

1 CORINTHIANS OVERVIEW

THE CITY OF CORINTH

Ancient Greece was divided into two principal areas: Macedonia on mainland Greece and Achaia on the Peloponnesus Peninsula. The Peninsula is almost completely severed from the mainland by a bay thrusting in from the Adriatic Sea on the west. Only a narrow isthmus, four to six miles wide connects the Peloponnesus to the remainder of Greece.

At the southern end of the isthmus is a range of mountains topped by the Acrocorinth peak at the foot of which lay the ancient city of Corinth. As the Roman capital of the province of Achaia which included much of Macedonia, Corinth was the fourth largest city in the Roman empire. With its two ports, one on each side of the isthmus, Corinth served as a bridge for seagoing traffic between the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. This strategic location made it one of the chief commercial centers of the Empire.



In 146 BC, the then ancient and thriving city of Greek Corinth was completely sacked and destroyed by the Romans. The city lay in ruins for a hundred years until Rome began to rebuild it in the reign of Julius Caesar in 44 BC. A colony of demobilized Roman soldiers, all of whom were freedmen, were used to rebuild the city.

Corinth quickly became the richest and most powerful city in Greece and the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Widely known for its wealth and culture, Corinth was also regarded as the most wicked and licentious of cities. The temple of the goddess Aphrodite was located in Corinth. This temple, boasted two thousand female slaves who were really “sacred” prostitutes, available to the city and to the numerous commercial travelers. The temple income was a major source of revenue for the city.

To live as a Corinthian meant, to the men of Paul’s day, to live in luxury and licentiousness. This wealthy, bustling, licentious city was also the home of numerous schools of philosophy. Running the gamut of Greek and Roman philosophy, these schools made disputing with words or “the wisdom of words” one of the main intellectual pursuits of the Corinthians.

The original population of Roman freedmen was quickly infused by native Greeks as well as the polyglot of people engaged in commerce. By Paul's time, the city contained a large Jewish element which had been created by the commerce associated with the city, and by the fact that the Emperor Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome, many of whom found their way to Corinth. Approximately one half of the population consisted of slaves or craftsmen.

Rome	Washington, DC / New York!
Alexandria	Los Angeles / San Francisco!
Antioch	Chicago or Philadelphia!
Tarsus	Minneapolis!
Pisidian Antioch	Allentown!
Lystra	Reading!
Derbe	Easton!
Philippi	Scottsdale!
Thessalonica	Philadelphia!
Berea	Wilmington!
Athens	Boston!
Corinth	New Orleans!
Ephesus	San Francisco or Seattle!



THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Paul spent some eighteen months in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17), which resulted in the establishment of a Church. Apollos later became the second great leader of the Corinthian Church (Acts 18:24,27; 19:1; 1Cor. 3:4-6). During his three years at Ephesus Paul apparently stayed in close touch with the Church at Corinth. There is the strong probability that he had a short visit with them during this period.

The Corinthian congregation was predominantly Gentile, although it did contain a noticeable number of Jews, including Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue when Paul first arrived. The main body of the Church came from slaves or the humbler social classes. However, there were others of prominence in the group. These included Titus Justus, the Roman citizen who gave refuge to Paul, and Erastus, the chamberlain, a treasurer or manager, of the city. The religious tolerance of the city, the zeal of the members of the church, and the leadership of Paul caused the Church to thrive.

In the 50's of the first century, when 1 Corinthians was written, it was a flourishing church, but beset by problems arising from the multiple leaders, various intellectual factions, and diversity within the congregation. These problems form the basis for Paul's two letters to the Corinthians.

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT TIMELINE OF EVENTS

A.D. 49-50: Council at Jerusalem

<i>The Council at Jerusalem</i>	Acts 15:2b-21
<i>The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers</i>	Acts 15:22-35

A.D. 50-52: Second Missionary Journey

<i>Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas</i>	Acts 15:36-41
<i>Timothy Joins Paul and Silas</i>	Acts 16:1-5
<i>Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia</i>	Acts 16:6-10
<i>Lydia's Conversion in Philippi</i>	Acts 16:11-15
<i>Paul and Silas in Prison</i>	Acts 16:16-40
<i>In Thessalonica</i>	Acts 17:1-9
<i>In Berea</i>	Acts 17:10-15
<i>In Athens</i>	Acts 17:16-34

A.D. 51-52: 18-Month Stay in Corinth

<i>In Corinth</i>	Acts 18:1-11
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[During this 18-month stay in Corinth he wrote the two letters to the Thessalonian church 1 Thessalonians was probably written soon after Timothy and Silas rejoined him in Corinth from Macedonia (18:5); 2 Thessalonians was likely written some six months after that.]

A.D. 51: Writing of 1 THESSALONIANS **1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:28**

A.D. 51-52: Writing of 2 THESSALONIANS **2 Thessalonians 1:1-3:18**

A.D. 52: Appearance before Gallio

<i>In Corinth (cont'd)</i>	Acts 18:12-17
<i>Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos</i>	Acts 18:18-21

<u>A.D. 52: Return to Jerusalem and Antioch</u> <i>Another Visit to Jerusalem, then Antioch</i>	Acts 18:22
<u>A.D. 53-57: Third Missionary Journey</u> <i>Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos (cont'd)</i>	Acts 18:23-28
<u>A.D. 54-56: 2-Year Stay in Ephesus</u> <i>Paul in Ephesus</i>	Acts 19:1-22
<u>A.D. 55: Writing of 1 CORINTHIANS</u>	1 Corinthians 1:1-16:24

1 CORINTHIANS

Written in Ephesus during the spring, prior to Pentecost (per 16:8), 1 Corinthians is Paul's written response to information he'd received from "some from Chloe's household" (1:11), reports of a situation involving gross sexual immorality (5:1-13), and various questions about practical matters of Christian faith, worship, and living. It seems that Timothy was sent to deliver the letter. In chapter 16 he also mentions the planned collection for the gift offering to Jerusalem.

Of all of Paul's letters, 1 Corinthians was probably (after 2 Corinthians!) the most difficult one he had to write. Almost the entirety of the epistle is concerned directly or indirectly with doctrinal and ethical problems which were plaguing this young fellowship of new believers.

Not one to avoid unpleasant issues, Paul immediately plunges headfirst into these problems...

TRANSLATION OF THE FIRST TEN VERSES, AND NOTES

Verse 1:

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother:

RE: Sosthenes:

Staying and working Priscilla and Aquila (18:1-3)
Reasoning in the synagogue (18:4)
Silas and Timothy join ministry (18:5)
House of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God (18:7)
Crispus, the synagogue ruler (18:8)
Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler (18:17)
Priscilla and Aquila leave with Paul (18:18)
Priscilla and Aquila left in Ephesus (18:19)
Priscilla and Aquila meet Apollos in Ephesus (18:26)
Apollos comes to Achaia (Corinth), preaches (18:27)
But not there at the time of the letter (16:12)

So Paul is writing, from Ephesus, with Sosthenes!
He is sending the letter with Timothy (4:17; 16:10)
Priscilla and Aquila greeting from house church (16:19)

P.S. -- What ever became of Silas after the second journey? The next time we see him is his having helped Peter compose 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:12), together with Mark (5:13), to whom Peter refers as "my son"!

Verse 2:

To the church [congregation, assembly, gathering] of God that is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified [set apart, made holy, consecrated] in Christ Jesus, called to be saints [consecrated ones], together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

NOTE: Three references to God's calling in 2 verses. Also: "have been sanctified" in Christ.....

Verse 3:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: Grace and peace from God and Lord....

Verse 4:

I give thanks [*eucharisto*] to my God always concerning you because of the grace of God that has been given to you in Christ Jesus,

Verse 5:

that in every way you have been enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge,

Verse 6:

just as the testimony [*martyrion*] of Christ has been confirmed [verified, proven to be true, sustained, strengthened] in you,

Verse 7:

so that you are not lacking in any gift [spiritual gift, *charismati*] as you wait expectantly for the revealing [*apocalypsin*] of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Verse 8:

who will also confirm [sustain, strengthen] you to the end, blameless [guiltless] in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9:

Faithful is God, through whom you were called into the fellowship [communion, partnership, *koinonian*] of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SUMMARY:

He gives thanks for grace, that they've been enriched in speech and knowledge, so as not to be lacking in any spiritual gifts, as they await the day of Jesus' coming; followed by a beautiful summary comment in verse 9.

(An overall theology here shown, also some patterns already familiar from other letters – grace, the affirmation of testimony in faithfulness, shown forth in waiting for the Day of his coming. Theme for Corinthians introduced here: their strength (their giftedness) has been misused in such manner as to become their weakness....)

This was the good news. From verse 10 forward Paul begins addressing the bad news....