

## Review

- First, *Geography*, the strategic location Corinth enjoyed
- Second, *History*, especially the post-Julian period
- Third, *Circumstances* of authorship

## Message:

- The source of the gospel (last week)
- The nature of the Christian community
- The relationship of Christians to the world (next week)

## The nature of the Christian community

Especially the subject of 1 Cor 12, 14, but pervades the teaching of both epistles, beginning with “to the church of God” (1Co 1.2; 2Co 1.1).

“The Graeco-Roman cities at this time were honey-combed, in all grades of life, with private associations — trade-guilds, burial clubs and friendly societies, religious confraternities; their existence supplied a great social need, and formed a partial substitute for the political activity suppressed by the levelling Roman empire. These organisations prepared heathen society for Church life; and Christianity upon Gentile soil largely adopted the forms of combination in popular use, borrowing from the Greek club as much as from the Jewish synagogue. But it transformed what it borrowed. In the Churches of God established in Thessalonica and Corinth the first stones were laid of the Christian structure of society. New conceptions of duty and kinship are unfolded in this Epistle ... Paul’s sociology naturally met with resistance from men reared in Paganism; human nature is still against it. The Corinthians brought into the Church their Greek contentiousness, their lack of loyalty and public spirit. The mental stimulus and large freedom of the new faith, where reverence and self-control were wanting, resulted for the time in greater turbulence rather than in a nobler and happier order.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, n.d.), 742–43.

The church as the “**building of God**” (1Co 3.9, 10, 16 [temple];  
2Co 6.16 [temple], 10.8, 13.10)

- In communion with the Son (1.9)
- Baptized into one body by one Spirit (2.12, 12.13)

Since we are in communion with the Son, and baptized into one body by one Spirit, what implications does that have for our fellowship among other believers? **We should strive to love one another, as Christ loved us.**

What implications does this have when someone deviates from true doctrine or from personal unity (*i.e.*, get’s mad and fights in the church)? **Such action speaks against the Christian testimony and mars the name of Christ in the wider community.**

The church as a “**brotherhood**”

- “Brethren” not merely a courtesy (1Co 1.10)
- The underlying concept of mutual family obligation (1Co 8.11ff. to sin against a brother is to sin against Christ)
- The connection is of different parts of one body (1Co 12.14ff.)
- The connection demands mutual obligation (1Co 12.21-26)
- The collection for the saints demonstrated the breadth of this connection, at least from Corinth to Jerusalem (1Co 16.1ff.; 2Co 8-9)

Granted, many earthly families are dysfunctional, yet God pictures the church as a family. Even in an imperfect human family, what qualities of family life parallel these we’ve seen of church life in Corinthians? **Genuine relationship, obligations, connectedness, obligations**

The church as the “**body of Christ**”

- We are a *fellowship* [partnership, community] of the Son of God (1Co 1.9)
- The “in Christ” concept mentioned above
- “he who is *cemented to the Lord*, is one spirit”<sup>2</sup> (1Co 6.17, Findlay translation, compare 6.16)
- The body of Christ, and members individually (1Co 12.27)

<sup>2</sup> Findlay, 743.

- “No man in Christ is self-complete; the eye finds its mate in the hand, the head in the foot. This reciprocal subordination dictates the law of the life in Christ Jesus and controls all its movements.”<sup>3</sup>
- With the apostle, we operate together “under the law of Christ” (1Co 9.21)
- Division in the church suggests an impossibility: “the division of Christ” (1Co 1.12-13a)
- “The Church was in the eyes of some of its members a kind of debating club or philosophical school, in which [*heresies* — divisions] and [*schisms*] were matters of course; to others it was a benefit society, to be used so far as suited inclination and convenience.”<sup>4</sup>
- The church is to be “one loaf” and “one cup” (1 Cor 11.16ff.)
- The church must guard its fellowship against communion with demons (1Co 10.20ff.) and unbelief (2Co 6.14ff.)

Ultimately, the unity of the church will be found in the purification of the coming of Christ and his evaluation of us all (1Co 3.10-15, and see other passages on the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming in the epistles).

Thinking of the “body” metaphor, we could continue on the unity theme, but let’s consider the care of the body. What things are necessary to fit the “body of Christ” for effective Christian service? **Exercising spiritual disciplines (mutual and personal Bible study), participating in edifying functions (building the health of the body), avoiding and purging dangerous pathogens (false doctrines, divisive spirits)**

**The imagery emphasizes the needs for unity, but also for solidarity in protecting God's church from external and internal attack.**

<sup>3</sup> Findlay, 743.

<sup>4</sup> Findlay, 744.