

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

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The Writer

Paul

“ 1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

The Purpose of the Writing

"To the Church of God which is at Corinth" 1:2

"To them that are sanctified" "Called to be saints" 1:2

"All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" 1:2

Paul intended for the letter to circulate

Review

beyond this church.

To answer questions the Corinthians had concerning problems in the Church. (7:1; 8:11; 12:1; 16:1) These problems are common today in one form or another.

To reprove contentious arguments. I Cor. 1:11-13

To defend his apostleship and ministry. I Cor. 9:1-27

The Theme

Cleansing the church from false conceptions. Christian conduct is a top priority.

GIVE ALL YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO JESUS

Setting: The City of Corinth

In Paul's day, Corinth was the leading commercial center of Greece and one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. No other city held such a commanding geographic position in Ancient Greece. Its location on the Isthmus of Corinth, the narrow strip of land that was considered a commercial bridge between the North and the South allowed it to control all travelling merchants. There was a harbor on the west side and the east side giving it the advantage commercially and militarily as a leading naval power.

Corinth was a Grecian city noted as a sports center (I Cor. 9:24-27). It was populous (500,000 -

700,000) and wealthy. The first athletes were attracted to the Isthmian games celebrated near the city. Paul addressed athletes in his epistles.

A cosmopolitan place, intellectually alert, materially prosperous, but morally corrupt. The ideal of the Corinthian was the reckless development of the individual. The Corinthian man was a man of pleasure and leisure and proud of his physical strength. The Corinthian's desire was his law—if it feels good, do it. Corinth was a land of idolatry and prostitution. The Greek's worshipped a multitude of false gods and goddesses which included the false goddess Aphrodite who supposedly embodied love and beauty.

Paul looked for strategic places to preach the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 18:1-11). Corinth was also a prestigious center from which the Gospel could spread out to the surrounding districts. Anything preached in Corinth was sure to spread.

The spirit of the city of Corinth was getting into the Church. The church today faces the same problems—carnality and immaturity instead of growth under the Lordship of Christ. Some of the problems in Corinth were:

INTELLECTUAL PRIDE

Corinth was the rival of Athens. The Greeks were proud of their language, literature and learning. Paul prepared this epistle to meet the Greek mind. He begins by showing the foolishness of human wisdom. (1:20,21; 2:14; 3:19) Paul renounced human wisdom and influence from his ministry. (1:17; 2:1)

ADDICTION TO IMMORALITY

...reported commonly that there is fornication among you. (5:1-11; 6:15-18)

DRUNKENNESS

Ye come together not for the better, but for the worse...and another is drunken. (11:17,21)

CARNALITY

They were babes before and still babes full of their carnality. Paul had to feed them milk when they should have been mature enough to handle meat. They were still walking as men. (3:1-3)

LACK OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Christian brothers were taking each other to secular courts over personal disputes. There was a lack of unity and the common bond of love which is characteristic of Christ. (6:1-8)

CHURCH ATMOSPHERE OF LUXURY AND LICENTIOUSNES

Paul admonishes them to set their goals higher and to be more mindful of the kingdom of God. Their affluence has created the dangerous potential for idolatry.

TORN BY CONTENTION AND DIVISION

Divisions plagued the church. Loyalty, love and forbearance were replaced by jealousy, bitterness, and revenge. (3:4; 16:12)

RELAXED IN ITS DISCIPLINE

Over and over, Paul finds it vitally necessary to instruct them in proper judgment. There is quite a sense of disorder in the church that Paul is confronting in this letter.

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