

1 Corinthians

Bible Study Outline

Author

Tradition and even the most liberal modern scholars agree that the internal and external evidence for the authorship of 1 Corinthians belongs to the apostle Paul.

To quote David Lowry,

"That Paul is this letter's author there is little doubt. Even the most imaginative critics find no objection on this point. The apostle came to Corinth (Acts 18:1–18) on his second missionary journey (probably in the spring of a.d. 51 as the proconsulship of Gallio likely began later that year, in July). There Paul met Aquila and Priscilla who had left Rome in a.d. 49, when Claudius issued an edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from that city. The couple ran a tent-making business, a trade also practiced by Paul. Since no mention is made of their conversions, they were probably Christians when Paul met them. With a kinship along spiritual, ethnic, and vocational lines, Paul was naturally attracted to them. According to his custom Paul attended the synagogue and took part in its services, seeking to persuade his hearers that Jesus is the Messiah. When the synagogue was closed to Paul, he went next door to the house of a synagogue listener who heard and believed, a Gentile named Titius Justus (Acts 18:7). He was one of many people in Corinth who belonged to the Lord."¹

Audience | Date

Quite obviously, the letter was written some time subsequent to Paul's first visit to Corinth. Following his departure from the city, he sailed from Cenchrea for Syria by way of Ephesus. Landing at the Palestinian port of Caesarea, he then visited the Jerusalem churches and journeyed on north to his home church at Antioch in Syria (Acts 18:18–23).

After some time in Antioch, Paul left on his third missionary journey and visited the churches of Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23). He finally came to Ephesus (19:1), preaching and teaching there for almost three years (19:10; 20:31). According to Bruce, the two years was probably that and a few months more. With the three months of 19:8, this would make up the three years of 20:31; i.e., three years less a few months.

¹ Lowry, David, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

While at Ephesus, Paul heard of the Corinthians' troubles and questions through reports from Chloe's house (1 Cor 1:11) and possibly through a delegation from Corinth (16:17). At this point he wrote the Epistle.

That 1 Corinthians was written on the third missionary journey and from Ephesus and in the spring of A.D. 55/56 is evident from the following reasons: (1) Paul says he is writing from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8, 9, 19). (2) He wrote the letter several years after his initial departure from Corinth in the fall of A.D. 51, because it was written subsequent to Apollos's stay at the city (Acts 18:26, 27; 1 Cor 1:12) and after Timothy and Erastus had been sent by Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22) and Timothy had been sent on to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17). Further, it took some time for the Corinthian problems to develop and for news of them to reach Paul. (3) The letter was written before the beginning of summer, because in 1 Corinthians 16:8 Paul intimates that it is a relatively short time to Pentecost (i.e., late spring) after which he intends to leave Ephesus. The time of writing is certainly before winter, for Paul states that he wants to come and winter with them (1 Cor 16:6, cf. Acts 20:3). This all adds up to some four or five years after his initial departure from Corinth in the fall of A.D. 51, counting his journey to Jerusalem and extended stay in Syrian Antioch (Acts 18:18, 23) and his almost three-year ministry in Ephesus (19:8, 10; 20:31).²

Theme

1 Corinthians is a vast letter, finding a church at one of its lowest points as it struggled in many significant areas. A broad view of the flow of the concepts within the letter seems to highlight a more "cosmic", overarching battle within the church that was bigger than the sum of the individual issues. This battle was one of unity in love being the foundational lifestyle quality of the family of God. This is seen through Paul's methodical deconstruction of the core issues that they faced; lack of unity in how they viewed leaders, lack of unity in how they dealt with sexual, lack of unity in how they interacted with the poor among them, and the list goes on in Paul's treatise on their disunity. However this progression of Paul does in fact lead to the solution. He builds a case that they have forgotten what truly unifies them - love. Among the myriad solutions that might be offered to fix the individual problems, Paul rather addresses the central problem as a rejection of unity in and expressed through love toward one another.

We are choosing to summarize this central battle into one phrase which exemplifies the primary focus of Paul, "The Fight For Family Unity".

² *Mare, W. H. (1976). The Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1 Corinthians*

Doctrine

Unity

Among the vast topics addressed in 1 Corinthians, unity is a central area of focus and concern. In his estimation, Paul sees the presence of division (and lack of unity) as a primary cause for the difficulties that have plagued the church. Although the specific issues of sin that were negatively impacting the church don't seem to directly address unity, he sees them as a being a cause of them. In a very practical sense, Paul is appealing to the church to unite together around the core doctrinal issues and function of the church, not necessarily to remove all problems and guarantee the eradication of them, but to better position the church to deal with them in ways that are healthy and maintain the unity of the church with God and each other.

Baptism

Another key issue that is briefly addressed is baptism. 1 Corinthians provides interesting balancing perspectives on an issue that has been deeply defended in the dogma of the church from the 400s AD until the present. We will take a closer look at what we learn from Paul's words, and consider the principle of the practice of baptism and consider how we can best represent the intentions of this practice both from an observational perspective (what they did) and a propositional perspective (what we have been told or not told to do).

Resurrection

One of the more challenging passages in the entire Bible is found in the latter chapters of 1 Corinthians where Paul speaks at length regarding the resurrection. We will look closely at the specifics of the issue of the resurrection and how it impacts the foundational of biblical unity in love.

Many regard this as a challenging passage, which it is, however much confusion exists due to the passage being viewed separately from the entire context that Paul builds preceding this section. We will strive to faithfully look at the details and seek clarity, but we will primarily do this through a proper contextual look at Paul's statements within the broader context.

Outline

SECTION 1: Introduction

Date: July 16, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Topic: Introduction

SECTION 2: Division And Wisdom

Date: July 23, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17
Topic: Purpose: Call To Unity

Date: July 30, 2023

Passages: 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5
Topic: Gospel Wisdom (1)

Date: August 6, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16
Topic: Gospel Wisdom (2)

Date: August 13, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23
Topic: Leadership And Rewards

Date: August 20, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 4:1-17
Topic: Leadership Authority And Sacrifice

SECTION 3: Sexual Immorality

Date: August 27, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 4:18-5:13
Topic: Sexual Complacency

Date: September 3, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11
Topic: Civil Disputes (Sexual?)

Date: September 10, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Topic: Sexual Temptation

Date: September 17, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 7:1-24
Topic: Sexual Purity: Marriage

Date: September 24, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 7:25-40
Topic: Sexual Purity: Singleness

SECTION 4: Freedom And Wisdom

Date: October 1, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 8
Topic: Freedom

Date: October 8, 2023

Passages: 1 Corinthians 9:1-23
Topic: Freedom: Paul's Example

Date: October 15, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13
Topic: Freedom And Rewards

Date: October 22, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1
Topic: Freedom To Glorify God

Date: October 29, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
Topic: Gender Roles

Date: November 5, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
Topic: Wealth And Power

Date: November 12, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
Topic: Spiritual Gifts

Date: November 19, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 13
Topic: Love And Worship

Date: November 26, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 14
Topic: Prophecy

SECTION 5: The Resurrection

Date: December 3, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 15:1-34
Topic: Gospel And Resurrection

Date: December 10, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58
Topic: Resurrection Doctrine

SECTION 6: Closing Remarks

Date: December 17, 2023
Passages: 1 Corinthians 16
Topic: Family Business