

Paul's Letters to the Church at Corinth

A Plea for Unity

1 Corinthians 1

Lesson 1

*Trinity Bible Church Sunday School
January 6, 2013*

Corinth

- ▶ Great luxury
- ▶ Great learning
- ▶ Great moral depravity
- ▶ Great idolatry





Paul and the Corinthian Church

- ▶ 18 months in Corinth (2nd missionary journey)
- ▶ 3 years in Ephesus (3rd missionary journey)
 - 1st letter (5:9)
 - 2nd letter from Ephesus – 1 Corinthians
 - A painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1)
 - A “sorrowful letter” (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8, 9)
- ▶ 4th letter from Macedonia – 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 7:5-7)
- ▶ 3rd visit (Acts 20:2-3)

1 Corinthians

- I. Salutation (1:1-9)
 - II. Reply to report from the house of Chloe (1:10-4:21)
 - III. Reply to a report of immorality (5:1-6:20)
 - IV. Reply to questions in letter (7:1-16:9)
 - V. Concluding Salutations (16:10-24)
- ▶ “Will the First Epistle to the Corinthians be a heap or a building?” (F. Godet)
 - ▶ “If you and I expect to glorify God in our day, we must be prepared to stand against the moral degeneration, and let our lives be guided by God through His Word.” (LD Custis)

A Plea for unity

1 Corinthians 1:1-31

- ▶ Greeting (1:1-9)
- ▶ A plea for unity (1:10-4:21)

Salutation (1:1-9)

- ▶ Customized greeting – sets the foundation
- ▶ Paul – apostle by the will of God
- ▶ Church of God in Corinth
 - Sanctified in Christ Jesus – holiness in Christ Jesus
 - Called to be saints (holy) with all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Grace and peace from God (Father and Son)

Thanksgiving for grace given

- ▶ Grace given to them in Christ Jesus – cf. 1:30
 - Enriched – speech (logos) and knowledge (wisdom)
 - Testimony about Christ confirmed among them
 - Spiritual gifts
 - Eagerly awaiting Christ's return
 - God is faithful

A Plea for Unity (1:10-31)

- ▶ An appeal to brothers that by the name of Jesus Christ there be no divisions
- ▶ The reality in the church – divisions and quarreling
 - Of Paul
 - Of Apollos
 - Of Cephas
 - Of Christ

What were the issues?

- ▶ “Of . . .” or “Followers of . . .”
- ▶ Without the same mind and judgment (v. 10)
- ▶ Desire for eloquence (2:1-2)
- ▶ Non-spiritual (3:1-4) – fleshly approach to Christianity
- ▶ Wisdom of the world valued (3:18-22)
- ▶ Misunderstand the role of the minister (4:1-2)
- ▶ Pride (4:6)

Paul's conclusion: 16:12-13

- ▶ Paul promotes Apollos . . for his ministry
- ▶ Paul exhorts them to be firm in the faith and act in love
- ▶ Submit to every fellow worker and laborer

The cross of Christ (1:17-31)

- ▶ Not with words of eloquent wisdom
- ▶ Resting in the power of the Cross of Christ
- ▶ The cross of Christ reveals two kinds of wisdom

Wisdom of God

- ▶ God's wisdom is foolishness to worldly wise men
- ▶ God's wisdom is powerful to save
- ▶ God's wisdom is to destroy the wisdom of man
- ▶ God's wisdom makes the wisdom of man to be foolish
- ▶ Wisdom of man cannot know God
- ▶ God's foolishness brings knowledge of God
- ▶ Jews desire a sign; Gentiles desire wisdom

The cross of Christ is not marketable

- ▶ It offends – sinners with no recourse
- ▶ It offends – death and eternal wrath
- ▶ It offends – to bow before the bloody cross of Christ
- ▶ It saves – “power of God and the wisdom of God”

The wisdom of God in salvation (1:26-31)

- ▶ Consider your calling
- ▶ God chooses to bring down the pride of man
- ▶ God's design: no flesh will glory before God.

The Capstone of God's wisdom (1:30)

- ▶ Of God
- ▶ In Christ Jesus
 - God's wisdom
 - Righteousness
 - Sanctification
 - Redemption
- ▶ Only boasting in Christ crucified

A PLEA FOR UNITY

- ▶ The wisdom of man v. the wisdom of God
- ▶ The wisdom of God in the message of the Cross
 - Irreconcilable with human wisdom
 - It is the power of God for salvation.
- ▶ Unity in knowing Christ and Him crucified
- ▶ This must be our common mind and judgment (1:10)