

# NT Survey Class #5 1 & 2 Corinthians - Teaching C - 3

Written by Apostle Paul: 1 Cor 1:1; 2:1

- 1 cor. includes Sosthenes as a co-author
- 2 Cor. includes Timothy as a co-author
- Paul frequently is joined by others in being credited in authorship — 8 times in all.

However ...

- in 1 Corinthinans he is never mentioned again
- Paul writes in the first person “I”
- 2 Corinthians is written in the plural “we”

Sosthenes is never heard of or from again.

He is included in the generic. “our brother” (NIV) but literally “the brother”

- Sosthenes mentioned in Corinth in Acts 18:17
  - could be the same guys who was converted later and Paul wanted to point this out and make some connection to the church.
  - could be a different Sosthenes to be separated by “the brother” in contrast to the Sosthenes who was not a brother.

## Establishment of the Church in Corinth

2nd Missionary journey - AD 50-52

Went to Corinth after a challenging time in Athens. **Acts 17:34-18:1**  
(Athens is about 45 miles east of Corinth)

**1 Cor 2:1-5**

*When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*

- Not how we usually view Paul
  - ineloquent
  - weakness
  - great fear & trembling
  - not persuasive or well crafted.

**Question: What can we learn from this?**

- Too often we put too much emphasis on HOW we present the gospel vs. letting the power of the Spirit shine in our lives.
- **Paul needed a job**
  - he meets Aquila & Priscilla = fellow tentmakers
    - remember the public markets where guilds would band together,
    - likely Paul went there to seek people for whom he could work/partner with.
      - even though Paul as a trained teacher and scholar
      - ALL jewish males were also taught a trade.
      - “If you fail to teach a child a trade you teach him how to steal”
      - This came in handy for Paul on several occasions.
    - Converted Aquila & Priscilla in the process.
- **Paul begins his outreach in the Synagogues**

- Acts 18:4 *“Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”*
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- Silas and Timothy bring him financial support from Macedonian churches.
- They join in the missions work.

## 2 Cor 11:7-9

*Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.*

- When the general Jewish audience is resistant, Paul shifts his focus to the Gentiles.

## Acts 18:6

*But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”*

### **Question: What can we learn from this?**

- Paul stays and works there for 1.5 years
- Apollos also ministered there. **Acts 19:1**
- Peter? He is mentioned in 1 Cor 1:12
  - probably never ministered there
  - listed as one of the key members of Jesus’ original 12 and the “keeper of the keys” . Highly influential person in the church.

## The City of Corinth

- Seaport city of approx. 500K population
  - served 2 seas
    - Aegean
    - Adriatic
- Reputation as a very immoral city.
  - possibly due to various influences from all over the world via seaports.
  - call someone a Corinthian = identify them as a very immoral person.
  - Held great temples of Aphrodite & Venus (who's headquarters would be Athens or Rome for Venus)
    - goddess of love i.e. sex.
      - Aphrodite is the Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. She is identified with the planet Venus, and her Roman equivalent is the goddess Venus.
      - worship of these deities involved heterosexual and homosexual "temple" prostitutes.
        - paid prostitute by paying the temple.
        - Aphrodite had a festival of her own, the Aphrodisia
        - reported to have over 1000 such prostitutes
      - we get the word Aphrodisiac from her.
- There was a 2nd visit to Corinth and possibly a 3rd.
- There is evidence of regular correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian church. .
  - **1 Cor 5:9** Paul refers to writing them earlier.
  - **1 Cor. 7:1** Paul refers to them writing him with questions.

## The Message to the Corinthians

- Message is to a church - not individuals

- Message is to a church of people Paul converted!!!!
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### **Basic outline of 1 Corinthians**

- Dealing with divisions -- 1:10–4:21
- Dealing with an sinful brother -- 5:1-13
- Dealing with lawsuits among believers -- 6:1-11
- Dealing with the abuse of freedom -- 6:12-20
- Dealing with marriage or being single -- 7:1-40
- Dealing with the eating of things sacrificed to idols -- 8:1–11:1
- Dealing with problems with the Lord's supper -- 11:17-34
- Dealing with spiritual gifts -- 12:1–14:40
- Dealing with the matter of resurrection -- 15:1-58
- Dealing with the collection of the gift -- 16:1-9
- Conclusion -- 16:10-24

**Question: Based on what we see here, what was Paul's "so that" for writing this letter.**

### **Theme = Community**

- Much deals with how we treat each other.
- specific issues with the same common challenge = how do we treat one another.

**1 Cor 6:12**

*12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.*

**1 Cor. 10:23,24**

*23 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. 24 No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.*

**1 Cor 12:7**

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

2 Cor 12: 1 (in a negative sense)

*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.*

- “beneficial” = *sumphero* = *lit.*, “to bring together,”
- 1 Cor 13 - not a breakout poem on the beauty of love but a description of how to treat one another.

The whole of 1 Corinthians is a call to Community

Foundation

**1 Cor. 1: 9**

*God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

- don’t read this as an individual - but as a church
  - before we get to divisions

- before we get to treating others in the Body as less important
  - marital status
  - economic status
  - historical sin status
- before we get to the true meaning of the Lords Supper
- We - as a church — are called into Fellowship with Jesus.

*koinonia*

It's easy to see why many in the church were “ ... ***weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.***” 1 Cor. 11:30 The 1 Spirit by which they had been baptized into 1 body was being quenched because they were not interested in the common good of that BODY!!!

The letter to the Corinthians was written to a group of ***House Churches***.

**Question: In what way could that effect the receiving of the message?**

To read 1 Corinthians as being written to multiple house churches gathering around the city of Corinth paints a different picture of just how difficult this ‘...perfectly united in mind and thought.’ would have been.

Consider this description by Richard Horsley from his historical work on the cultural context of the 1 Corinthians text:

Contrary to the popular image of Paul preaching the gospel in public places, he and his coworkers almost certainly avoided the marketplace of religious competition for the more intensive interaction of small groups in people’s houses. From references to ‘the assembly in the house of Priscilla and Aquila’ (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5; cf. Phlm 2) it seems clear that the movement in Corinth (and again in Ephesus) took the form of a number of small ‘assemblies’ based in households.

Gregory Linton states, “there was no community-owned real estate in the first two centuries.” Regarding Corinth he estimates that it would have been made up of as many as six house churches. It is believed that the house

churches in Corinth might have met in one large assembly on a rare occasion (1 Cor. 14:23) possibly in the home of Gaius (Rom. 16:23).

Wealthier citizens of the first century had homes or villas that could have accommodated a crowd into the hundreds.

Corinth is proof that trials, sin and other challenges arise despite the connectedness of small groups. Even with evidence of fairly regular larger assemblies of the Corinthian disciples the church faced challenges to their convictions and unity.

Justin Martyr, a one-time resident of Rome, remarked that he had no real grasp of how many Christians actually lived in Rome. He really only knew of the few Christians that lived within a close proximity to his tenement home.

This seeming lack of global or city-wide connectedness without spreadsheets and quick communication upon which we so heavily rely, makes the building of the church seem quite impossible. Yet, it was in these years that we see a dynamic fellowship with explosive and expansive growth revealing itself to the world.

The only clear explanation for this growth is that it was God 'adding to their numbers' those were being saved, it was God directing them to boldly proclaim the gospel message, and it was God that enabled them to find their deep and intimate connectedness with each other.

Too often in our modern American culture we cannot erase from our traditional minds the idea of 'church' being a building or a place. In fact, the Bible paints a very different picture. The word 'church' as it appears in the New Testament Greek is *ecclesia*. This is a word that was borrowed from the common language of Greco-Roman culture that simply means 'assembly' as in a gathering of people. The people are the church and where there are two assembled the church is meeting in the presence of the Lord. To truly appreciate the power of the house church setting we must understand, with deep conviction, the belief that even the smallest assembling of Christians is 'church'.

The first known Christian assembly building was not constructed until A.D. 201. This means that for over 150 years Christians nearly only ever assembled in homes.