

I Corinthians 1: In Christ

The most complete statement of Paul's theology: Romans

Paul's most extensive correspondence with any single church: Letters to the Corinthians.

--No other church gave Paul more problems!

--The Corinthian letters represent the most intimate disclosure of the inner life and workings of any early church found in the New Testament.

1. Take a glance at a map of Corinth

--The city was in a very favorable location – two ports, one to the east and the other to the west: Cenchreae and Lechaeum.

--To avoid a rather dangerous voyage around the Peloponnesian peninsula, cargo ships would offload at one port and carry overland to the other which was only 10 miles.

--All of this overland cargo passed through Corinth on its way to the next port

Corinth like many sea ports of our day (San Francisco, Miami, New York), was well off, culturally diverse, and morally debased.

--Corinth was also rather large for those days: 400K people – ranked among the largest cities in the Roman Empire.

--It was filled with pagan temples, the most prominent being the temple to Aphrodite (goddess of love) which employed over 1,000 prostitutes.

--The city was so immoral that even pagan Rome called it immoral!

--There was a coined phrase during this time that was used in the empire: “Corinthianize yourself” = the very limits of wickedness.

--A common phrase: “so and so went to another region and Corinthian-ized himself.”

Corinth was nothing like our hometowns; it's not like anything in Texas unless you grew up in the rougher areas--mostly inner city in our state.

--What they were and came out of when they came to Jesus was, for the most part, far more severe than most of our experiences.

--I was raised in a small town where the teachers and school leaders as well as city leaders were parts of local churches for the most part.

--I wasn't saved out of utterly depraved circumstances like these people were.

--My people were Christians for generations and were the salt of the earth that made America the great nation that it was.

--Many of you come out of similar environments and backgrounds.

--Our experience is probably less than 1% of the average person's life and background today.

--Compared the rest of the world, we are anomalies, irregularities and outliers from the norm of human experience.

--Our world is becoming more and more like Corinth and less and less like the Bible belt small town we grew up in.

--But our focus in ministry is still aimed at those who are mostly like us. **This is a mistake.**

--If we cannot reach, teach, lift up and restore those who come from great darkness, which is the vast majority, we will cease to exist as churches.

--This is the world we are called to reach= **Romans 1:28-32**

--Are we willing to reach these people? If we are not, we might as well close our doors.

2. Into this first century world of darkness, the Apostle Paul went as a missionary bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

--According to **Acts 18**, Paul's preaching caused riots, revolution and revival.

--People got saved and Paul started a church where no one else would have thought it possible.

--The occasion of the writing of Paul's first letter to this church was 18 months after he'd left there and while he was in Ephesus.

--Paul received a report of the church's wellbeing and heard of the problems and abuses that were happening there.

--Paul writes to address a church in trouble: divisions, gross immoralities, marriage problems, abuses of the Lord's supper, misuse of Spiritual Gifts, Heresies about the resurrection, etc.

3. The Keynote of this letter is the supremacy of Christ. Jesus was the solution to their problems as He is for ours.

--**V. 1** --So true because Paul was found by Jesus on the road to Damascus; taught by Jesus Himself out in the Arabian wilderness.

A wonderful place to be—"I am where I am and I am doing what I do because it is exactly what God has for me."

--Is that your situation? Are you where you are supposed to be, doing what you are supposed to do, being obedient to Christ?

--**V. 2** -- the Church "at Corinth" = one of the toughest prepositional phrases because of what being "at Corinth" meant!

"in Christ Jesus" -- the most important prepositional phrase in the entire Bible!

--Every promise and blessing of the Bible is predicated on that little phrase.

--It was because this phrase was true for this church, that there were solutions to its many problems and issues, supply for it many needs, answers to its many questions.

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to be "in Christ Jesus"

--Doesn't matter where we are located: New York, Corinth, Moscow or Fredericksburg -- where we are is incidental!

--The important thing is Whose we are; so, the important question is "Are you in Christ Jesus?"

"Called to be saints" --The English almost sounds like it's something still hoped for, but the Greek is far clearer= **saints by calling**

--Notice: because of our calling, we are saints—not because of our actions but because of His actions; not because we are good but because HE's been good to us; We didn't qualify, Jesus qualified for us.

--All of mankind can be divided into two categories: The Saints and the "Ain'ts"

--If you are in the Christ, you're a saint.

--If You ain't in Christ, you're an "ain't"

--**VV. 2-8** -- does it strike you a little funny that Paul says that He's thankful to God for them? given all their problems?

--As we will see, he has little confidence in them as a people but all kinds of confidence in God!

--"Ya'll are messed up over there" but **V. 9 "God is faithful"**