

1 CORINTHIANS

DR. KEITH B. MCGEE I, PASTOR
INSTRUCTOR



Be Intentional
Philippians 2:12-13
Annual Theme 2023

1 CORINTHIANS

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

GREETING (1:1–3)

- I. REPROOF: THE REPORT OF SIN (1:4–6:20)
 - A. DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH (1:4–4:21)
 - 1. NOT LIVING UP TO THEIR STANDING (1:4–16)
 - 2. NOT UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL (1:17–2:16)
 - 3. NOT UNDERSTANDING MINISTRY (3:1–4:21)
 - B. DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH (5)
 - C. DISPUTES IN THE COURTS (6:1–8)
 - D. DEFILEMENT IN THE WORLD (6:9–20)
- II. INSTRUCTION: REPLY TO QUESTIONS (7–16)
 - A. CONCERNING MARRIAGE (7)
 - B. CONCERNING IDOLS (8–10)
 - 1. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (8)
 - 2. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL (9)
 - 3. THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL (10)
 - C. CONCERNING CHURCH ORDINANCES (11)
 - D. CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12–14)
 - 1. ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF GIFTS (12)
 - 2. USING GIFTS IN LOVE (13)
 - 3. PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WORSHIP (14)
 - E. CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION (15)
 - 1. PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION (15:1–34)
 - 2. PROCESS OF THE RESURRECTION (15:35–49)
 - 3. PROGRAM FOR THE RESURRECTION (15:50–58)
 - F. CONCERNING THE OFFERING (16:1–12)

FAREWELL (16:13–24)

INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO 1 CORINTHIANS

I. THE CITY

WITHOUT QUESTION, CORINTH WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CITY OF GREECE. IT WAS THE CAPITAL OF THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ACHAIA AND WAS IDEALLY LOCATED ON THE EMPIRE'S MOST IMPORTANT TRAVEL ROUTE FROM EAST TO WEST. FOURTH IN SIZE AMONG THE GREAT CITIES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, CORINTH WAS NOTED FOR COMMERCE, CULTURE, AND CORRUPTION. EVERYONE KNEW WHAT "A CORINTHIAN GIRL" WAS, AND "A CORINTHIAN FEAST" WAS THE DEPTH OF LUXURY AND LICENSE. CORINTH WAS THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE WORSHIP OF VENUS AND FOR SOME OF THE MYSTERY CULTS FROM EGYPT AND ASIA.

II. THE CHURCH

PAUL VISITED CORINTH ON HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY, AFTER HE HAD MET WITH SEEMING FAILURE IN CULTURED ATHENS (ACTS 18:1–17). HE MADE FRIENDS WITH TWO JEWISH TENT-MAKERS, AQUILA AND PRISCILLA, AND STAYED IN CORINTH FOR A YEAR AND A HALF. HE REASONED WITH JEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUE WEEK AFTER WEEK, AND SILAS AND TIMOTHY JOINED HIM AFTER THEY HAD COMPLETED THEIR MINISTRY IN BEREА. THE RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE WAS CONVERTED AND BAPTIZED BY PAUL (ACTS 18:8, SEE ALSO 1 COR. 1:14–16). CHRIST GAVE PAUL SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO STAY IN CORINTH (ACTS 18:9); AFTER A YEAR AND A HALF, HE DEPARTED FOR EPHESUS. HE LEFT BEHIND A CHURCH RICHLY GIFTED IN SPIRITUAL THINGS (1 COR. 1:4–7), BUT SORELY TEMPTED BY THE WORLDLY WISDOM AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE CITY ITSELF.

III. THE CORRESPONDENCE

PAUL REMAINED AT EPHESUS FOR THREE YEARS (ACTS 19:1ff). IT IS LIKELY THAT HE MADE A SECOND VISIT TO CORINTH (SEE 2 COR. 13:1) TO CORRECT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THERE. ONCE BACK IN EPHESUS, HE WROTE THEM A STRONG LETTER ABOUT FORNICATION (SEE 1 COR. 5:9), BUT THIS LETTER HAS BEEN LOST TO US. THE CHURCH AT CORINTH THEN WROTE A LETTER TO PAUL, POSSIBLY SENDING IT WITH STEPHANAS, FORTUNATUS, AND ACHAICUS, WHO WERE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH (1 COR. 16:17). THIS LETTER ASKED SEVERAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT BOTH DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE, AND PAUL ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS (AS WELL AS REBUKING THEM FOR THEIR SINS) IN 1 CORINTHIANS. (NOTE 1 COR. 7:1, 8:1, 11:17.) HE ALSO SENT TIMOTHY ON AHEAD TO HELP THE LEADERS UNIFY AND PURIFY THE CHURCH (ACTS 19:22; 1 COR. 4:17 AND 16:10–11). IT IS LIKELY THAT THE THREE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS MENTIONED IN 1 COR. 16:17 CARRIED 1 CORINTHIANS BACK WITH THEM.

TIMOTHY RETURNED TO PAUL WITH NEWS THAT THE CHURCH HAD RECEIVED HIS LETTER BUT THAT SOME THINGS WERE STILL NOT RIGHT. PAUL THEN DISPATCHED TITUS TO CORINTH TO SEE THAT THE BELIEVERS OBEYED HIS APOSTOLIC ORDERS (2 COR. 7:13–15). TITUS THEN MET PAUL (2 COR. 7:6–16) WITH THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE OFFENDER (1 COR. 5) HAD BEEN DISCIPLINED AND THAT THE CHURCH HAD OBEYED PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS. IT WAS THEN THAT PAUL WROTE, ALONG WITH TIMOTHY (2 COR. 1:1), TO COMMEND THE CHURCH AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO GO ON AND FINISH THE GOOD WORK. TITUS TOOK THIS LETTER TO CORINTH AND WAITED THERE TO ASSIST THE CHURCH IN RAISING ITS SHARE OF THE COLLECTION FOR THE POOR SAINTS IN JERUSALEM (2 COR. 12:17–18 AND 8:6). PAUL MADE ONE FINAL VISIT TO CORINTH (ACTS 20:1–4).

PAUL HAD TWO BASIC PURPOSES FOR WRITING 1 CORINTHIANS: (1) TO REPROVE THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS FOR THE FLAGRANT SINS THAT WERE BEING PERMITTED IN THE CHURCH (1–6); AND (2) TO ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE. HE HAD RECEIVED REPORTS OF SIN FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF CHLOE (1:11) AND FROM STEPHANAS, FORTUNATUS, AND ACHAICUS (16:17). HIS OWN VISIT TO THE CITY FROM EPHESUS GAVE HIM FIRSTHAND INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIVISIONS AND DISPUTES IN THE CHURCH. NO LETTER IN THE NT DEALS SO FORCIBLY WITH LOCAL CHURCH PROBLEMS, AND PERHAPS NO NT LETTER IS MORE NEGLECTED TODAY.