

Review:

First, *Geography*, the strategic location Corinth enjoyed

- Wealth
- “Multi-culturalism” (i.e., people from everywhere)
- Vice
- Many religions

Second, *History*, especially the post-Julian period

- Made Corinth a Romanized Greek city
- Capital of Achaia

Third, *Circumstances* of authorship

- Paul’s back and forth dealings with fractious Corinthian church
- Paul’s many letters: the prequel (lost), 1 Corinthians, the hard letter (lost), 2 Corinthians

Message:

1 Corinthians is “*the epistle of the cross in its social application.*” [Findlay, 739.]

Three main topics in 1 Corinthians

- To heal divisions and correct contentions in answer to the report from Chloe’s people (1-6)
- To answer specific questions raised in a letter from the Corinthians (7-16)
- To emphatically defend the doctrine of the resurrection, perhaps the key problem in Corinth, as Paul makes it the climax of the epistle.

2 Corinthians the epistle *revealing the heart of pastoral application.*

Three main topics in 2 Corinthians

- To defend Paul’s ministry against the hostility and suspicions raised by false teachers present in the Corinthian church (1-7)
- To exhort Corinthian readiness for the offering they already pledged to support (8-9)
- To defend Paul’s apostleship and denounce those who opposed him and consequently also opposed Christ (10-13)

A survey of commentaries shows many themes developed in the Corinthian epistles. We will cover most of them as we work through the epistles themselves. In this introduction, I'd like to highlight some themes developed in one of my commentaries, by G. G. Findlay.

These themes are also developed to some degree in 2 Corinthians, but our focus here will center mostly on 1 Corinthians.

- The source of the gospel
- The nature of the Christian community
- The relationship of Christians to the world

The source of the gospel

Paul came preaching the “testimony of God” (1Co 2.1)

- Receiving the gospel makes us “by his doing in Christ” (1Co 1.30)

Note: “in Christ” a theme in both books, 12x in 1 Co, 8x in 2 Co

- Gospel also makes us “the church of God” (1Co 1.2)

“To the CoG” used only in 1 Co, 2 Co, “CoG” used also in Ac 20.28; 1Co 10.32, 11.22, 15.9; Gal 1.13; Titus 3.5

Strong contrast of God and world in 1Co 1.26-31 — the church of God is assembled out of the world

- Founded on the testimony of God (2.1)
- The preaching of the cross (1.17)

The word of the cross (1Co 1.18)

“veiled under a guise of weakness”

- Exposes the folly of the world (1Co 1.18)
- Empowers the faith of the believer (1Co 1.21)
- Grants the Holy Spirit (1Co 2.13)
- Empowers the preaching of the gospel (2Co 6.7)

The critical problem in Corinth: spiritual immaturity

- Only overcome by full understanding and acceptance of the gospel (1Co 4.6)

Don't exceed what is written

Don't be arrogant (KJV “puffed up”)

See 1Co 4.18-19, 5.2, 8.1, 13.4

- Become sober-minded as you ought (1Co 15.34)

Full force of this word: “get sober out of your drunken condition”

The gospel, founded in the preaching of the cross, makes the difference between the Christian and the world. A new life begins in Christ, a new way of life follows Christ, and the new destiny of life focuses on Christ.

1 Cor 15.1-4 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,