

I CORINTHIANS

AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul. Leaving Antioch on his third missionary journey, Paul passed through Phrygia and Galatia and came to Ephesus, where he remained more than two years. This was a much longer time than he had spent in any city on these journeys. It was during this time that reports reached Paul concerning the moral and spiritual state of things in the Corinthian Church. This was the occasion of the writing of this letter.

There were many things at work to hinder the power and progress of the Gospel in Corinth. As indicated before, this letter was written from Ephesus. Paul had come to Corinth from Athens and had remained there 18 months. He began by preaching in the synagogue, but he was driven out of it and was compelled to give his instructions in the home of a man called Justus. During this stay he founded the church of Corinth and wrote the epistles to the Thessalonians which were his first epistles.

THE CITY OF CORINTH: was the "sin center" of the Roman Empire at that time. It was located about forty miles west of Athens. It was the commercial center of the Roman Empire with three great harbors. The ruins of the old city of Corinth can be seen today.

THEME: "Christians Ought to Mature and Grow in the Grace and knowledge of Our Lord Jesus."

INTRODUCTION: While in Ephesus he received news of a distressing nature relative to the state of things in the church at Corinth. It was divided by a spirit of contention, by a party spirit one faction adhering to Paul; another, to Apollos; another, to Cephas; and another that gave itself to the name of Christ.

I. THE CHURCH WAS DIVIDED. Chapter 1:11-13

As had been stated there were several parties in the church the Paulites, the Cephasites (followers of Peter), the Apollosites, and the Jesus—ites. What a tragedy that the church was divided! They were following man, not God. This is a great danger.

II. THEY WERE CALLED "BABY CHRISTIANS.

Read the first few verses of I Corinthians 3. Because of these divisions, they were called "babies. They could not take meat. The Apostle Paul said he had to feed them with milk, not with meat. He also said he had determined to preach nothing among them save Christ crucified. Nowadays a lot of people have the idea that this means that that is all a preacher is supposed to preach. This is not true. Preaching Christ crucified is milk. It is necessary for the early stages of the Christian life, but God wants people to have more than that. He wants them to have the doctrines of the Bible and teachings of the Bible. Paul could not preach it here because they were baby Christians. (NOTE TO TEACHER: Discuss with the class members the characteristics of infancy and babyhood, and apply them to baby Christians. For example, a baby wants to have is own way, wants to play all the time, cries all the time, complains, does not share, etc.)

III. THE CHURCH WAS IMMORAL. 5:1 - 6:20

There was a terrible sin of licentiousness and immorality in the church. Corinth was called the "eye of Greece." Nearly 150 years before Christ it was destroyed by the Romans. It was rebuilt by, Julius Caesar and became a metropolis. Therefore, it was an important commercial center. In such centers

the Apostle Paul planted the seeds of the Gospel so it could spread as the travelers went from Corinth to other areas. The sinfulness of this city was notorious. It was here that the social forces of the age met. There was a terrible sin of immorality in the church. The sinfulness of this city was notorious. It was here that this church that the sins of immorality was accepted in the church. So great was the sin immorality that it effected all the other portions of the church. All of the sin that had been the shame of other religious orders was found here. Impurity was indulged as a religious service. This church had become wicked even in the eyes of the sinful people that lived in the city. We must be aware not to let the wickedness of this world get into our life nor our Church.

Impurity was indulged as a religious service. One thousand consecrated prostitutes were found in the name of religion. It was much like the situation found in America today. Morality is of great interest to our Lord. God wants us to be clean vessels for his service. Immorality, destroys our usability for the Lord. Yes, we can be forgiven, yet it will always be a hindrance to us in our service. There are some positions in the work of God we can no longer do, due to immorality. To the young person today morality will be the greatest fight you will have to battle.

IV. ANSWERS PROBLEMS — Chapters 7-16.

(1) Answers of Paul indicates in 7:1 — "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." The first answer is concerning marriage. The passage is clear— one wife for one man—if one is an unbeliever the believing mate should stay and try to win the other (7:10-40).

(2) In Chapters 8, 9 and 10 we see that they go together and answer the questions concerning conduct and Christian liberty. Note 8:1, 8, 9 and especially V-13.

These Chapters deal with Christian conduct and its affect on weaker brethren. Five times in these three Chapters we find the expression of consideration for the weaker brother:

(3) chapter 11 — Paul answers concerning women and the Lord's Supper. In 11:5 we find a verse that has been grossly misconstrued. The principle of the woman's place.

(4) chapters 12, 13, 14 — Concerning Spiritual Gifts. The three Chapters should be taken together as one. There are gifts given to every man as He wills.

CONCLUSION; There were many other sins in the church at Corinth—the sin of the misuse of tongues, the sin of immorality, the sin of not having enough love, etc. However, the lesson for this week should be characterized by the desire for Christians to grow to the fullest of stature. God wants us to grow in grace.

MEMORY VERSE: I Peter 2:2 "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"