

**NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY**

**LESSON SERIES**

**UNIT IV - THE CHURCH EPISTLES  
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS  
THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS**

for

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## **UNIT IV - NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY THE CHURCH EPISTLES**

### **A. THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Apostle Paul addressed this Epistle to the church which was in the city Corinth. He wrote to Romans Ephesus around 57 A.D. Carnal Corinth was the sin center of the Romans Empire in Paul's day. It was labeled "vanity fair." Its location was about 40 miles west of Athens on a narrow isthmus between Peloponnesus and the mainland. It was the great commercial center of the Roman Empire with three harbors, of which two were important Lechaem, which was about one and one half miles to the west, and Cenchrea, which was about eight and one half miles to the east. Since the time of Paul, a canal has been put through the isthmus, and Corinth is no longer an important city.

Even the ruins of Corinth were lost to history for many years. A fishing village had been built over them. In 1928 an earthquake uncovered them, and now much of the city has been excavated.

During that time and history when Greece was independent, Corinth was the head of the Achaean League. Later, and 196 B.C. Rome declared it a free city. In 146 B.C. Corinth rebelled and was totally destroyed by Mummius, the Roman general. Its art treasures were taken to Romans and for a century it lay desolate. 100 years later, in 46 B.C. Julius Caesar rebuilt the city and great elegance, restoring it to its former prominence and returning its former splendor.

In Paul's day there were about four hundred thousand inhabitants in Corinth. The population consisted of Greeks, Jews, Italians, and a mix multitude. Sailors, merchants, adventurers, and refugees from all corners of the Roman Empire filled its streets. A perpetual "Vanity fair" was held there. The vices of the East and the West met and clasped hands in the work of human degradation.

In religion, they were pagan polytheists and idolators; and, like the inhabitants Paul met on his visit to Athens, they had an idol for every god, and the a god for every department of life.

Religion itself was put to ignoble uses. A magnificent temple was built for the Greek goddess Aphrodite, or Venus as we know her by the Roman name [Aphrodite was the goddess of the city, that God is a love and beauty]. In this temple were a thousand priestesses who ministered to a base worship. Those thousand so-called priestesses were actually nothing more than prostitutes. Sex was a religion in Corinth.

Not only was their religion debased, but the Greek philosophy was in its decay also. The city was given over to licentiousness and pleasure. The Isthmain games were conducted here. The people went on in endless discussions. It was into this kind of setting that Paul came, and later he saith, "For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" [1 Cor. 2:2]. This was up people given over pleasure,

debauchery, and drunkenness. In fact, they coined the Word in the Roman Empire which was to "corinthianize." To "corinthianize" means to go to the limit in sin.

## **II. THE PURPOSE AND DATE OF THE LETTER**

Against this corrupt background Paul preach the Gospel in Corinth. He founded the church there and later wrote two epistles to them. Paul came Corinth on his second missionary journey, and it was the terminus of his third missionary journey. Acts chapter 18, verses 1-18 gives us an account of 18 months spent in Corinth. It was in Corinth that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla. They had been driven out of Rome by an edict of Emperor Claudius. This edict was issued because of tumults raised by the Jews who were persecuting the Christians.

When Paul first came to Corinth, he preached in the synagogue. As usual, or riot was the result. Paul usually had a riot, revolution, and revival wherever he went. Corinth was no exception.

On Paul's third missionary journey he spent a long period of time in Ephesus. It was in Ephesus that he did some of his outstanding work as a missionary. Probably that area was more thoroughly evangelized than any other. However, this caused the Corinthians to become disturbed. They were baby Christians, and they were urging Paul to come to them. Apparently Paul wrote them a letter to correct some of the errors that had come into the church. They, in turn, wrote to Paul asking questions that they wanted answered about political issues, religion, domestic problems, heathenism, and morality. Paul answers them and responded to more reports which were brought to him. We do not have the first letter which Paul wrote to them. The letter that followed the reports brought to him is the letter we know today as 1 Corinthians. Later on Paul wrote the letter we now call 2 Corinthians.

## **III. THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER**

This letter is a combination of two kinds of teachings.

The first -- and this embraces much of the letter -- consists of practical, elementary correction and discipline of Paul's disciples at Corinth, whom he addresses "as men flesh, as babes in Christ." This part of the letter is informal, a sort of first-aid to teach Christians their duties as Christians. In other words, "I fed use with milk, not solid food." And much of the present letter is a continuation of the same diet.

The second kind of teaching in 1 Corinthians consists of those great fundamental passages on the Lord's Supper [11:17-34]; Love [13]; the Resurrection and Immortality [15].

The keynote of this Epistle is the supremacy of Christ, the Lordship of Jesus. This is so important for us to note, because that is the solution to the problems. You will in this Epistle that he, Jesus, is the solution to correct moral, social, and religious disorders.

The letter should be read as a most earnest Gospel message to a newly established Christian Church, struggling to be Christian but against a background of vice, immorality, and worldliness [paganism].

**IV. A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER**

Here is a brief topical statement of the main contents of the letter:

1. Introduction. The letter opens with greetings and praise of the Corinthians Christians for their calling, and for what they had attained in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [1:1-9].
2. Problems in the Corinthian church suggested by the personal report brought to Paul by Chloe's people [1:11]; the evils of parties and party spirit in the church ; the misconception of the mission of the Apostles; the wisdom of God as contrasted with the wisdom of the world [1:10 to 4].
3. Two other problems suggested by the report of Chloe's people. First, that evil example reported of a man living with his father's wife, and the fact that the Corinthian Church had done nothing to discipline him; second, the un-Christian practice of brethren having lawsuit's with one another, before a heathen judge [5 and 6].
4. Further problems submitted in the letter from the Corinthian Church [7-14] - marriage and divorce [7]; eating food offered did by idols [8]; Paul's own example of self denial, and some historical illustrations [9-10]; disorders in worship, including the Lord's Supper [11], and spiritual gifts [12-14].
5. Love [13].
6. The resurrection and immortality [15]
7. The gathering flesh contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem; personal messages, conclusion, and benediction [16].

A broad outline of this book divides it into three major section's:

1. Salutation and thanksgiving, 1:1-9
2. Carnalities, 1:10-11:34
3. Spiritualities, 12-16

**V. EXPANDED OUTLINE****I. Salutation and thanksgiving, Chapter 1: 1-9****II. Concerning Conditions in the Corinthian Church, Chapters 1: 10-16:9****A. Concerning Divisions and Party Spirit, Chapters 1-4**

- Centrality of Christ Crucified Corrects Divisions, Chapter 1
- Clarity of Holy Spirit Corrects Human Wisdom, Chapter 2
- Correct Conception of God Clarifies Christian Service, Chapter 3

- Conditions of Christ's Servants Comes comes Constrain Christian Conduct, Chapter 4
- B. Concerning Scandals in the Corinthian Church, Chapters 5-6
  - Impurity, Chapter 5
  - Lawsuits among Members, Chapter 6
- C. Concerning Marriage, Chapter 7
- D. Concerning Christian Liberty, Chapters 8:1-11:1
- E. Concerning Women's Dress, Chapter 11: 2-16
- F. Concerning the Lord's Table, Chapter 11:17-34
- G. Concerning Spiritual Gifts, Chapters 12-14
  - Endowment of Gifts, Chapter 12
    - Gifts Are Given to Maintain Unity in Diversity, Chapter 12:1-11
    - Members of Human Body Compared to Gifts of Holy Spirit, Chapter 12:12-31
  - Energy of Gifts - Love, Chapter 13
  - Exercise of Gifts, Chapter 14
    - Gift of Tongues Discussed, Chapter 14:1-22
    - Order in Local Church for Exercise of Any Gift, Chapter 14:23-40
- H. Concerning the Gospel, Chapter 15
  - Prominence of Resurrections in the Gospel, Chapter 15:1-4
  - Proofs of Resurrection, Chapter 15:5-19
  - Parade of Resurrection, Chapter 15:20-28
    - Christ, the Firstfruits, Chapter 15:20-23b
    - Those Who Are Christ's (Church), Chapter 15:23c
    - Old Testament Saints, Tribulations Saints, Chapter 15:23c
    - Kingdom Set Up, Christ Reigning, Chapter 15:24-25
    - Death Destroyed, Chapter 15:26
    - Christ Returns to His Place in Trinity, Chapter 15:27-28

- Program and Pattern of Resurrection, Chapter 15:29-50
- Power of Resurrection, Chapter 15:51-58

I. Concerning Collections, Chapter 16:1-9

**III. Closing Exhortations and Benediction, Chapter 16:10-24**

## **B. THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Shortly after Paul had written I Corinthians from Ephesus, where he was in grave danger (2 Cor. 1:8), he wrote 2 Corinthians from Philippi. Paul was in Ephesus approximately 3 years. He had sent Titus to Corinth because he could not personally go there at that time. Timothy was with Paul in Ephesus and these two proceeded to Troas to wait for Titus to bring word from Corinth (2 Cor. 2:12,13). When Titus did not come, Paul and Timothy went onto Philippi where Titus brought good news from Corinth (2 Cor. 7:5-11). Any breach between Paul and the Corinthian church was healed.

This Epistle is difficult to outline, as it is less organized than any of Paul's letters - but it contains more personal details. In each chapter there is always a minor theme developed which sometimes seems to take the place of the major theme and is generally expressed in some striking verse. This may explain the seeming difficulty in outlining and organizing this Epistle.

I Corinthians deals with conditions and *corrections* in the church.

2 Corinthians deals with conditions **or** the *ministry* within the church.

### **II. BRIEF OUTLINE**

#### **1. COMFORT of God, chapters 1-7 (*Christian Living*)**

1. Introduction, 1:1,2
2. God's Comfort for Life's Plans, 1:3-24
3. God's Comfort in Restoring a Sinning Saint, Chapter 2
4. God's Comfort in the Glorious Ministry of Christ, Chapter 3
5. God's Comfort in the Ministry of Suffering for Christ, Chapter 4
6. God's Comfort in the Ministry or Martyrdom for Christ, Chapter 5
7. God's Comfort in All Circumstances of the Ministry of Christ, Chapter 6
8. God's Comfort in the Heart of Paul, Chapter 7

#### **2. COLLECTION for the Poor Saints at Jerusalem, Chapters 8,9 (*Christian Giving*)**

1. Example of Christian Giving, 8:14
2. Exhortation to Christian Giving, 8:7-15
3. Explanation of Christian Giving, 8:1&9:5
4. Encouragement to Christian Giving, 9:6-15

#### **3. CALLING of the Apostle Paul, Chapters 10-13 (*Christian Guarding*)**

1. Authentication of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 10
2. Vindication of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 11
3. Revelation of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 12
4. Execution of Paul's Apostleship, 13:1-10
5. Conclusion of Paul's Apostleship, 13:11-14

### **III. EXPANDED OUTLINE**

#### **1. COMFORT OF GOD, Chapters 1-7**

##### **1. Introduction, 1:1,2**

##### **2. God's Comfort in Life's Plans, chapter 1**

1. vv. 3-7 "Comfort" and "consolation" are used 9 times in 5 verses. Comfort does not imply the sentimental, but rather sustains and helps. It is the same word used for the Holy Spirit - the Comforter. He comes to the side of a child of God to dispel the darkness and relieve the loneliness.
2. vv. 8-14 Paul had experienced the comfort of God through some crisis in Ephesus - probably sickness unto death (v.9). God comforted Paul so that he could comfort others. This is a great Christian principle.
3. vv. 15-20 Paul reveals his desire and plan to come to Corinth, and then his change of plan.
4. vv. 21-24 This is the second theme introduced. He equates the Holy Spirit with God (v.21). The Holy Spirit anoints the believer to understand divine truth (I Cor. 2:9,10; I John 2:27).
  1. God the Father is true (v.18).
  2. God the Son is absolute and positive (v.19).
  3. God the Holy Spirit is dwelling within (v.22).
    - (1) The Holy Spirit *confirms* ("stablisheth") the believer (v.21);
    - (2) The Holy Spirit *anoints* the believer (v.21);
    - (3) The Holy Spirit *seals* the believer (v.22; Eph. 4:30)
    - (4) The Holy Spirit is the earnest - the pledge that there is more to come (v.22).

##### **3. God's Comfort In Restoring a Sinning Saint, Chapter 2**

1. v.4 Paul's motive and method in writing.

2. vv. 5-13 This is a reference to the sinning saint (1 Cor. 5) for whom Paul had commanded immediate discipline. The believer had repented, and now Paul urges the church to restore him to fellowship.  
- Refusal to restore the believer would give Satan an advantage (v.11). Are we ignorant of his devices?
3. v.12 This is the only report Paul ever made of his ministry in fleas (Acts 20:6-12).
4. vv. 14-17 Again Paul introduces a second theme which is very important. How does God always cause us to triumph (v.14) when so often we feel defeated? The believer is a sweet savor (v. 15) to both lost and saved. Our business is to declare the Gospel. The responsibility then rests on the hearer. Our responsibility is to give the Gospel, not get results. Our care is that we are faithful in declaring the Gospel accurately.

#### **4. God's Comfort in the Glorious Ministry of Christ, Chapter 3**

1. vv. 1-3 Those who accept the Gospel and are converted become, in turn, the Gospel to the unsaved.  
"The Gospel is written a chapter a day  
By deeds that you do and words that you say.  
Men read what you say whether faithless or true.  
Say, what is the Gospel according to you?"  
- (Author unknown)
2. vv. 6-18 The ministry of the Gospel is more glorious than the ministry of Moses, for the glory of Christ does not pass away. Moses placed a veil over his face because the glory was passing away (v. 13). The veil now is over the eyes of those who follow the law (v. 14-15). "It" (v.16) means *heart* (see v.15), Those who are led by the Spirit are not under law (v.17).  
- Here is another great theme (v. 18). Only the Spirit of God can develop Christian character. It is something solid that must be developed like putting down of a sturdy and stable foundation of a building and the growing of a great tree like an oak or redwood. The word for "changed" is from the Greek *metamorphosis*, which is the same word used in speaking of the transfiguration of Christ. The ultimate goal of humanity is seen in the transfiguration of Christ.

#### **5. God's Comfort in the Ministry of Suffering for Christ, chapter 4**

1. vv. 1,2 Suffering tests the genuineness of the ministry. Paul presents a series of contrasts to show that the suffering of the ministry is not the defeat of the ministry.

2. vv. 3,4 There are 2 secondary themes in this chapter. Satan is the god of this world who tries to blind men at only one point - the Gospel. The lost world is like a prison house of sin. There is only one way out. Christ is the way (In. 14:6). At this point Satan blinds men.
3. v.7 "Earthen vessels" is the Greek word *ostrakinas* - "clay pitchers," reminding us of Gideon's 300 (Judges. 7). The vessels must be broken for the light to shine out
4. v. 8 "Troubled" is *pressed for room*. "Not distressed" is *still having room*. "Perplexed" is *unable to find a way out*
1. v.9 "*Persecuted*" is *pursued by an enemy*. "*Not forsaken*" is *not over-powered by the enemy*.
1. vv. 17-18 Suffering in this life is light in weight compared to the eternal weight of glory. Unseen things are real, for they are eternal. Things that are seen are temporary.

## 2. **God's Comfort in the Ministry of Martyrdom for Christ, chapter 5**

1. v. 1 Physical death means the departure from the body, labeled a tent ("tabernacle") by Paul.
2. vv. 2-5 These bodies are suffering bodies and temporary.
3. vv. 6-8 Death means to leave these fragile bodies and go home to be with the Lord.
4. vv. 9-13 The believer appears before the judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ to see if he receives a reward or not. The works of believers are judged.
5. vv. 14-21 The secondary subject seems to be the major subject in this chapter. The theme is reconciliation. The believer is joined to the glorified Christ at God's right hand (vv. 14,17). He is there because of Christ's work of reconciliation. God is reconciled by what Christ has done. We can do nothing to reconcile God, for He is already reconciled to us in Christ. The message of the Gospel is not asking men to do something to reconcile God, but to accept God's message and method of reconciliation (vv. 20,21).

## 1. **God's Comfort in All Circumstances of the Ministry of Christ, chapter 6**

1. vv. 4-7 Paul lists 19 trying experiences of the ministry
2. vv. 8-10 He lists 9 contrasts which cover the total life.

3. vv. 11-18 The minor theme here is a personal appeal of Paul. He calls upon the Corinthian Christians to make a clean break with idolatry.

## **2. God's Comfort In the Heart of Paul, chapter 7**

1. Paul here refers to his personal relationship to the Corinthian Christians. He refers to the comfort of God again (vv. 4,6,7,13).
2. v.10 This is God's definition of repentance. It means a change of mind. In turning to Christ by faith, a sinner turns from his sin. This is repentance for salvation (the secondary theme).

## **2. COLLECTION for Poor Saints at Jerusalem, chapters 8,9**

These 2 chapters give the fullest instructions for Christian giving.

### **1. Example of Christian Giving, 8:14**

- Giving is a grace. God wants the man before He asks for his gift. The Macedonian Christians first gave themselves (v.5).

### **2. Exhortation to Christian Giving, 7-15**

- Exhortation to Christian Giving. These are principles for Christian giving - not rules. The tithe is not demanded. Giving is a grace (vv. 7,8). Christ gave all - not a tenth (v.9).

### **3. Explanation of Christian Giving, 8:16-9:5**

1. They were to give to a specific cause - poor saints in Jerusalem;
2. They were to give to reputable messengers - Titus and those with him;
3. They were to give in reality and not promise.

### **4. Encouragement to Christian Giving, chapter 9**

1. v.6 Give generously.
2. v.7 Do not give grudgingly; give hilariously!
3. v.8 God gives the grace to give.
4. vv.9-11 Give bountifully, probably more than a tithe.
5. vv.12-14 Give according to the need.
6. v.15 We can never out-give God.

## **3. CALLING of the Apostle Paul, chapters 10-13**

### **1. Authentication of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 10**

1. v.3 Our warfare is spiritual. We do not measure success by numbers, money, or outward growth.
2. v.4 Our weapons are secret, so secret that they are not mentioned here. They are mighty. The Word arced is the hush-hush weapon. The Holy Spirit is the General. Prayer is the ammunition.
3. v.5 The warriors are successful, not victorious. The victory is Christ's, and we enter into it (2:14).

## **2. Vindication of Paul's Apostleship (very personal), Chapter 11**

1. v.9 Paul pays his own way.
2. vv. 13-15 This is the secondary subject. Ministers or Satan are attractive and winsome. They teach false doctrine for material benefit.
3. vv. 16-33 Paul's life vindicates his ministry.

## **3. Revelation of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 12**

1. vv. 1-3 this is Paul's experience (see v.7). He was stoned to death at Lystra (see Acts 14:19). Paul was caught up into the presence of God.
  1. 1st heaven - where are the "birds of heaven."
  2. 2nd heaven - where are the "stars of heaven."
  3. 3rd heaven - where is the abode of God.
2. v.7 God put a zipper on the mouth of Paul. He was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.
3. v.10 The man who went to heaven and returned is going to Corinth for the third time in weakness - also in dread (V. 20). This is the subsidiary subject.

## **4. Execution Of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 13:1.10**

- Paul is going to Corinth for the third time to exercise his office as an apostle. They will see the proof of his apostleship through the power of Christ working in Paul's weakness (vv. 3,4). Believers should take a regular inventory to see if they are in the faith (v.5). We should declare the Word of God, not defend it (v.8). This is a great verse for today.

## **5. Conclusion of Paul's Apostleship, Chapter 13:11.14**

- Paul returns where he began - to the comfort of God.

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**END of Lesson**