



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 1

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- Author: St. Paul (1:1; 16:21)
- Place of writing: Ephesus (16:8)
- Time of writing: Probably in the spring of 57 A.D., shortly before the Pentecost (16:8), during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-41)
- Background: Corinth was a very important commercial center which made it easy to be a place for all sorts of vice and its closeness to Athens added the problem of intellectualism



Introduction

- The establishment of the church occurred during St. Paul's second missionary journey
- It is recorded in Acts 18:1-18, which can be divided into three sections:
 - ❖ 1) Abiding with Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers; reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 18:1-6)
 - ❖ 2) In the house of Justus, abiding there and teaching for a year and six months (Acts 18:7-11)



Introduction

- ❖ 3) An incident before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12-18)
 - The church was adversely affected by the immoral environment found in the city
 - Pride caused division in the church and disruption in the services (1Cor 1-4,11)
 - Immorality and immodesty found its way into the church, which gave it a bad reputation (1 Cor 5)



Introduction

- The brethren were taking their personal problems with each other before the heathen courts instead of working them out among themselves (1 Cor 6)
- Other issues affecting the church included questions about marriage (1 Cor 7), meats sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8-10), women praying and prophesying with heads uncovered (1 Cor 11), the use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14), the resurrection from the dead (1 Cor 15), and the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16)



Introduction

- Thus the church was one beset with problems and questions that needed to be answered
- **Purpose of writing:** The bad news concerning the problems at Corinth had reached St. Paul in Ephesus
- It seems that this news came from at least two sources: 1) the household of Chloe (1:11); and 2) a letter sent to him (7:1), possibly by the hands of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17)



Introduction

- Therefore, in answer to these reports St. Paul writes to correct sinful practices and refute false doctrine
- Theme: 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Outline:
 - Introduction (1:1-9)
 - Problems reported by the house of Chloe (1:10-6:20)



Introduction

- ❖ a. Factions in the church (1:10-4:21)
- ❖ b. Sexual immorality (5:1-13)
- ❖ c. Lawsuits among brethren (6:1-11) d. Moral defilements (6:12-20)
- Problems mentioned in the letter from Corinth (7:1-16:9)
 - ❖ a. Marriage & celibacy (7:1-40)
 - ❖ b. Eating meats sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1)



Introduction

- ❖ c. Women praying and prophesying with heads uncovered (11:2-16)
- ❖ d. The Lord's supper (11:17-34)
- ❖ e. Spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)
- ❖ f. Resurrection from the dead (15:1-58)
- ❖ g. Collection for the saints (16:1-4)
- concluding remarks, instructions, and benediction (16:5-24)



Introduction

- In Chapter 1 St. Paul expresses gratitude that the Corinthians had been enriched by God, did not come behind in any gift, and were eagerly waiting for the revelation of the Lord (1-9)
- He started by addressing the first problem (division) (10-17)
- The underlying cause of the division was the exaltation of human wisdom, So, St. Paul showed the foolishness of boasting in such (18-31)



Greeting (1:1-3)

- Some of the Judaizers, who had visited the church at Corinth after the departure of St. Paul, in order to lessen his authority, had asserted that he was not an apostle, so, at the beginning, he asserts his apostleship (1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 12:12)
- Sosthenes was the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, is named in Acts 18:17
- He has Sosthenes with himself, that this doctrine might be confirmed by two witnesses



Greeting (1:1-3)

- It is a church of God, even though it has great faults in it
- The Father separates us, in giving us to His Son, that He may be in us, and we in Him
- The first shows our sanctification comes from God and the second shows to what end it strives for
- The letter is intended for all Christians, as well as for those at Corinth who recognize the Lord as their Savior



Greeting (1:1-3)

- God is the Lord of the saints everywhere as well as ours
- Grace and peace: This is the apostolic benediction but was especially appropriate to a church which was torn by dissensions
- Without the grace we cannot achieve anything
- We need the peace in the midst of all the difficulties that we are facing everyday
- We should ask for these gifts to us and others

Spiritual Gifts at Corinth (1:4-9)



- Going about to condemn many vices, he begins with a true commendation of their virtues
- We should be ashamed if we abuse God's gifts
- The reference is to the supernatural gifts of tongues and of knowledge which were imparted to the early church
- The testimony of Christ is confirmed by the fruits which it brought forth so that they were not inferior to other Christians in privileges

Spiritual Gifts at Corinth (1:4-9)



- They, like other Christians, were eagerly waiting for the return of the Lord to the earth
- God will do His part to confirm you and give you strength to the end
- That you may be free from blame in the day of judgment
- God's promises may be relied upon
- The fact that God called the saints to fellowship with His Son, is proof of His faithfulness



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- How earnest and imploring is the Apostle's exhortation that they should maintain unity!
- Have no distinctive party declarations
- If there were none, and all were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, all would speak the same thing
- It is evident that the Corinthians had formed several parties within the church (1 Cor 1:12)
- He tells them how he learned of their dissensions



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- Whether these were Chloe's children or her servants, or whether she lived at Corinth and these members of her household had come to visit St. Paul at Ephesus, or whether she lived at Ephesus and these persons had made a visit to Corinth, these are all unknown
- Chloe is not elsewhere named
- Now this I say: I explain more fully what I mean. He shows that there were four existing parties:



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- Of Paul. A Pauline party, clinging to the founder of their church (Acts 18:1-11);
- Of Apollos. A party of Apollos, who were probably carried away by their admiration of his Alexandrian philosophy (Acts 18:24);
- Of Cephas. A party of Judaizer, who claimed to be following Peter, called here by his Hebrew name of Cephas (Jn 1:42)



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- Of Christ. A fourth party, who claimed to turn away from all these human leaders, and to be only of Christ
- The church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12,13). Can that body be cut into parts, and these assigned to human leaders?
- Was Paul crucified for you? The cross binds us to Christ alone



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- By baptism we are baptized in Christ's name, into his death, and into Christ (Rom 6:3)
- The Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8); but the fellow-ministers of St. Paul usually administered the baptismal rite
- Since some of the Corinthians were claiming to be of his party, he was glad that he had not personally baptized them, lest some of them should say he had baptized in his own name (1Cor 1:15)



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- Crispus. Formerly chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8)
- Gaius. He was St. Paul's host at Corinth when the Epistle to the Romans was written. See Rom 16:23
- The household of Stephanas was the first fruits of Achaia (1 Cor 16:15)
- Stephanas was one of the three Corinthian brethren then visiting St. Paul at Ephesus (1 Cor 16:17)



Sectarianism Is Sin (1:10-17)

- St. Paul does not intend to belittle baptism, but to say that, in the division of labor, the work assigned him was to preach, while others did the baptizing
- Instead of seeking eloquence or philosophical speculation, which might hide the cross, he told the story of the gospel in plain and simple language



Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:18-25)

- The preaching of Christ crucified, or the type of speech which we use
- Those who are perishing. Those who refuse Christ
- Foolishness. They held that His crucifixion proved that He was not divine
- To the unsaved, the cross is a pillar of cloud; to the saved, a pillar of light



Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:18-25)

- God will put aside the wisdom and understanding of men; these will not save; but He will save by what the world called foolishness (Isa 29:14)
- Where is the wise? The Greek philosophers
- The scribes were the Jewish learned class
- The disputer of this world? Probably the Greek teachers who disputed daily in the public places
- All their worldly wisdom is excluded from the plan of salvation



Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:8-25)

- Worldly wisdom did not search out the true God
- Intellectual speculation had done its utmost, and failed, hence it was rejected
- Foolishness: By preaching what the wise of the this world called foolishness
- The Jews require not merely miracles, but a sign from heaven
- They said, Let Christ come down from heaven, if He is risen



Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:18-25)

- The Greeks demanded a well-argued system of philosophy (Acts 17:18)
- We preach not merely Christ, but Christ Crucified
- Because the Jews had an entirely different conception of the Christ, He became a stone of stumbling
- It seemed to the Greeks that a being who died so humiliating a death could not be divine
- The called: Those who obey the gospel



Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:18-25)

- The Lord Christ and His gospel not only is found to be mighty, but wise in meeting the soul's needs
- In Cross that men call foolishness, there is greater wisdom than in all the philosophers
- The Crucified Savior is mightier than all the strength of men
- If folly and weakness be of God, these will be wiser and stronger than men

Glory Only in the Lord (1:26-31)



- St. Paul now shows the weakness of the human chosen to convert the world; not those the world called wise, not the mighty, not the noble, yet the work was moving on with wonderful power
- Men whom the world would call foolish, with a gospel that it called foolishness; yet these confounded the wise and overturned the world's philosophies
- Base things of the world: Those of lowly birth

Glory Only in the Lord (1:26-31)



- And things which are despised: People that the world would call nobodies, and things that it counts as nothing; these are chosen
- To bring to nothing things that are: the existing state of things; the pagan religious, governments, and civilization; these were to be overthrown through the influence of the gospel
- That no flesh should glory in His presence: That it should be shown that the power was of God

Glory Only in the Lord (1:26-31)



- Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24), is wisdom to us
- In Him we are made righteous, and obtain sanctification and redemption
- Christ is all of these to us
- As Christ is imparting every grace that we enjoy, and bestowing every blessing, there is no ground for glorying in Paul, Apollos or Cephas, but in the Lord alone



Conclusion

- What was one thing the church did not lack in Corinth?
- What is the first problem St. Paul deals with in this epistle?
- How was their divisiveness expressed?
- Why was St. Paul thankful that he had not baptized any other?
- In what two ways do men view the preaching of the cross?
- How did the preaching of Christ crucified appear to the Jews and the Greeks?
- How has God chosen to confound the wise of this world?
- Upon what grounds may we boast?