

The Letters to the Churches- The Carnal Church 1 & 2 Corinthians

To understand the books that Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church you must begin with an understanding of the city in which the church was located. Corinth was a very pagan city in which men and women practiced the grossest paganism, vice and sin. To be called a "Corinthian" in the Roman Empire was to be insulted or called a low life. It has been said this church was defiled, divided and disgraced.

Paul had visited this city during his second missionary journey and founded the church. (See **Acts 18:1-18**) He had stayed for eighteen months during this time. He also visited the city on his third missionary journey. (**2 Cor 12:14**) and even a third time for three months (**Acts 20:3**) He wrote the Roman epistle in this city as well.

The reports brought to Paul about all the trouble the church was having would perhaps lead one to question if there were even any Christians in the church or the city. They didn't look saved, act saved, nor probably feel saved, but never the less they were saved. Paul very deliberately and intentionally emphasized the fact that they were brethren in Christ (See **1:2**)

These books are also a strong argument for the doctrine of eternal security, as we will see.

The books together contain the writings of Paul to a group of Christian young in the faith. Paul tried to straighten them out on several matters they were struggling with as well as answer some of their questions. The first letter that he writes is a very stern letter while the second is more compassionate.

Allow me to use following outline:

1 Corinthians:

- I- Greeting and Grace... **1 Cor 1:1-9**
- II- Power Struggle in Church... **1 Cor 1:10-4:21**
- III- Failures in Church... **1 Cor 5:1-6:20**
- IV- Answers to Six Questions... **1 Cor 7:1-16:24**

2 Corinthians:

- I- The Heart of the Apostle... **2 Cor 1:1-7:17**
- II- Collection for the Saints... **2 Cor 8:1-9:15**
- III- Defense of His Apostleship... **2 Cor 10:1-13:14**

1 Corinthians:

I- Greeting and Grace... 1 Cor 1:1-9

Paul sent this letter to the church at Corinth and to the saints in "**Every place...**" **1 Cor 1:2**

He next gave his traditional greeting of, "**grace and peace.**" He told them he thanked God for His grace that God had extended to them. (**1:4**). He also expressed his confidence in God completing the work of salvation. (**1:8-9**). This is a very glowing remark when looked at in contrast to the rest of the rebukes Paul gave them. We must realize he was telling them about GRACE and not their goodness.

II- Power Struggle in Church... 1 Cor 1:10-4:21

1:10-11 Someone from the house of Chloe informed Paul of the divisions in the church. The great debate was over who baptized whom and credibility

this gave the believers. Some claimed to be of Paul, Apollos, Cephas and even Christ. Paul rebuked them over this sternly.

III- Failures in Church... *1 Cor 5:1-6:20*

5:1-2 This church had in its membership a man who was committing adultery with his fathers wife. Those in the church were not only looking the other way at the sin but were sad that this man might be kicked out. *1 Corinthians 5:2 "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."*

Paul tells them *"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."*

1 Corinthians 5:5 This is eternal security at the height of grace beloved.

Another failure in the church was they were suing each other in the pagan courts. Paul tells them to settle this among the brethren and not to air the dirty laundry to the world.

IV- Answers to Six Questions... *1 Cor 7:1-16:24*

Paul is going to answer the questions brought to him by the delegation of three men. (see *1 Cor 16:17; 7:1; 8:1; 12:1*) The problem we have in this section is we only have the answers but not the questions.

1- Question Concerning Marriage. 1 Cor 7. He gives advice to the married and the unmarried, Christians marriage, etc.

2- Question Concerning Christian Liberties. 1 Cor 8-10 The question of eating meat sold in the market place after it had been sacrificed

to idols is addressed. The most important teaching here is found in **1 Cor 8:9-13**. Paul was conscience of the weaker brethren.

3- Question Concerning the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor 11:1-34. The church at Corinth had a great problem concerning conduct during the Lord's Supper. The poor had nothing to eat and the rich were flaunting their abundance. Paul told them this should not be so.

4- Question about Spiritual Gifts. 1 Cor 12-14. This section is probably the least understood and most controversial today. Tucked away in this section is the exhortation to love and that love is the most important thing among brethren.

I wish to point out the purpose of the gifts were to unite the church not to divide it. (**14:12**).

5- Question about the Resurrection. 1 Cor 15. This chapter is one of the most important in the entire Bible. It sets forth the great doctrine of the resurrection. Here is shown the importance, certainty, the necessity as well as the time and manner of the resurrection.

6- Question Concerning Collection for the Saints. 1 Cor 16. Paul tells them to give on the first day of the week, Sunday, *"as God hath prospered him."*

2 Corinthians:

I- The Heart of the Apostle... *2 Cor 1:1-7:17*

The change in tone from *1 Cor* to *2 Cor* is striking. (**2 Cor 2:1-4**) To understand the change in tone of these two letters lets look at a little more background.

Paul sent Timothy to Corinth with the first Corinthian letter. (see **1 Cor 16:10-11**). Timothy returned to Paul after being apparently unsuccessful in correcting the problems in the church. (**2 Cor 1:1**).

Paul hears the Judaizers who came from Jerusalem are undermining his work. They wanted salvation to be by works not by grace. He next sent Titus to Corinth with instructions to meet him in Troas after he was successful. Titus never showed up in Troas so Paul goes to Macedonia. (see **2 Cor 2:12-13**) Here he ran into Titus who gives him a good report of the church at Corinth.

Things were still not perfect however. The man they refused to discipline and remove from the church recorded in **1 Cor 5** had been kicked out. This resulted in his repentance and now they refused to let him back in. (**2 Cor 2:7-8, 11**).

II- Collection for the Saints...2 Cor 8:1-9:15

Paul had not accepted any money from the Church at Corinth in order for them to not be able to say he was only in it for the money. He tells them of the great sacrifices of the churches in Macedonia who had given out of their poverty. He sent Titus to Corinth for an offering. (**2 Cor 8:6**)

III- Defense of His Apostleship...2 Cor 10:1-13:14

Paul spent a great deal of time in this letter defending his ministry. He wanted them to know it was from God and not from man.

Application to Life's Steps:

- 1- Many times the divisions in our churches are over power struggles and not doctrine.
- 2- The Word of God speaks to the everyday problems of life.
- 3- Eternal security is a deep-rooted doctrine in the Scriptures.
- 4- The ministry of reconciliation is given to us to restore a fallen sister or brother.
- 5- God's work is supported by the faithful giving of God's people.

Retracing Our Steps:

- 1- Who wrote the books of **1 and 2 Corinthians**? _____
- 2- How many times did Paul visit this church? _____
- 3- What was the great controversy over in the church that Paul addressed? _____

- 4- What was Paul's teaching concerning weaker brethren? _____

- 5- What topics in **1 Cor** is least understood and controversial today?

