

Books of the Bible Series

I Corinthians

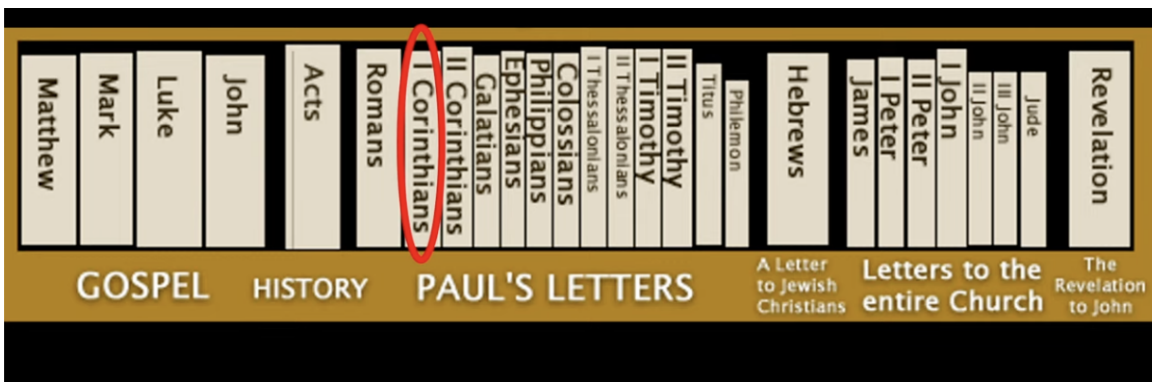
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6-25-23

First, some questions:

- *Who gets to tell you what to do?*
- *Who gets to define what is moral (right and wrong)?*
- *Why is that? (a very important question!)*

We are looking at I Corinthians today. This is Paul’s first letter to a group of people in Corinth in the Roman province of Achea.

Let’s look at the relative size of the NT books of the Bible if you lined them all on a shelf:



Paul’s letters in the NT are not in chronological order: they are really more arranged according to length, with the longer ones first. Romans was not written first, nor was the letter to I Corinthians. Actually, the OT prophets are arranged in a similar way, largest to smallest

Notice that we will spend the rest of this summer reading only Paul’s letters and then branch out into the other authors next summer.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----|
| Conversion of Saul | Acts 9:1-9 | 36 |
| Founding of Church at Antioch | Acts 11:19-30 | 43 |
| Paul's Call | Acts 13:1-3 | 47 |
| His First Missionary Journey Begun | Acts 13:4—14:28 | 48 |
| Council at Jerusalem | Acts 15:6-35 | 50 |
| Second Missionary Journey Begun | Acts 15:39—18:22 | 51 |
| Writing of I Thessalonians | I Thessalonians | 52 |
| Writing of II Thessalonians | II Thessalonians | 53 |
| Third Missionary Journey Begun | Acts 18:23—21:17 | 54 |
| Writing of I Corinthians | I Corinthians | 57 |
| Writing of Galatians | Galatians | 57 |
| Writing of II Corinthians | II Corinthians | 58 |
| Writing of Romans | Romans | 58 |
| Writing of Luke's Gospel | Luke | 59 |

Date of I Corinthians: The chart to the left (from BlueLetterBible.org) shows a list of some **key events** of Paul and their **dates**; you can see that they estimate this letter to have been written around 57 A.C.

You can see it was perhaps written somewhere between 54-57 AD; this was when he also wrote 2nd Corinthians and Romans. We think he wrote I Corinthians in Ephesus and we think he wrote

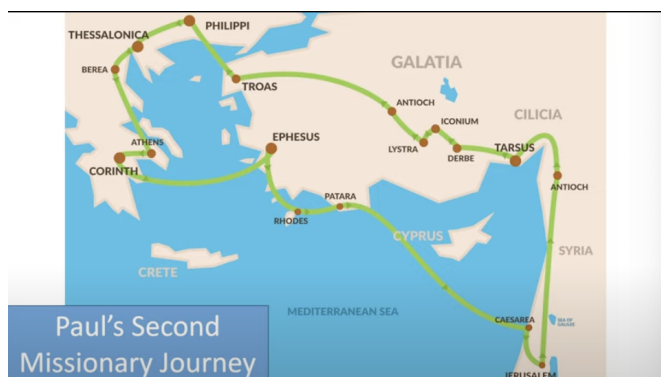
Romans from Corinth on his third visit there. There are other theories for the date for I Cor. One website I found (conformingtojesus.com) put the date anywhere from 54-57 AD

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|--|---|
| 37 | Jerusalem, Tarsus, Syria, Cilicia | | | | |
| 46-47 | Antioch, Jerusalem | 11 | 1 year - Antioch | | |
| 48-49 | First Missionary Journey and Antioch | 13-14 | | | Galatians |
| 50 | Jerusalem Council and Antioch | 15 | | | |
| 51-53 | Second Missionary Journey | 16-18 | 18 months - Corinth | | 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians |
| 53-54 | Antioch | | | | |
| 54-57 | Third Missionary Journey | 19-21 | 3 years - Ephesus | | 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans |
| 57 | Jerusalem Arrest | 22-23 | | | |
| 57-59 | Caesarea Prisoner | 24-26 | 2 years | | |
| 59-60 | Journey to Rome | 27-28 | | | |
| 60-67 circa | Rome House Arrest | 28 | 5-7 years circa | | Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy |

Note: We can verify the date of I Corinthians from outside sources. Archeologists have evidence that Galio, the Roman judge there, was in Corinth in AD 51 which helps us trace when Paul was in Corinth. T

First, let's go over some of the back story of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. On the **FIRST** Missionary Journey, he visited Corinth, starting in Antioch and traveled across modern-day Turkey to Macedonia (because of a dream). He then went to Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and then went by ship to Ephesus.

The **SECOND** time is more complicated. IF you read Acts, your assignment from 2 weeks ago, this will be familiar to you.



Here is an outline of the events of this second Missionary Journey found in the book of Acts. . (The details of each of these events will follow this chart; they set the stage for the letter to Corinth)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Philippi | Acts 16:11-40 | river, demon, riot, jail, earthquake, asked to leave |
| Thessalonica | Acts 17:1-9 | synagogue, riot, Jason must post bail, Paul & Silas sent away at night |
| Berea | Acts 17:10-15 | synagogue, riot, Paul sent away, Silas & Timothy stay |
| Athens | Acts 17:16-34 | synagogue, marketplace, Areopagus |
| Corinth | Acts 18:1-18 | P & A, synagogue, S & T rejoin, Paul frustrated, stays 1.5 years, proconsul |
| Ephesus (1 st time) | Acts 18:18-28 | P & A move, Apollos arrives, P & A teach, Apollos goes to Corinth |
| Ephesus (2 nd time) | Acts 19 | synagogue, lecture hall, 2-3 years, riot, leaves for Macedonia & Greece |

Let's start at **Philippi** where there was a girl who was bothering Paul. It turns out, she had a demon who could tell fortunes. When Paul cast out the demon and disabled this ability, her owners were upset and caused an uproar because they lost money. They start a riot and Paul is beaten, thrown in jail; there is an earthquake, a jailbreak, and eventually, the city officials find out he is a Roman citizen. At this point, they want him to leave.

So he goes to **Thessalonica**, still in Macedonia, above Greece. He talks with people in the synagogue and the offended Jews start a riot. They cannot find Paul so they arrest Jason, whom he is staying with. They brought him before Roman's authorities and made him post bail and release Jason. Paul and Silus sneak away at night and head to Berea, where the same kind of thing happened.

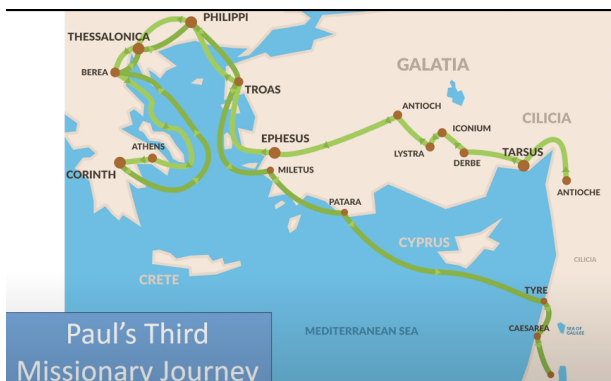
But the Jews from Thessalonica hear about this and travel to **Berea** and start another riot. In the middle of this, the Bereas send him away for his own safety and he is separated from his friends, Silus and Timothy.

Paul goes alone with escorts to **Athens** and speaks in the synagogue and the marketplace because he noticed the idolaters. The philosophers there are interested in what he is saying and have him speak to him to the Areopagus where he tells many people about Jesus. Some believe and many say this is not the high and mighty philosophies that they are used to and ask him to leave.

He finally goes to **Corinth** where he meets Priscilla and Aquila (P and A) who were tentmakers, a very big deal in those times. Paul was also a tentmaker. He joined them and waited in Corinth for Silus and Timothy to arrive. He would work 6 days/week and he would preach on the Sabbath. He was happy when Silus and Tim arrived because he could speak 7 days/week. This frustrated the Jews and he had to move next door the synagogue rather than being at the synagogue. He stayed quite a long time at Corinth for 1 ½ years, maybe closer to 2 years. At one point, the Jewish people bring him before their procounsel, Galio, a judge in the Roman government, and claim he is preaching illegal things. Galio, however, doesn't care.

Paul leaves and journeys to **Ephesus**, joined by Priscilla and Aquila. Paul continues on to **Jerusalem** and his home base of Antioch.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey:



This journey takes a long time.

In the meantime, Apollos arrives who is a persuasive speaker who comes to learn things about Jesus that are incorrect. A and P take him aside and he understands what the truth is. Then he returns to Corinth and he is very popular among the Christians. This is important to the back story of I Corinthians.

Paul journeys back to **Ephesus** for 2-3 years where he daily talked about Jesus in a lecture hall. But eventually a riot occurred because the people were very invested in their idols, especially to Artemis. Paul was teaching against idols and this would cause a lot of money to be lost in their silver idol-making shops. Paul leaves and arrives back in **Corinth**. Our best guess is that before the riot breaks out, he writes a letter to Corinth.

Some interesting facts: I Corinthians is NOT the first letter; it actually mentions a previous letter in

I Cor 5:9-11

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— **10** not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. **11** But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister^[a] but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

We don't have this letter; maybe someday it will be found. It provides a backdrop for what Paul is talking about in I Corinthians. We also have II Corinthians (which is probably the 3rd or even the 4th letter)

Occasion for I Corinthians

Paul gets a report from Chloe and her household:

I Cor I: 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

He also received a letter from them in response to his first letter:

I Cor 7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

There was a lot of evidence of letters going back and forth. I encourage now to get a hold of an NIV Bible nearby or you could use a Bible app. I want to do an outline of I Corinthians by looking at the headings in this book. Remember, these were not placed there by Paul; they are one translator's opinion of what constitutes a section of the writing. Even different NIV versions have different headings. This is, however, a quick way to get an overview of any book!

Outline of I Corinthians using NIV headings

Ch 1 **Greeting** (no heading to start, but I call it the "Greeting")

Thanksgiving

Divisions in the Church (an ongoing theme of the popularity of Apollos vs. Paul and its conflicts; Paul wants to make it clear that we are to be unified and follow Jesus, not another man)

Ch 2 Christ and the Wisdom and Power of God (in contrast to what he did in Athen's to the philosophers, Paul tries to be humble and unassuming in Corinth; this theme of God's wisdom appears foolish but is part of his plan: this makes the Gospel accessible to all, both simple and sophisticated.),

Ch 3 The Church and its Leaders, Wisdom from the Spirit, Divisions in the Church

Ch 4 Apostleship in Christ (I'm trying to shift our definition here: an Apostle is a title that gives authority in the kingdom of God: It is someone who had personal interaction with Jesus and therefore has special authority in the church. Paul asserts he is an apostle just like the other apostles. He says this gives him certain rights, which he didn't ask from the Corinthians, such as being paid and taking a wife among other things. Think about what it means to have authority.)

Ch 5 Expel the immoral brother (This a controversial theology of **ex-communication**: A man was committing incest with his father's wife and Paul says he cannot be a part of the church; this was probably addressed in the first letter. He explains that people who live outwardly sinful lives need to be kicked out of the church, at least for a time.)

Ch 6 Lawsuits Among Believers (He says Christians should be able to judge inside the church, thus avoiding lawsuits among believers. These things should be handled inside the church, not outside the church with an unbelieving judge. Their lawsuits are actually an embarrassment.)

Sexual immorality (There was a famous temple to Aphrodite in Corinth; the way to worship this goddess of erotic love is by enacting erotic love. Paul tells them not to take part in this: they should be completely pure and blameless, straight and narrow in matters of sexuality.)

Ch 7 Marriage (Paul addresses questions regarding marriage: who, when, situations, how should it end, why or not. One thing he makes a case for is singleness and says that abstinence is better than being married *<but he doesn't assert his apostleship to this statement>*. He says if you do get married, a principal way to stave off temptation, is to have relations as often as possible.)

Ch 8 Food sacrificed to idols (People would get meat by buying the surplus of meat which had been offered to idols in their temples. Paul explains this important issue because he doesn't want them participating in the worship of false gods and demons: but he also wants them to know that at the end of the day, food is just food. How can both of these points be held in the same way? *Disgraceful, idolatrous behavior vs. It's just food.*

Ch 9 The rights as an apostle.

Ch 10 Warnings from Israel's History
Idol feasts and the Lord's Supper

Believer's Freedom (We are free to eat anything we want as long as we aren't doing it in a way that would cause others to sin against their own conscience. I've found this inspirational with issues like alcohol in our culture. We don't have controversies about meat but alcohol is controversial. The Bible says it's OK to drink it but we need to be aware of others when we do so. Some people drink too much. One way to apply this: I'm

OK drinking alcohol personally but if it's a problem for anyone around me, I should not drink it. This is what we are called to in the Love chapter, 13).

Ch 11: Propriety in worship or how worship services should be conducted. (Our best guess is that in the early church, they gathered for a potluck meal. We do something similar here at the Village today. Eventually, after eating, people would talk about Jesus and what that meant. As part of this meal, they would also do the Lord's Supper. This was the way things happened in an early church worship service. But in Corinth, some people wouldn't share food, especially with the poorer people who would sometimes leave hungry. Paul said that everyone should have a chance to eat and that the best spots for eating should be open and that people should fight over the most lowly spot. In these gatherings, people also offered spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, which got chaotic because people talked all at once. Paul said this was not a way to gather as believers.)

Ch 12 Spiritual Gifts

One Body, Many Parts (This is a beautiful metaphor of a body which says that everybody is important in a church and has a role.)

Ch 13 Love (This chapter is often read at weddings. But notice that this is talking about divine love, not eros love.)

Ch 14 Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

Orderly Worship (More about prophetic gifts and orderly worship. He also talks about Jesus's bodily death as an important hope for us in the future; the whole world will be brought into resurrection at the end of times.)

**Ch 15 Resurrection of Christ
Resurrection of the Dead
The Resurrected Body**

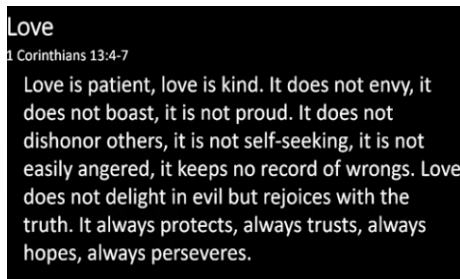
Ch 16: The Collection for God's People (Paul collects money for the poor in Jerusalem and gives final greetings.)

Some Personal Highlights:

Ch 13 on Love is similar to Romans 12 which talks about loving enemies and hospitality. Both of these *together* are a wonderful instruction on how to live out the Christian life.



I Cor 13 is really really really really hard! We like to



receive this kind of love but to carry it out ourselves is difficult. Some

of us think it's even unjust to be this loving.

There are also instructions on communion, which I will read to you in a few minutes before we take communion. Paul explains that we shouldn't eat/drink in an unworthy manner and he explains this. Basically, if you don't believe that Jesus died for your sins and give your allegiance to him, you shouldn't take the Lord's supper. (Ch 11).

I Cor also has some tough passages that we don't like; I think the most controversial message in our culture is addressed in Chapter 6:

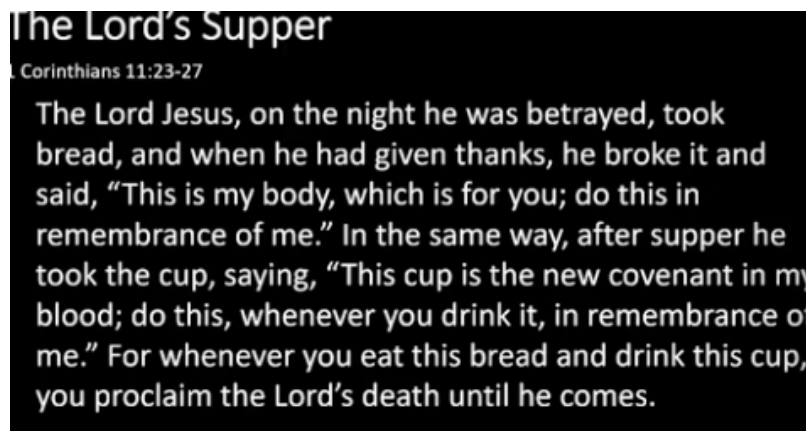


We think this is harsh, unjust, and bigoted. But we have Paul saying it to us! This is why I asked the questions at the beginning: Who gets to tell you what to do? Is Paul allowed to do this? Is the Bible an authority? Paul has a lot of practical, ethical, and moral things to say in this book. Some like this until they get to something they don't like. Why should we listen to Paul? He says he is an apostle, which is People don't like that Paul is defining what is moral. Paul asserts that he is an apostle with high authority, higher than other people.

Some instructions from me: **Read** Romans and I Corinthians! **Read** Acts. I think Acts will help you understand more deeply what we are talking about this summer and next. But read I and II Corinthians in one sitting, as quickly as possible. Don't stop or take breaks: do it fast to get a big overview. If you can, read it outloud with others. With Acts, just read it!

Consider your attitude toward authority: what are you stuck on when comes to Paul's authority?

I end by inviting you to take the Lord's Supper:



it

