

# 1 Corinthians

1st century Corinth was the leading commercial center of southern Greece. The city was infamous for its immorality and paganism. In spite of great obstacles, Paul was able to plant a church there on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17). The church was plagued with problems: moral and ethical, doctrinal and practical, corporate and private. Paul writes the letter of first Corinthians to deal with some of these disorders and to answer questions which hit the Christians in court that raised on crucial issues.

## INTRODUCTION

Corinth, the most important city in Greece during Paul's day, was a bustling hub of worldwide commerce, degraded culture, and idolatrous religion. There Paul founded a church (Acts 18:1-17) and two of his letters are addressed "To the church of God which is at Corinth."

1 Corinthians reveals the problems, pressures, and struggles of a church called out of a pagan society. Paul addresses a variety of problems in the lifestyle of the Corinthian church. Not only does Paul offer words of discipline, but he also shares words of counsel in answer to questions raised by the Corinthian believers.

## AUTHOR

Pauline authorship of 1 Corinthians is almost universally accepted. This widely held belief can be found as early as A.D. 95, when Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthian church and referenced this epistle in regard to their continuing problem of division.

The oldest recorded title of this epistle is *Pros Korinthious A*, the "First to the Corinthians." The *A* was no doubt a later addition to distinguish this book from 2 Corinthians.

## DATE & SETTING

Corinth was a key city in ancient Greece until it was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. Julius Caesar rebuilt it as a Roman colony in 46 B.C. and it grew and prospered, becoming the capital of the province of Achaia. Its official language was Latin, but the common language remained Greek. In Paul's day Corinth was a metropolis and strategically located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea. Because of its two seaports it became a commercial center, and many small ships were rolled or dragged across the Corinthian isthmus to avoid the dangerous 200-mile voyage around southern Greece.

The population of Corinth was approximately 700,000, about 2/3 of whom were slaves. It was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Paul was able to establish a church in Corinth on his second missionary journey. He taught the Word of God in Corinth for 18 months in A. D. 51-52. After Paul's departure, Apollos came from Ephesus to minister in the Corinthian church (3:6; Acts 18:24-28).

When Paul was preaching and teaching in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he was disturbed by reports from the household of Chloe concerning quarrels in the church at Corinth (1:11). The church sent a delegation of three men (16:17), who apparently brought a

letter that requested Paul's judgment on certain issues (7:1). Paul wrote this epistle as his response to the problems and questions (he had already written a previous letter; 5:9). It may be that the men who came from Corinth took this letter back with them. Paul was planning to leave Ephesus (16:5-8), indicating that 1 Corinthians was written around AD 56.