

XLVI

1 CORINTHIANS

WHO WROTE IT?

1 Corinthians 1:1 identifies the author as the apostle Paul.

WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

1 Corinthians was written in approximately A. D. 55.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The apostle Paul founded the church in Corinth. A few years after leaving the church, the apostle Paul heard some disturbing reports about the Corinthian church. They were full of pride and were excusing sexual immorality. Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was rampant misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. The apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation—Jesus Christ.

SOME KEY VERSES

For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

1 CORINTHIANS 3:3

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

A QUICK SUMMARY

The Corinthian church was plagued by divisions. The believers in Corinth were dividing into groups loyal to certain spiritual leaders (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:1-6). Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be united because of devotion to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Many in the church were essentially approving of an immoral relationship (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Paul commanded them to expel the wicked man from the church (1 Corinthians 5:13). The Corinthian believers were taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-2). Paul taught the Corinthians that it would be better to be taken advantage of than to damage their Christian testimony (1 Corinthians 6:3-8).

Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions on marriage and celibacy (chapter 7), food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8 and 10), Christian freedom (chapter 9), the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14), and the resurrection (chapter 15). Paul organized the book of 1 Corinthians by answering questions the Corinthian believers had asked him, and by responding to improper conduct and erroneous beliefs they had accepted.

OLD TESTAMENT TIES

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul uses the story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness to illustrate to the Corinthian believers the folly of the misuse of freedom and the danger of overconfidence. Paul has just warned the Corinthians about their lack of self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). He goes on to describe the Israelites who, despite seeing God's miracles and care for them—the parting of the Red Sea, the miraculous provision of manna from heaven, and water from a rock—they misused their freedom, rebelled against God, and fell into immorality and idolatry. Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to note the example of the Israelites and avoid lusts and sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 10:6-8) and putting Christ to the test and complaining (1 Corinthians 10:9-10).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Many of the problems and questions the Corinthian church was dealing with are still present in the church today. Churches today still struggle with divisions, with immorality, and over the topic of spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians very well could have been written to the church today, and we would do well to hear Paul's warnings and apply them to ourselves. Despite all the rebukes and corrections, 1 Corinthians brings our focus back to where it should be—on Christ. Genuine Christian love is the answer to many problems (chapter 13). A proper understanding of the resurrection of Christ, as revealed in chapter 15, and thereby a proper understanding of our own resurrection, is the cure for what divides and defeats us.

MY NOTES