

Paul and the Corinthians

- 50/51 First, Founding Visit (18 months)
- a. Paul leaves for Ephesus
 - b. II Cor. 12:21 Sexual immorality and licentiousness
- 52-54 Letter A (now lost; see I Cor 5:9; written from Ephesus)
- a. Apollos in Corinth
 - b. Super apostles arrive in Corinth?
 - c. I Cor. 1:11 According to Chloe's people there are schisms in Corinth
 - d. I Cor. 7:1 Paul receives a letter from Corinthians inquiring about several matters
- 54/55 Letter B (=I Cor.; written from Ephesus)
- a. I Cor. 16:10 Timothy arrives in Corinth
 - b. II Cor 12:16 Suspicious that Paul took from the collection
 - c. II Cor. 10:8-9 Dissatisfaction with Paul's authoritarian tone
 - d. II Cor. 3:1 Request that Paul provide a letter of reference
 - e. Timothy comes to Ephesus
- 55 Letter C (=II Cor. 2:14-7:4; from Macedonia? see I Cor. 16:8) Second Visit
- a. II Cor. 2:1 Second visit painful, 12:21 visit humiliating, discord, arrogance, tempers
 - b. II Cor. 12:18 Titus and "brother" in Corinth for collection (ch. 8:6)
 - c. II Cor. 1:15-16 Paul in Ephesus, planned to go to Corinth on way to Macedonia
 - d. II Cor. 2:5 Someone insults Paul
 - e. II Cor. 1:23-2:4 Paul changes plans, writes painful letter instead of visit
- 55/56 Letter D (=II Cor 10-13; written from Ephesus, the "painful letter?")
- a. II Cor. 7:9 Corinthians grieved by the letter.
 - b. II Cor. 2: 6-7 The "majority" disciplined the offender
 - c. II Cor. 1:8-9 Paul nearly dies in Asia
 - d. II Cor. 2:12-13 and 7:5-9 Paul leaves Ephesus for Troas, no Titus
 - e. Paul arrives in Macedonia, no Titus
 - f. Titus arrives with good news
- 56 Letter E(=II Cor 1:1-2:13 and 7:5-9:15; written from Macedonia)
- a. Paul concerned that Corinthians misunderstood his letters
 - b. Corinthians critical of Paul's authoritarian epistolary tone
 - c. Corinthians suspicious of Paul's financial dealings
 - d. II Cor. 9:3-5 Titus and brethren going to Corinth to prepare collection
- 56-57 Third Visit
- a. Rom. 15:25-26 Paul arrives and receives collection
 - b. Paul writes Romans and leaves for Judea

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

Introduction

- I. The city of Corinth
 - A. History
 1. During Hellenistic period it headed Achaean League
 2. Destroyed ~~by~~ Lucius Mummius, Roman general, 146 B.C.
 3. Refounded under Julius Caesar as Roman colony 44 B.C.
 4. New city Latin at first. Soon came Greeks, Orientals, many Jews
 5. Captial of Achaia under Romans. Commercial city, possibly 600,000 population
 - B. Features
 1. Acrocorinth, 1800 ft. high. Commanded isthmus
 2. Market in center of city; statue of Athene and temple of Apollo, ruins yet stand
 3. Poseidon chief god but also altars to Hermes, Artemis, Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, Heracles, and others. Isis cult popular; extended equality to women
- II. Founding of the church (see Acts 18:1-18)
 - A. Date of Paul's first visit about A.D. 50-52
 1. Priscilla and Aquila arrived shortly after expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius, about A.D. 49
 2. Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, About A.D. 51 or 52 according to inscription at Delphi
 - B. Aquila and Priscilla may have been Christians in Rome
 - C. Apollos came from Alexandria as Christian
 - D. First months in synagogue. Converts included two synagogue rulers: Crispus and Sosthenes
- III. Occasion of Letter
 - A. Paul in Ephesus (see 16:12); in touch with Corinthians through various persons and a letter from Corinth (7:1)
 1. Those of Chloe (1:11f); Apollos (16:12); Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus (16:15-18)
 2. Previous letter to Corinth (5:9); letter from Corinth (7:1)
 - B. First Corinthians probably written A.D. 54 or 55
- IV. Outward problems at Corinth

Division, pride, confusion about wisdom, pride in knowledge (gnosis), confusion over place of leaders, censorious judgment, fornication and even incest, tolerance of immorality, lawsuits against one another, insistence upon personal rights, negative attitude toward things material, contempt for one another, disorder and division even at Lord's Supper, pride in spiritual gifts, false ideas about ecstatic utterance, perfectionist doctrine which rejects resurrection idea.
- V. Root Problem at Corinth
 - A. Egocentric pride, claiming special gnosis, possession of the Spirit, perfection now
 - B. The "wisdom" of the world: self-love, self-trust, self-assertion, insistence upon personal "rights."

- VI. Four basic threats (cf. Erich Stange, Die Korintherbriefe)
- A. Confusion of their wisdom with God's (Chs. 1-4)
 - 1. Forget that they are "called" ones. They are a special people because of God's calling, not because of their merit or work
 - 2. Confusion over leaders. Each but a witness to what God had done in Christ.
 - B. Corruption by the world (Chs. 5-11)
 - 1. As saints they are set apart from the world
 - 2. A colony of heaven: to be in but not of the world
 - C. Abuse of gifts of the Spirit (Chs. 12-14)
 - 1. Not for selfish advantage
 - 2. Not for pride or display
 - D. Surrender of eschatological hope (Ch. 15)
 - 1. "Perfectionists" think they have arrived
 - 2. "Immortality of Soul" substituted for resurrection of total person from the dead
- VII. Paul's answer
- A. The cross as God's wisdom and power
 - B. Holiness: true separation from the world
 - C. Love: the true and ultimate way
 - D. Resurrection: the eschatological hope assured through resurrection of Jesus

COMMENTARIES:

- Barrett, C. K., Harper's N.T. Commentary (in preparation)
- Craig, C. T. and John Short, "First Cor.," Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 10
- Dodd, Marcus, "First Cor.," The Expositor's Bible, Vol. 5
- Evans, Ernest, "First Cor.," The Clarendon Bible
- Findlay, G. G., The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 2
- Goudge, H. L., The Westminster Commentaries
- Grosheide, F. W., The New International Commentary
- Hering, Jean, The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians
- Hodge, Charles, An Exposition of the First Ep. to the Cor.
- Lenski, R. C. H., Interpretation of First and Second Cor.
- Moffatt, James, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary
- Morgan, G. Campbell, The Corinthian Letters of Paul
- Robertson, A. and A. Plummer, International Critical Commentary

Analysis of First Corinthians

Introduction (1:1-9)

Address and greeting (1:1-3)

Thanksgiving for the church (1:4-9)

- I. The confusion and division of the church as the world's "wisdom"; the cross as God's wisdom (1:10-4:21)
 - A. Factions in the church (1:10-12)
 1. Prayer for unity (1:10)
 2. Reports of factions (1:11-12)
 - B. Implications of factions (1:13)
 1. To divide church is to divide Christ (1:13a)
 2. To exalt men is to give them the place of Christ (1:13b)
 - C. Paul's true task (1:14-17)
 1. Not to baptize but to evangelize (1:14-17a)
 2. To magnify the cross of Christ, not the wisdom of words (1:17b)
 - D. The "foolishness" of God vs. the "wisdom" of men (1:18-3:23)
 1. The cross (with its self-denial and self-giving) is to the perishing, foolishness; to the saved, the power of God (1:18).
 2. The world's wisdom (self-love, self-trust, self-assertion) is false and futile (1:19-20)
 3. Through God's wisdom the knowledge of God is given to man, not achieved by man (1:21a)
 4. Through God's good will the man who trusts is saved by the "foolishness" of the thing preached, the self-giving in death of Christ (1:21b)
 5. Christ crucified is to the Greeks foolishness, to the Jews a stumbling block; to the called, God's power and God's wisdom (1:22-25)
 6. The Christian calling rooted in God's grace, not man's merit, hence the glory is to God alone (1:26-31)
 7. Man's faith to be rooted in God's power and not man's wisdom (2:105)
 8. God's spirit alone can reveal to man the deep things of God (2:6-16)
 9. Jealousy, strife, and factions belong to the unredeemed life, not to the life in Christ (3:1-4)
 10. What Christians are (3:5-17)
 - a. Nothing in themselves (3:5-7)
 - b. Fellow-workers belonging to God, God's cultivated field, God's building (3:8-9)
 - c. God's builders by His grace and responsible to God for how they build (3:10-15)
 - d. God's temple, not to be defiled nor destroyed (3:16-17)
 11. Man's foolish "wisdom" mocks man with nothing; God's wisdom makes him possessor of all (3:18-23)
 - E. God alone is the Judge; man is the judged (4:1-21)
 1. God, not others nor self, the final judge of the minister's stewardship (4:1-5)
 2. Factions root in man's false sense of his virtues (4:6-8)
 3. The apostles as "fools" for Christ's sake (4:9-13)
 4. Appeal to Corinthians to respond to the challenge of love (4:14-21)

- II. The church in the world and the world in the church: moral problems in Christian living (5:1-7:40)
 - A. Sex and money (5:1-6:20)
 - 1. Incest within the church (5:1-13)
 - a. Worse than the incest is the pride in the deed through some "holiness" doctrine exempting the "spiritual" from moral restraint (5:1-2)
 - b. The offender to be disciplined with view to his salvage and to safeguard the church from further infection (5:3-8)
 - c. Previous letter misunderstood and now interpreted: the church not to discipline the world but itself (5:9-13)
 - 2. The shame of self-assertion, lawsuits in particular (6:1-11)
 - a. Shame of suing a Christian brother before pagan world (6:1-6)
 - b. Christian should suffer wrong, not do wrong (6:7-11)
 - c. Relinquish rights and do right (6:12-20)
 - (1) Freedom is not license (6:12-14)
 - (2) The body as an essential part of man belongs to Christ and is to be pure (6:15-20)
 - B. Questions raised in letter from Corinthians about marriage and celibacy (7:1-40)
 - 1. Marriage and sex within marriage both normal and right (7:1-7)
 - 2. The unmarried admonished not to marry (7:8-9)
 - 3. Marriage to be permanent, not to be broken (7:10-11)
 - 4. Advice to those in mixed marriages (7:12-16)
 - a. The Christian to live with non-Christian spouse if at all possible; the marriage is valid and the children are legitimate (7:12-14)
 - b. If the unbeliever demands his freedom, it is to be given (7:15-16)
 - 5. The Christian, whatever his marital or legal status, to rise above circumstance and live for Christ (7:17-24)
 - 6. The unmarried, in view of the stress of the times and in the interest of freer service, advised not to marry (7:25-35)
 - 7. A father free to give or not give in marriage his virgin daughter, depending upon the circumstances (7:36-38)
 - 8. A wife bound to husband so long as he lives; a widow may marry a Christian, but happier, in Paul's judgment, if she remain single (7:39-40)
- III. The Christian's Freedom (8:1-11:1)
 - A. Food sacrificed to idols (8:1-3)
 - 1. Knowledge puffs up; love builds up (8:3)
 - 2. Idols represent no real gods; no moral value to eating as such (8:4-8)
 - 3. Dangers involved: (a) the "weak" are hurt morally and spiritually, if inboldened to eat contrary to conscience; (b) the "strong" sin against Christ in sinning against the weak (8:9-13)
 - B. Rights relinquished for sake of right (9:1-23)
 - 1. Paul's rights as an apostle (9:1-14)
 - a. As one who saw the risen Lord (9:1-2)

- (b) Right to marriage (9:3-5)
 - (c) Right to financial support (9:6-14)
 - 2. Rights relinquished (9:15-23)
 - C. The importance of discipline (9:24-10:22)
 - 1. Paul's self-discipline (9:24-27)
 - 2. Peril of presuming on privilege (10:1-13)
 - 3. The Lord's table vs. that of demons (10:14-22)
 - D. Responsibility to the weak (10:23-11:1)
 - 1. The test: not is it lawful; but does it edify? (10:23)
 - 2. Not self-interest but the good of the others (10:24)
 - 3. The other's conscience to be respected even when it is misinformed (10:25-11:1)
- IV. The public worship of the church (11:2-14:40)
- A. Veils and customs (11:2-16)
 - B. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
 - 1. Disunity destroys the meaning of the Lord's Supper (11:17-22)
 - 2. The meaning of the supper (11:23-26)
 - 3. Failure to see the church as the body of Christ is not only disunity, it is sin (11:27-34)
 - C. Spiritual gifts: their source, value, and use (12:1-14:40)
 - 1. Diversities of gifts but one spirit (12:1-11)
 - 2. Unity and diversity in the body of Christ (12:12-31)
 - 3. Love as the ultimate way (13:1-13)
 - (a) The importance of love (13:1-3)
 - (b) The characteristics of love (13:4-7)
 - (c) The permanency of love (13:8-13)
 - 4. Speaking in tongues with limited value and serious dangers contrasted with prophecy or inspired preaching (14:1-39)
 - (a) Prophecy edifies the church; tongues may only confuse (14:1-25)
 - (b) Worship to be orderly and edifying (14:26-40)
- V. The Resurrection of the dead (15:1-58)
- A. The resurrection of Jesus (15:1-19)
 - 1. The fact of His resurrection (15:1-11)
 - 2. The meaning of His resurrection (15:12-19)
 - B. The resurrection of those in Christ (15:20-34)
 - 1. The victory over death (15:20-28)
 - 2. Pictured in baptism (15:29)
 - C. The resurrection body changed as to nature (15:35-50)
 - D. Assurance of victory through Christ (15:51-58)
- VI. Practical and personal matters (16:1-24)
- A. The collection for the poor at Jerusalem and Paul's travel plans (16:1-12)
 - B. Concluding admonitions, greetings, and salutation (16:13-24)