

# 1 Corinthians Introduction

## “I Have Many in this City Who Are My People”

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1Co 1:1-2 ESV Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, 2 **To the church of God that is in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

### What kind of place was Corinth?

#### **Wealthy because of trade**

- It was located on a 4 mile wide Isthmus between Europe and Asia
- It had a harbor on the East leading to Asia and one on the West leading to Italy

#### **Worship**

- Worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation.

#### **Recreation**

- The Isthmus Games - second only to the Olympics - took place every 2 years

#### **History**

- In 146 B.C. Corinth was conquered - worship at the temple of Aphrodite ceased but the Isthmus Games continued hosted by a nearby city.
- In 44 B.C., Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth as a Roman city - It became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia
- As its wealth grew, Corinth was once again the host of the Isthmus Games, where **victors of each event won a wreath of celery stalks.**

#### **By the time the apostle Paul arrives**

- Corinth had the largest population in Greece with Greeks, Jews and Romans.
- Because of trade Corinth was also inhabited by Phoenicians and Phrygians from the east
- The temple of **Aphrodite** had been restored with its **culture of promiscuity**
- The Roman empire spread its ideas and religion and gods from other cultures (a melting pot)
  - Roman gods and Greek gods
  - **The cult of Isis** with an emphasis on "wisdom"
  - **The cult of Mithras** with an emphasis on "mysteries"
  - Same culture as Athens (Mars Hill) where there were all kinds of gods - even the unknown God - and people who sat around all day just wanting to hear new things
- The name “Corinth” became synonymous with sin, corruption and debauchery
- To be called a “corinthian” was an evil slur

#### In this sin-filled city - God has His church “To the Church of God in Corinth” - called out

- Acts 18: 9 [**Paul was in Corinth**] And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for ***I have many in this city who are my people.***" 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

## How did the church get started? or “How Did God Get Paul to Corinth?”

### **God leads us - Act 16:6-10 ESV**

- 6 Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia
- 7 Tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them
- 8 they went down to Troas
- 9 And in a vision "Come over to Macedonia and help us"
- 10 He concluded that God had called us to preach the gospel to them
- Persecution in Philippi (Philippian jailer), the same in Thessalonica, those persecutors followed them to Berea (although many received the message there)- so he left and went to Athens - the story of MARS Hill

### **God has a PLAN ---but---he uses a MAN or a woman (Coincidence or God?)**

Act 18:1-18 ESV After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

### **Coincidence or God?**

- He had just run away from Persecution at Thessalonica (Although sent there by God BTW)
- He found Aquila and Priscilla (**Coincidence** or a God-thing?)
- They were in the same trade as Paul (**Coincidence** or a God-thing?)
- They were there because Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome (**Unfortunate circumstance** or a God thing?)
- **They had a vision for eternal things** that moved them to kingdom work in the midst of hardship (**This is the kind of man and woman God can use**)
  - They showed Apollos the way of God more perfectly
  - They had **a church in their house** (1 Cor 16:19)
  - Later they were found in Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19)
  - At some point they went to Rome (Rom 16:3-5) - Paul called them "**fellow workers**" who "**risked their lives**" and once again they **had a church in their house**

### **God often closes one door to open another BETTER door**

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. 5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they **opposed** and **reviled** him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and **went to the house of a man named Titius Justus**, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. 8 **Crispus**, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed** in the Lord, together with **his entire household**. And **many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized**.

- People are not always responsive But that in itself does not determine God's will
- When things don't go as planned - keep looking for opportunity

## **I HAVE MANY IN THIS CITY WHO ARE MY PEOPLE**

9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be **afraid**, but go on **speaking** and **do not be silent**, 10 for **I am with you**, and **no one will attack you** to harm you, for **I have many in this city who are my people.**" 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

- He typically spent little time in cities because of persecution
- But in this case God said **I HAVE MANY IN THIS CITY WHO ARE MY PEOPLE**

## **God intervenes - even into secular affairs - His purpose will stand**

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized **Sosthenes**, the ruler of the synagogue, and **beat him in front of the tribunal**. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this. 18 After this, **Paul stayed many days longer** and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila... ..

## The very introduction of the book gives us a clue as to his approach

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Paul will address division, immaturity, carnality, dragging each other to court, divorce, sexual immorality, abuse of spiritual gifts, questions about idols etc. -- YET he addresses these same people here as **THE CHURCH OF GOD** --- **SANCTIFIED** [set apart] --- **SAINTS** [holy] --- It is critical that we see ourselves as Christ sees us, and begin to live out our relationship with Him as the **New Normal**

## How does the book of 1 Corinthians apply today?

### **May we see our culture through the eyes of Christ**

- Corinth was "sin-city" - a place few Christians would want to be --- YET "I HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY WHO ARE MY PEOPLE"

### **May we see ourselves as God sees us so we may walk with Him in the midst of corrupt culture**

- The book of 1st Corinthians can also show us how to live in a culture that is devoid of the knowledge of God...a culture much like ours today...

### **May we be those willing to live out God's plan to reach "Those Who Are His People"**

- God called His beloved apostle, and Aquila and Priscilla and Timothy and Silas to come to this awful place, and bring the light of Jesus Christ
- Where would those people be today, if it weren't for the likes of these men and women?