26:26.
 - b. **"Fruit of the vine,"** representing the blood of our Lord shed for the remission of our sins, Matthew 26:28.
4. A **proclamation**, 1 Corinthians 11:26.

WHY EAT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. He commands us to do so, Luke 22:19.
2. Because we love him, John 14:23; 2 Cor. 5:14.
3. To keep in contact with him let we forget.

WHEN SHOULD THE LORD'S SUPPER BE EATEN?

1. Jesus said "This do in remembrance of me."
2. We should want to remember him often.
3. The Apostles put it on the "first day of the week," Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Rev. 1:10.
 - a. The day was appropriate, John 20:1, 19; Acts 2:1-4.
 - b. They had the authority, Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:42.
4. The "first day" comes once a week.
5. As other services, not to be neglected, Heb. 10:25.

WHO SHOULD EAT OF THE SUPPER?

1. Citizens of the kingdom, Luke 22:29-30.
 - a. Those "born again" into the kingdom, John 3:5.
 - b. Those translated into it by "baptism", Col. 1:13.
2. They who can and do "discern the body," 1 Cor. 11:29.
 - a. Infants and some handicapped can not "discern."
 - b. They who can discern, but do not, drink judgment unto themselves, 1 Corinthians 11:29.
3. Citizens who have examined themselves, 1 Cor. 11:28.
 - a. If they have repented of sin, Matt. 5:23-24.
 - b. If they put the Lord first, John 21:15
4. We should neither invite nor forbid.

Suggested hymns:

"When We Meet In Sweet Communion"
"Night With Ebon Pinions"