

Purpose

To identify problems in the Corinthian church, to offer solutions, and to teach the believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt society

Author

Paul

To Whom Written

The church in Corinth

Date Written

Approximately 55 AD, near the end of Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus, during his third missionary journey

Setting

Corinth was a major seaport and trade center. It was filled with idolatry and immorality.

Key Verse

"I appeal to you by the authority of Christ to stop arguing. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind."
1 Corinthians 1:10

Special Features

This is a strong, straightforward letter, harsh at times.

An Overview (16 Chapters)

- Paul Addresses Church Problems (1:1-6:20)
- Paul Answers Church Questions (7:1-16:24)

Major Themes

- *Loyalties*: The Corinthians were rallying around various church leaders — Peter, Paul, and Apollos. These loyalties led to intellectual pride and created a spirit of division in the church.
- *Immorality*: Paul received a report of uncorrected sexual sin in the church. The people had grown indifferent to immorality. Others had misconceptions about marriage. We are to live morally, keeping our bodies for God's service at all times.
- *Freedom*: Paul taught freedom of choice on practices not forbidden in Scripture. Some believers felt certain actions — like eating meat of animals used in pagan rituals — were corrupt by association. Others felt free to participate without feeling that they had sinned. We are free in Christ but we must not abuse our Christian freedom by being inconsiderate and insensitive to others.
- *Worship*: Paul addressed disorder in worship. People were taking the Lord's Supper without first confessing sin. There was misuse of spiritual gifts and confusion over women's roles in the church. Everything we do to worship God should be done in a manner worthy of his high honor.
- *Resurrection*: Christ's resurrection assures us that we will have new bodies after we die. The hope of the resurrection gives us Christian confidence. Since we will be raised to life after we die, our life is not in vain. We are to live today knowing we will spend eternity with Christ.