

One Bible One Year

1&2 Corinthians

Gn	Ex	Lv	Nu	Dt														
Js	Ju	Ru	Sa ^{1,2}	Ki ^{1,2}	Ch ^{1,2}	Ez	Ne	Es										
Jb	Ps	Pr	Ec	So														
Is	Je	La	Ek	Da	Ho	Jl	Am	Ob	Jo	Mi								
					Na	Hk	Zp	Ha	Zc	ML								
Mt	Mk	Lk	Jn	Ac														
Ro	Co ^{1,2}																	

Summary

Today we are looking at the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians. These are letters written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth.

Paul went to Corinth in 52 AD and as was his usual practice he began preaching about Jesus in the Synagogue. But he was rejected by many Jews there and therefore established a Christian church centred on the many Romans and Greeks who became Christians as a result of his ministry.

Paul wrote 1st Corinthians in 55AD and 2nd was sent not much more than a year later. At that time Corinth was the main city in Greece both politically and economically. It was a very wealthy city because of its strategic position controlling a narrow strip of land between the Aegean and Adriatic seas. This made Corinth a perfect location for trade as merchants crossed between the two seas and access the markets of both mainland Greece and the Peloponnese.

As a city to plant a church, Corinth was a vibrant mix of people who would carry the message of Jesus with them across the empire. But it was also a highly secular city – in fact the city was well known for its loose morality and the name Corinthian was a by-word for excess and sexual license.

Outline

1st Corinthians

- Introduction (1:1-9)
- Divisions in the Church (1:10- 4:21)
- Moral and Ethical Disorders in the Life of the Church (chs. 5-6)
- Instruction on Marriage (ch. 7)
- Instruction on Questionable Practices (8:1-11:1)
- Instruction on Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
- Instruction on the Resurrection (ch. 15)
- Conclusion: Practical and Personal Matters (ch. 16)

2nd Corinthians

- Apologetic: Paul's Explanation of His Conduct and Apostolic Ministry (chs. 1-7)
 - Greetings (1:1-2)
 - Thanksgiving for Divine Comfort in Affliction (1:3-11)
 - The Integrity of Paul's Motives and Conduct (1:12-2:4)
 - Forgiving the Offending Party at Corinth (2:5-11)
 - God's Direction in Ministry (2:12-17)
 - The Corinthian Believers -- a Letter from Christ (3:1-11)
 - Seeing the Glory of God with Unveiled Faces (3:12-4:6)
 - Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7-16a)
 - The Prospect of Death and What It Means for the Christian (4:16b-5:10)
 - The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:10)
 - A Spiritual Father's Appeal to His Children (6:11-7:4)
 - The Meeting with Titus (7:5-16)
- Hortatory: The Collection for the Christians at Jerusalem (chs. 8-9)
- Polemical: Paul's Vindication of His Apostolic Authority (chs. 10-13)

Themes

Paul writes because he is troubled by divisions that have started to occur in the church and he mentions different factions who were all holding claim to higher knowledge and superior spirituality. He begins therefore with a clarification that the power of the gospel is in Christ crucified rather than human strength. He goes on to answer some specific questions the church has raised in a letter to him.

As Leon Morris says:

"Paul was troubled about the divisions within the church... There was also a quarrelsome spirit... First and foremost 1 Corinthians is a letter directed at the reformation of conduct."

Another central messages of Corinthians, particularly the 2nd Epistle, is the issue of new false teachers entering the church. As Paul Barnett says:

"A major source of criticism of Paul arose, apparently, from the recent arrival of certain Jewish 'ministers' or 'apostles', whom, however Paul does not name or identify. These newcomers were seeking to persuade the Corinthian church that Paul's theology was in error and, specifically, that the covenant of Moses was still in force... Unquestionably the arrival of these intruding 'ministers' and their campaign against Paul's doctrines and character are the chief reason for the difference in emotional tone evident between the first and second letter."

Paul's words to the Corinthians and to us show us how important it is to hear and practice good doctrine based on the forgiveness of the cross and the hope of resurrection through Christ alone. As Paul puts it:
"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:2-5)

Further thinking

How does earthly wisdom differ from God's wisdom?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5

How did people attempt to "save" themselves in Corinth?

How do people try to "save" themselves in London?

What does Paul mean by the "message of the cross"?

What is the problem at the church in Corinth?

(see also 1:10-17)

How does Paul address it?

Is pride an issue for the Corinthians?

How does this compare with the message of the cross?

Why is the message of Christ crucified ultimate life changing wisdom?

What does Paul mean in 2:4-5?

What challenges the message of the cross in our lives?

How can we remember to make the cross our focus?