

## The Epistles of Paul

# 1st Corinthians | The Body of Christ

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### Date:

Around 55 A.D., roughly three years after the events of Acts 18:1-17.

### Audience and Reason:

Corinth was the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of Greece in the biblical period. It was a true cosmopolitan city, with diversity in economics, education, nationality, and religion. It was known for its hedonism and indulgence, with a particular reputation for sexual immorality. The letter was sent in response to letters sent to Paul by some in the Corinthian church challenging Paul's church leadership. Paul's tone is often harsh, quick, and sarcastic, demonstrating the gravity of the matters at hand.

### Key Verses:

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (NIV): And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 3:5–9 (NIV): 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV): 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NIV): 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (NIV): 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

## **Major Themes:**

### **The Unity and Diversity of the Church**

Paul wanted his readers to know that just as God wants us to be unified in faith and love, we need to embrace the diversity that God uses to empower His church.

### **Spiritual Gifts**

The Corinthians were a spiritual dynamic church, with charismatic manifestations of the Spirit's power. Paul wanted them to focus these gifts in a healthy way to build each other up and impact the outsider.

### **Hallmarks of a Healthy Church**

While the Corinthians thought that powerful speaking and charismatic gifts were the signs that they were a strong church, Paul teaches them that truly healthy churches display unity, love, and order.

### **The Resurrection**

Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that the resurrection of Christ is a critical part of Christian dogma and cannot be ignored or rejected. It is not only a critical orthodox truth, but an indispensable source of encouragement for the Christian in hardship.

## **How To Read First Corinthians:**

1. Remember that these are historic answers to real-life issues that people actually struggled with. Never forget the humanity of the Bible.
2. Take notes to follow the logic and thinking of the letter.
3. Pay close attention to the changes in Paul's tone and how he speaks to the reader.