



SAINTS

Under Construction

A Study of 1 Corinthians

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (1 Corinthians 3:10)

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April - June 2011

the Laurel Canyon church of Christ

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 (April 3rd)

As We Build, There Must Be No Divisions Among Us (1:1-3:23)

WEEK 2 (April 10th)

As We Build, We Must Not Go Beyond What Is Written (4:1-21)

WEEK 3 (April 17th)

As We Build, The Church Must Be Kept Pure (5:1-13)

WEEK 4 (May 1st)

As We Build, We Must Learn To Get Along (6:1-11)

WEEK 5 (May 8th)

As We Build, We Must Use Our Bodies To Glorify God (6:12-20)

WEEK 6 (May 15th)

As We Build, We Must Lead The Lives That The Lord Has Assigned (7:1-40)

WEEK 7 (May 22nd)

As We Build, We Must Guard Against Pride (8:1-13)

WEEK 8 (May 29th)

As We Build, We Must Not Put Obstacles In The Way Of The Gospel (9:1-27)

WEEK 9 (June 5th)

As We Build, We Must Adamantly Avoid Idolatry (10:1-33)

WEEK 10 (June 12th)

As We Build, We Must Respectfully Remember Our Head (11:1-34)

WEEK 11 (June 19th)

As We Build, We Must Ground Our Motives In Love (12:1-14:40)

WEEK 12 (June 26th)

As We Build, We Must Steadfastly Labor Unto Death (15:1-16:24)

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from the city of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia (16:8, 19), most likely within the period between Passover and Pentecost (16:8; cf. Lev. 23), and therefore in the Spring of the year. It is unclear whether this was the Spring of A.D. 53, 54, or 55. He wrote, in any case, near the end of his three-year ministry in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:5-9; cf. Acts 19:1-22) during his third missionary journey.

The city of Corinth sat on the isthmus connecting the Greek mainland with the Peloponnesian peninsula. This location made it a flourishing crossroads for sea traffic between the Aegean region and the western Mediterranean. It was a place where many cultures and religions mingled. Since it was a Roman colony, Roman law and customs were important, particularly among the upper classes, but many “gods” and “lords” found a home in Corinth (8:5). The worship of these gods was fully integrated into governmental affairs, civic festivals, trade guilds, social clubs, and everyday life in general. Corinth was also a destination for traveling professional orators who charged a fee for attendance at their entertaining rhetorical displays and advised people on how to advance socially.

Into this environment, Paul brought the gospel of Jesus Christ, and soon a church was established. He was aided in his work by two new-found friends from Rome, Priscilla and Aquila, who, like Paul, were displaced Jews and tentmakers by trade (Acts 18:1-4, 18-19, 24-28; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19). Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila spent 18 months in Corinth in the early 50s and then, after a brief trip to Judea and Syria, Paul traveled to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila were already there (Acts 18:19; 1 Cor. 16:19) and, by the time Paul arrived, they had already met the skillful Christian apologist Apollos, who had also been in Corinth (Acts 18:24-19:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12).

Paul settled in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31) and at some point wrote to the Corinthians the otherwise unknown letter that he mentions in 1 Corinthians 5:9. It is not known what prompted the letter, but it dealt with sexual immorality, a persistent problem for the Corinthian church (5:1-13; 6:12-20). Sometime later, Paul received an oral report indicating that the Corinthians had not only misunderstood his first letter (5:10) but were plagued with serious problems of division, sexual immorality, and social snobbery (1:10-11; 5:1; 11:18). Around the same time, a letter arrived from the Corinthians that displayed considerable theological confusion about marriage, divorce, participation in pagan religions, order within their assemblies, and the bodily resurrection of Christians (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 15:12, 35).

In response to these troubling developments, Paul felt compelled to write a substantial letter to Corinth, making the case that much of their conduct was out of step with the gospel. What we have as 1 Corinthians is that letter.

Despite the often stern tone of the letter (4:18-21; 5:2; 11:17, 22; 15:36), Paul was thankful to God for the Corinthians (1:8) and felt a deep, personal affection for them (16:24). Because of this love, and for the purpose of God’s glory (10:31), Paul wanted the Corinthians to become a well-constructed dwelling place for God’s Spirit (3:12, 16) and to be “guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8).

WEEK 1 (April 3rd)
As We Build, There Must Be No Divisions Among Us
1 Corinthians 1:1-3:23

1. Carefully read Paul's description of the first-century Christians in Corinth (1:2). What sort of practical effect should these descriptions have on Christians of any age?
2. Knowing what you know of the Corinthians and their problems, how significant is it that Paul "gives thanks to God" (1:4-9) for them?
3. Why is it vital that brethren agree, that there be no divisions among us, but that we be united in the same mind and in the same judgment (1:10)? How is such even possible?
4. In your own words, summarize the "power of the cross" as described by Paul in 1:17-25.
5. How are God's people sometimes guilty of shameful boasting (1:26-31), and what sort of deteriorating effect does it have on the unity our Lord expects from his subjects?
6. What is Paul's point in 2:1-16?
7. Practically speaking, what does it mean to be "of the flesh" (3:3) or "merely human" (3:4)?
8. In your own words, summarize Paul's message in 3:10-15.
9. We get the impression that what Paul is saying in 3:16-17 is extremely important, but *what* is he saying?
10. In what way does Paul expect me, even today, to "become a fool" (3:18)?

WEEK 2 (April 10th)
As We Build, We Must Not Go Beyond What Is Written
1 Corinthians 4:1-21

1. In what ways were the apostles “stewards of the mysteries of God” (4:1)?
2. What is Paul’s point in 4:1-4?
3. In 4:5, Paul moves from the “stewardship” of the apostles to a “Therefore” point-of-application for the Corinthians. In your own words, what is Paul’s message in 4:5?
4. What sort of dangerous tendencies do men and women (even those who claim to be followers of Jesus) have when they “go beyond what is written” (4:6)?
5. We get the sense that Paul is rooting the warning of 4:6 in a reason elaborated upon in 4:7. What is that reason?
6. Carefully read 4:8-13. What is Paul getting at in this paragraph of comparisons and contrasts?
7. In what way were the Corinthians Paul’s “beloved children” (4:14-15)?
8. What qualifies Paul to urge Christians to “be imitators of me” (4:16)?
9. What can we learn from Paul’s reference to his established practice of teaching the same things “in every church” (4:17)?
10. In 4:21, Paul cites the possibility of his coming to Corinth “with a rod” or “with love in a spirit of gentleness.” How are both approaches, at times, necessary for the sake of the gospel, continued growth, and personal holiness?

WEEK 3 (April 17th)
As We Build, The Church Must Be Kept Pure
1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1. When we read of “sexual immorality” (5:1) in the New Testament, what is being referenced?
2. Why is immorality among saints that is not tolerated even among pagans a big deal?
3. In what way can brothers and sisters be guilty of “arrogance” (5:2) and “boasting” (5:6) in relation to the sins of others?
4. Why is “mourning” (5:2) a much more appropriate response to sin within a church? What will such mourning, practically speaking, look like?
5. What qualified Paul to “pronounce judgment on the one” who was guilty of sexual immorality (5:3)?
6. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians to take action when they were “assembled” (5:4)?
7. What does it mean to “deliver” a man “to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (5:5)?
8. What does Paul mean in his reference to “leaven” (5:6)?
9. We get the impression that there are rich Biblical roots behind Paul’s reasoning in 5:7-8. What do these sentences mean?
10. In your own words, summarize Paul’s point in 5:9-13. What can we learn from this paragraph? What sort of bearing should it have on our own interaction as a church?