

# UNITED IN CHRIST

## PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: I CORINTHIANS I Corinthians 1:10

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. AUTHORSHIP

##### 1. PAUL—IDENTIFIED IN TEXT—**1:1**

a. **Called as an apostle of Jesus Christ—by the will of God**

b. Same phraseology used in these letters:

- II Corinthians
- Ephesians
- Colossians
- II Timothy—an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God

##### 2. **AND SOSTHENES OUR BROTHER**

a. Uncertain identity

b. Name of synagogue leader in Corinth—**Acts 18:17**

- Beaten after Proconsul Gallio refused to prosecute Paul
- No evidence this is the same person

#### B. BACKGROUND

##### 1. PAUL'S VISITS TO CORINTH

a. **First Visit—Acts 18:1-17**

- Second missionary journey
- After Macedonian churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea
- After Athens
- Stayed a year and a half
- While Gallio was Proconsul—about 51-52 AD
- Persecuted by Jews
- Then to Ephesus—and Caesarea

b. **Second visit**

1. Not recorded in Acts

2. Evidence in II Corinthians

➤ **Cor 12:14**—he will come a third time

➤ **II Cor 13:1**—he already came a second time—and will come a third time

3. This had to be the ‘painful visit’—suggested in **II Cor 2:1-2**

c. **Third Visit—Acts 20:2-3**

1. Third Missionary Journey—after Ephesus

2. In Greece for 3 months—about Spring 57 AD

3. Location probably Corinth

a. Staying in home of Gaius when he wrote Romans—**Rom 16:23**

❖ Paul had baptized Gaius earlier in Corinth—**I Cor 1:14**

b. Further evidence Romans likely written from vicinity of Corinth

❖ Phoebe (**Rom 16:1**) was from Corinthian port city of Cenchrea

2. CITY OF CORINTH

a. Political history

1. Burned by Romans—146 BC

2. Rebuilt and made Roman Colony by Julius Caesar—46-44 BC

3. Augustus made it the capital of Roman Province Achaia (Greece)—27 BC

b. Prosperous trade center

1. On isthmus between Peloponnesian Peninsula and mainland Greece

2. Ports on two gulfs

➤ Gulf of Corinth—connected to Ionian Sea (west)—port of Lechaion

➤ Saronic Gulf—connected to and Aegean Sea (east)—port of Cenchraea

3. Two ports connected by *diolkus*

➤ Paved stone causeway—3 miles long

➤ Constructed 6<sup>th</sup> century BC

➤ Enabled ships to be pulled across isthmus

➤ Saved 200-mile sea journey

4. Corinth was half-way between Sparta and Athens

c. Richest and most populous Greek city—about 700,000 people in Paul’s day

d. Luxurious and materialistic

e. Licentiousness

1. Aphrodite—patron goddess
2. Temple prostitutes—originally Aphrodite’s temple had 1000 of them
3. Reputation for sexual immorality—notorious even in pagan world
4. NOTE: Paul writes more about sexual ethics here than elsewhere

❖ **5:1-13** and **chapter 7**—constitute 12% of the book)

### C. COMPOSITION OF LETTER

1. PAUL WROTE IT WHILE IN EPHESUS—**16:8-9, 19-20**

2. UNLIKELY DURING FIRST VISIT TO EPHESUS

○ **Acts 18**—Paul passed through only briefly—about 51-52

3. PROBABLY DURING SECOND—LONG STAY—IN EPHESUS

a. Third Missionary Journey—Paul in **Ephesus** 3 years—about **53-56 AD**—**Acts 19**

b. Evidence

1. Paul refers to Apollos—1:12; 3:4

❖ Apollos was not mentioned until Paul began 3<sup>rd</sup> journey—**Acts 18:24-28**

2. He says he will send Timothy to Corinth in **I Cor 4:17**

❖ Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia *after* his second stay in Ephesus—**Acts 19:22**

### D. RECIPIENTS—CORINTHIAN CHURCH

1. PREVIOUS CORRESPONDENCE

a. Paul had written them previously—**5:9**

➤ About immorality in their ranks—especially the man sleeping with his step-mother

b. They had written Paul—asking questions about certain issues—**7:1**

c. Paul had gotten reports about problems in the church—from Chloe’s household—**1:11**

2. MEMBERSHIP

a. Mostly lower class—‘few’ were highborn—**1:26-28**

b. But some were influential leaders

1. **Crispus**—**1:14**—leader of local synagogue—**Acts 18:8**

2. **Erastus**

❖ Civic treasurer in same city with Gaius (**Rom 16:23**)—probably Corinth

❖ Later Erastus was living in Corinth (**II Tim 4:20**)

### 3. TWO PROBLEMS IN THEIR RANKS

- a. **Division**—over several issues
- b. **Licentiousness**—excessive exercise of ‘freedom’ (libertinism)
  1. **Immorality**—within the body (incest)—and behavior in the world (with prostitutes)
  2. **Idolatry**—participating in pagan banquets

## E. PURPOSES

### 1. TO RESPOND TO REPORTS ABOUT DIVISIVENESS

- a. **1:11**—he had been informed there were quarrels among them
- b. **11:18-19**—he had heard—and was convinced—there were divisions among them

### 2. TO FOLLOW UP HIS FIRST LETTER—**5:9**

- Gave instructions about how to deal with the immoral man—**chapter 5**

### 3. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS POSED BY CORINTHIANS

- a. **7:1**—*Now concerning the things about which you wrote . . .*
- b. He addresses several issues—beginning with the phrase—“*now concerning*”
  - Marriage—**7:1** and **7:25**
  - Eating meat offered to idols—**8:1**
  - Spiritual gifts—**12:1**
  - Giving offerings—**16:1**
  - Apollos’s possible return—**16:12**

## F. NATURE OF LETTER(S)

### 1. LENGTH

- I Corinthians—Paul’s longest letter (437 verses beats Romans by 4 verses)
- I and II Corinthians—over 1/3 of all Paul’s letters

### 2. UNITY

- I Corinthians—is one letter
- II Corinthians—is a composite of more than one letter

### 3. EARLIEST WRITTEN ACCOUNT OF

- a. The Lord’s Supper—**chapter 11**

- b. The Resurrection—**chapter 15**
- 4. TWO-WAY DIALOGUE
  - a. Answering questions posed by Corinthians
  - b. Delegations visited Paul from Corinth—**1:11; 16:15-18** and **II Cor 7:5-7, 13**
- 5. RADICAL EXPECTATION OF PAROUSIA
  - a. This current world is passing away—**7:29-31**
  - b. Not everyone will die—but all will be changed—instantly—**15:51-55**

## **G. ORGANIZATION**

- 1. INTRODUCTION
  - a. Salutation—**1:1-3**
  - b. Thanksgiving—**1:4-9**
- 2. ADDRESSING CORINTHIAN PROBLEMS
  - a. Factions in the Church—**1:10—through chapter 4**
  - b. Incest in the Church—**chapter 5**
  - c. Lawsuits in Public Courts—**6:1-11**
  - d. Immorality with Prostitutes—**6:12-20**
- 3. ANSWERING CORINTHIAN QUESTIONS
  - a. Marriage—**chapter 7**
  - b. Eating meat offered to idols—**chapters 8-10**
  - c. Worship—**chapter 11**
    - 1. Orderliness in worship—**11:1-16**
    - 2. The Lord's Supper—**11:17-33**
  - d. Spiritual gifts—**chapters 12-14**
  - e. The Resurrection—**chapter 15**
  - f. Giving Offerings—**16:1-4**
- 4. CLOSING—**16:5-24**

## **II. BIBLICAL TEXT**

**1:10-11**—*Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind in the same*

*judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people. That there are quarrels among you.*

### **III. EXPOSITION**

#### **A. DIVISION OVER SEVERAL THINGS**

##### **1. FACTIONS—[chapters 1-4](#)**

- Forming personality cults—of Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ
- Some think they have special wisdom—elitist theology
- Some emphasize persuasive oratory
- Emphasis on superficial and worldly message—like prosperity gospel
- Lacking spiritual understanding of the mystery of God's wisdom—in the cross

##### **2. LAWSUITS—[chapter 6](#)**

- Publicizing disunity—taking internal squabbles to civil courts

##### **3. MARRIAGE—[chapter 7](#)**

- Disagreements about what to do with pagan mates—and divorce
- Some probably spiritualizing marriage—rejecting the physical aspect
- Some treating their daughters unfairly—not allowing to marry

##### **4. EATING MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS—[chapters 8-10](#)**

- The 'strong' in faith offending weaker Christians—flaunting their liberty

##### **5. DISRUPTING WORSHIP—[chapter 11](#)**

- Women taking too much liberty—being disorderly in worship

##### **6. ABUSING COMMUNION—[chapter 11](#)**

- Rich members marginalizing poor ones—eating ahead—and gluttonously

##### **7. HERESY CONCERNING RESURRECTION—[chapter 15](#)**

- Some denying the bodily resurrection—possibly early Gnostic influence

#### **B. FIVE IMAGES—DEPICTING THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY**

##### **1. COSMIC LORD**

**8:6**—*Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

###### **a. Only one Lord—and leader—of the church**

- Singular and ultimate lordship of Christ
- Devotion to anything else—is **idolatry**—we serve either God or the world!

b. **Contrast**—polytheistic pagan idolatry—in Corinth

*8:5— For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords.*

1. Many gods

2. Isthmian **games**

- Devoted to Poseidon
- Conducted near Corinth
- Second only to Olympic games—held year before and year after them

3. **Meals** devoted to gods—in banquet rooms next to temples

c. **Application**

1. Beware also—**human personality cults**—and factions—are **idolatrous**

2. In Corinth—**1:12**—some followed Paul—Apollos—Cephas—Christ

3. Tendency to deify humans—especially in pagan world

➤ **Example—in Lystra—first missionary journey**

➤ **Acts 14:12-13**—*And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.*

2. THE **CROSS**

**1:17-18**—*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

a. Preaching of the **cross** is the **power** of God

b. **Mystery** of the gospel—God’s foolishness is wiser than man

c. Any message short of this—robs the gospel of power

d. *The* **central** unifying message of the church = the foolishness of the cross

e. **Paul illustrated** this in his own life—compared with the Corinthians

**4:10**—*We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.*

f. **Application—contrasts**

1. **Theology of Glory**—Luther contrasted with ‘Theology of the Cross’

2. **Prosperity Gospel**—preaching for show and superficiality and popularity
3. **Social Gospel Alone**—ministry of works without radical faith in divine atonement

### 3. UNION WITH CHRIST

**6:17**—*But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

#### a. Union with Christ

- Brings God’s spirit—to dwell within us
- Mutually exclusive—with all other devotions
- Means separation from the worldliness
- Requires an exclusive choice—to serve **Him**—or the **world**

#### b. So—Paul exhorts Corinthians to **flee** two things—that **divide** them from Christ

##### 1. **Flee immorality**—**6:18**—addressing problem of (temple) prostitution

- ❖ To join with a prostitute—is to become ‘one flesh’ with her
- ❖ Analogous to marriage—becoming one with wife—**Gen 1:24**—**Mk 10:7-9**
- ❖ One cannot be joined to Christ—and to another in immorality

##### 2. **Flee idolatry**—**10:14b**—addressing problem of eating at pagan banquets

- ❖ Don’t let liberty in Christ—become an excuse to flirt with the world!

### 4. THE **TEMPLE** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**3:16**—*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

**6:19**—*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from god, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.*

#### a. Corinthian context—many temples

- Aphrodite—atop the city—Acrocorinth
- Apollo
- Poseidon
- Venus-Fortuna
- Hermes
- Demeter
- Isis—from Egypt
- Serapis—from Egypt
- Cybele—from Phrygia
- One dedicated to ‘all the gods’

#### b. The Christian Temple

1. Being joined to Christ—means we become a spiritual habitation for God Himself
2. The **foundation** of that house is **Christ** alone



**3:11**—*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

3. Be careful—to build with spiritual materials that will endure—**3:10-15**

4. **Contrast**—Corinthian temples

➤ **Ruins**—all that remain of great temples of Aphrodite and Apollo

➤ **Temple of Apollo**—12,000 square feet—only 7 of its 38 columns survive

## 5. **UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BODY**

**12:12-13, 27**—*For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. . . . Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*

a. The church is the *unified* body of Christ—made of *many* members

b. *Everyone* has **value**—and an important/unique place of service

c. *Every* spiritual gift—is **meaningful** and **necessary**—for the body to function properly

d. Great *diversity*—in the body—[Jew/Greek—slave/free]

e. Unity of *multiplicity*—many parts working together—for one purpose

### ❖ **Illustration—diversity and multiplicity—the human body**

➤ Corinthian Temple of Asclepius and Hygieia—[gods of healing]

➤ Devotees hung votive offerings in temple

➤ Many dangling *terra-cotta* replicas of human body parts

f. More than *unity*

1. Begins with *each* person being **united** in Christ

2. Brings together—all the unitedness of individuals in Christ

3. Produces—*synergy*—the divine whole is greater than the sum of its human parts

g. God's **Spirit**—is the **ultimate unifier** and **empowering** agent

1. Unity is not due to the ingenuity of human leaders—but God

2. Only God can truly *unite* and *synchronize* such diverse and different parts!

## C. **FOUR ACTIONS—OF A UNIFIED CHURCH**

### 1. GENUINE **SERVICE**

a. Trustworthy Christians are not self-promoting—but servants of Christ

**4:1-2**—*Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*

- b. Selfless service was exemplified by the apostles themselves

**3:5-9**—*What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*

## 2. **SELF-RESTRAINT AND CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS**

- a. Freedom in Christ brings **liberty**—but exercising that liberty has **boundaries**

1. For our own sakes—not everything is beneficial

**6:12**—*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

2. For the sake of the group—not everything edifies

**10:23**—*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.*

3. For the sake of others—we must set the right example

**8:9**—*But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.*

- b. We must give up some personal ‘identity’ in order to **identify** with others

**9:19, 22**—*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. . . . I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.*

- c. Not just to just to ‘please’ men—but God can **save** them

**10:32-33**—*Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many, so that they may be saved.*

- d. Genuine servanthood—means personal sacrifice of privilege and rights.

- Paul affirms this in **Ph 4:5**—*Let your moderation be known to all persons . . .*

- e. The church will not be divided—when people mutually serve this way!

## 3. **LOVE**—chapter 13

- a. Central **unifying** dynamic—that prevents strife and division = **αγαπη**

- b. Solution—to division is issues in **chapters 12 and 14**—is found in **chapter 13**
- c. Why **αγαπη** works—because
  - 1. **αγαπη** is the *more excellent way*—**12:31**—even more than serving!
  - 2. **αγαπη** is *not selfish but selfless*—*it does not seek its own*—**13:5**
    - Only God’s love is able to unify without prejudice—and does not divide
  - 3. **αγαπη** *never fails*—**13:8**
  - 4. **αγαπη** never quits—it always *abides* [with faith and hope]—**13:13**
- d. Relationship of **αγαπη** to spiritual gifts—and service
  - 1. Obedience and service do not produce love—but *vice versa*
  - 2. The only pure and true motive for genuine service is love
- e. This relationship is seen in all passages dealing with spiritual gifts
  - 1. The gifts of **I Corinthians 12 and 14**—are anchored by **chapter 13**
  - 2. The gifts of **Romans 12:4-8**—are followed by:
 

**Rom 12:9**—*Let love be without hypocrisy*
  - 3. The gifts of **Ephesians 4:11-12**—are preceded by:
 

**Eph 3:17**—*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love . . .*
- f. What God wants—worshipful service that flows from love

#### 4. GENUINE—MEANINGFUL—EDIFYING **WORSHIP**

**14:26, 33, 40**—*What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. . . for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. . . But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.*

- a. Orderly and respectful worship—**chapters 12 and 14**
  - Not disorderly in the use of gifts—**chapters 12 and 14**
  - Not disruptive—anyone being ‘contentious’[here—women]—**chapter 11**
- b. Communion that honors Christ and edifies the whole body—**chapter 11**
  - Observing the Lord’s Supper with respect and reverence