

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

Author: _____ and Sosthenes (1:1)

-The background is _____ 18:1-18

-Some _____ believed (Crispus, 18:8 and Sosthenes, 18:17)

-Many Jews persecuted _____ and the believers

-Paul _____ for at least one-and-a-half years (18:11) (AD 49/50)

To: Corinth and ____?! (1:2)

But there are so many specific issues:

1. The sexually immoral man in 1 Cor. 5

2. The “weak” and the issue of _____ (1 Cor. 8-10)

3. The special offering (16:2-3)

4. _____ coverings (11)

5. Problems with the Lord’s _____

Other big issues in Corinthians: tongues, marriage, the resurrection, the gospel, slavery, Jew/gentile relations, role of women in ministry....

Greeting (1:3-9)

-Paul starts with a positive assessment of their standing in _____, even though Corinth is often regarded as the church with “problems.”

-Paul is always thankful because of the grace they have in Christ (4), that they have been “enriched in every way” (5), they “do not lack any spiritual gift” (7), they “eagerly wait” for Jesus to be revealed (7), they will be kept “firm to the end” and “blameless” (8), and they are “called into fellowship” with Jesus (9).

Purpose (10)

-Paul identifies “_____” as the main issue he will address (10)

Issue #1 Is 1 Corinthians divinely _____?

-Does Paul himself admit a _____ in the text in 1:14-16?

-Does Paul declare his words non-authoritative in 1 Cor. 7:10-12?

1 Corinthians: Introducing the Gospel (1:10-4:16)

-Paul finds unifying power only in the gospel. (1:17)

-Paul describes this “message of the cross” as foolishness (1:18)—according to the wisdom of the world (1:19). Not many were “wise” (1:26):

Epicureans: Rejected anything supernatural including divine revelation. Pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain and overindulgence should be avoided. They did not believe anything was right or wrong, only helpful or not. They taught not to fear death because you cease to be.

Stoics: People need to bring themselves into harmony with the natural order of the universe. Be free from passion and unruly emotion. They valued wisdom, courage, and justice. They prized logic and human reason. They did not believe in “death” but continuing on as “threads” in the universe.¹

Jews:

Paul says that the scribes in Jerusalem (Paul was one) and the philosophers of Athens like to think they are the center of intellectual life for the world. But they are few and lack real wisdom.²

Question: Why does Paul preach without wisdom and eloquence? (17)

-not with “eloquence or human wisdom” (2:1) or “wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (2:4)

1. Paul says that it is so that their faith would not rest on human wisdom (2:5)

2. Paul consistently offers Christ crucified/God’s power (2:2, 5) as the alternative

Issue #2 Does Paul mean that preaching should be unplanned and avoid rational support?

No:

- Paul himself supported his points with reason

¹ Chronicles of the Apostles, (2016), 554-556.

² Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, (2011), 82.

Acts 18:4 Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

- Paul often uses formal arguments within the letter of 1 Cor. (15:13-15), or appeals to evidence (15:6)
- Paul writes parts of 1 Corinthians carefully following standard formatting of poetry³ (1:23: four lines, each with 7 syllables with rhyming, is at the center of a four layer chiasm)⁴
- Paul follows conventional elements of Greek funeral orations in his hymn on the cross (1:17-2:2)⁵: Pericles gave a well known speech of praise for the Athenians that Lincoln followed in the Gettysburg address. Paul seemed to follow this as well, including mysterious compression and opposing pairs (Jews demand signs/Greeks look for wisdom vs. “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.”)

3. Paul does reverse some of the expectations of a Greek funeral oration. According to Plato, he was supposed to:

praise noble birth (But, 1:26)

praise education (But, 1:19-20)

praise noble actions worthy of their education (2:6)

“He means that the Greeks see Jesus as worthless because he was “low born.” He is despised by Jews, Greeks and Romans because he died on a cross. But God used those despised events to set loose in human history a power and a wisdom that makes Rome appear weak and Athens foolish.”

He does not come out and say, “The Greek heritage of art, architecture, philosophy and democracy is foolishness when compared to the cross.” Instead, he says, “The things that are not nullify the things that are.” (compression and opposing pairs)⁶

Paul determined not to allegorize the gospel message to make it fit the modes of gentile thinking (such as Philo).

³ Bailey, 87.

⁴ Bailey, 85.

⁵ Bailey, 94.

⁶ Bailey, 84.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Our “message” is true _____, one that is in opposition to worldly wisdom (6).

This wisdom was “_____” by God in eternity past and made known only since the resurrection (7).

Who are “the _____ of this age” (8)?

The gospel is not just _____ message that can help, but is the one and only truth that gives hope to all humanity.

The gospel is part of a biblical _____ that contradicts the world’s story.

Our culture’s version of “the story” is one in which the _____ is health and prosperity. But in the Bible it is loving and being loved by God.

We know about God’s Wisdom through the _____

Mind of _____ → Holy Spirit → Us (10-12)

Even the “words” are _____ taught by the Spirit. We need a new vocabulary beyond what the world offers us to understand God’s mystery.

Conclusion: Seeing ultimate truths is beyond our capabilities without God revealing it to us. He has revealed it to us through history, his Word, prophets, the cross, and the gospel message. All this comes through the Spirit.

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1 Corinthians 3

The Corinthians have _____ to spiritual wisdom (1:7) but are not making use of it. (3:1-4)

What _____ spiritual wisdom? Jealousy and quarreling (3:3)

Issue #3, What is a “Carnal Christian”:

The antidote is to reject so-called worldly ways of thinking that seeks out being better than others. (3:18)

In context, this is accomplished by _____ the world with spiritual eyes focused on the ongoing plan of God centering on the cross and resurrection.

Ministry is about what _____ is doing, not human achievement. (3:6-7)

Issue #4, Who is the one saved, “escaping through the flames.” (3:15):

Purgatory?:

The verse is talking about evaluating the quality of _____ for reward, not a judgment on evil deeds.

Ministries that boast impressive _____ may not receive high marks for their work on the day of judgment. Our goal must always focus on being biblical, not “successful.”

Paul identifies the “building” in 10-15 as God’s _____ (16-17).

Collectively, the _____ of the church are like a temple in that they God is present in their midst.

Paul warns against _____ the temple, (17) a reference to building carelessly (10, meaning unbiblically) and in a fleshy way.

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