

1 Corinthians 1-3, 8

Corinth

1. Corinth was a **municipality** in Greece
2. See picture **#30** in your Bible Pics and map **#13** in your Bible maps (Corinth is #22)
3. It is **48 miles** southwest of Athens
4. Corinth is located on the **Isthmus** of Corinth (a narrow 4 mile across strip of land connecting two larger pieces of land) with **harbors** on either side and therefore was ideally situated to be a major center of commerce.
5. It was known as **wealthy** because of its commerce and valuable harbors. One harbor lead to **Asia** and the other to **Italy**, which made Corinth an easy place for both countries to exchange.
6. Due to its profitable commerce situation, **thousands** were eager to settle there.
7. The **population** of this city was Diverse. Primarily **Roman** and **Greek**, but also other peoples, including **Jews**.
8. The Corinth that Paul knew was less than 100 years old, but **five times larger than Athens**.
9. Corinth had a reputation for being a city of **immorality**. One of the Greek words for “fornicate” was **KORINTHIAzomai** – a word derived from the city’s name.
10. Paul chose this city as the **headquarters** for his Western mission and spent a **year and a half** here.
11. This is not the first epistle Paul has written to them. He wrote an earlier one, but we do not have it.

Share this quote: **“The witness of Paul to the saints at Corinth, and the message applies to us in this day, living as we do in a world that can be compared in many ways to Corinth of old. In a society of turmoil, immorality, free-thinking, and questioning of the reality of God, we reach out for the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”**

Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, April 1969, 138.

1 Corinthians 1

- **Vs 1:** Paul is making an announcement here. We wonder when Paul became an **Apostle**, it appears to be somewhere after his second mission and before his third mission.
- Verses **1-9** are his **salutation**, and then he gets down to business.
- There must have been a **reason** Paul wrote this letter.
- **Vs. 11:** One of the **branches of the church in Corinth, directed by Chloe** has brought it to Paul’s attention that there are contentions/arguments among the members of the Church. Paul is writing to help correct the problems. **This epistle is corrective.**
- Imagine an Apostle getting a letter from a Stake President on how to deal with the following issues
 - Pride in their stake shown by members **comparing who married them**. (“This general authority married me”... “Well, THIS general authority married me!”)
 - Members saying that certain men should hold certain **callings** because they have **higher educational degrees**.
 - Members **pointing fingers at each other** saying that they shouldn’t be doing certain things on Sunday, and the other members pointing back and saying it isn’t bad to do that.
- This is the nature of 1 Corinthians. This letter is *corrective* and his goal is to unify (notice verse **10**) And **he does it by using doctrine and quoting scripture**.
- President Kimball knew how powerful knowing the doctrine is. In fact, he gave a talk once called “The Role of a Righteous Woman” and said this: **“We want our homes to be blessed with sister sriptorians—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family. Regardless of your particular circumstances, as you become more and more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, you will be more and more effective in keeping the second great commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Become scholars of the scriptures—not to put others down, but to lift them up! After all, who has any greater need to “treasure up” the truths of the gospel (on**

which they may call in their moments of need) than do women and mothers who do so much nurturing and teaching?" (Ensign, November 1979)

- If we truly want to love, lift, and help each other, we do it by teaching DOCTRINE. But we must know it first.
- **Vs 12-15.** This is the first thing Paul tackles. The members had been comparing **which missionary had baptized them**. They must feel that there is some pecking order of who had the better missionary or Apostle.
- Paul doesn't beat around the bush or give his message in a way that can be misinterpreted. He is clear. Christ is not divided. **His power lies with them all** – there is ONE baptism, and you all received it. **One does not give a better baptism than another.** In their boasting, they are actually denying the power of God instead of recognizing the blessing, power, and ordinance of baptism.
- **How do these attitudes still exist in our day?**
- **How will it bless our lives when we purge this out of our society?**
- **4 Nephi 1:15-18**

1 Corinthians 2

- The **Greek culture** had infiltrated Corinth (they had been "**Hellenized**") and **INTELLECTUALISM** had become its own religion there. It was worshipped, lifted up, and sacrificed to.
- **Paul is an intellectual.** He knows Hebrew, Latin and Greek. He knows the poets. He could intellectualize with the best of them. If he was concerned with being liked, he could have been adored. But he doesn't need their praises, he is there to testify.
- **Vs 1-5** He knows where the power really is. **He is an intellectual, and he knows that doesn't convert. The great irony is that it is by trusting and receiving revelation from the Spirit that we become true intellectuals.** He knows things that the greatest intellectuals there can't even begin to comprehend. But THAT is not the flag he is waving. He knows that is a waste of time and violates the sacredness of the Spirit.
- **Vs 7-8** A mystery is not a **mystery** if the natural mind can figure it out. Certain truths were ordained before the world was created that only the Spirit can reveal to you. The Greek word for "Revelation" is "**Apokalyptien**" which literally means "to remove the veil." The veil is removed and understanding is received. That is what makes it a mystery. It is a mystery to the world. Not even Princes know it.
- **Vs 9. I love this verse.** Just watch the prophets after they receive visions – note how committed they become.
- **Vs 14 – the consequence of not having the Spirit.** It seems that there must have been some members who were not relying on the Spirit, but rather intellectualizing the answers.
- Not only does the natural man "not" know spiritual truths, but **he "can't" know.**
- **2:1-5** An intellectual without a testimony of the Gospel could not say this. He knows where the power really is.

Share this experience by President Packer: I will tell you of an experience I had before I was a General Authority which affected me profoundly. I sat on a plane next to a professed atheist who pressed his disbelief in God so urgently that I bore my testimony to him. "You are wrong," I said, "there is a God. I know He lives!"

He protested, "You don't know. Nobody knows that! You can't know it!" When I would not yield, the atheist, who was an attorney, asked perhaps the ultimate question on the subject of testimony. "All right," he said in a sneering, condescending way, "you say you know. Tell me how you know."

When I attempted to answer, even though I held advanced academic degrees, I was helpless to communicate....

Such an idea came into my mind and I said to the atheist, "Let me ask if you know what salt tastes like."

"Of course I do," was his reply.

"When did you taste salt last?"

“I just had dinner on the plane.”

“You just think you know what salt tastes like,” I said.

He insisted, “I know what salt tastes like as well as I know anything.”

“If I gave you a cup of salt and a cup of sugar and let you taste them both, could you tell the salt from the sugar?”

“Now you are getting juvenile,” was his reply. “Of course I could tell the difference. I know what salt tastes like. It is an everyday experience—I know it as well as I know anything.”

“Then,” I said, “assuming that I have never tasted salt, explain to me just what it tastes like.”

After some thought, he ventured, “Well-I-uh, it is not sweet and it is not sour.”

“You’ve told me what it isn’t, not what it is.”

After several attempts, of course, he could not do it. He could not convey, in words alone, so ordinary an experience as tasting salt. I bore testimony to him once again and said, “I know there is a God. You ridiculed that testimony and said that if I *did* know, I would be able to tell you exactly *how* I know. My friend, spiritually speaking, I have tasted salt. I am no more able to convey to you in words how this knowledge has come than you are to tell me what salt tastes like. But I say to you again, there is a God! He does live! And just because you don’t know, don’t try to tell me that I don’t know, for I do!”

As we parted, I heard him mutter, “I don’t need your religion for a crutch! I don’t need it.”

From that experience forward, I have never been embarrassed or ashamed that I could not explain in words alone everything I know spiritually. The Apostle Paul said it this way:

“We speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:13–14.)

- One of the proofs that this Church is true is that we send **19 year old boys** on missions. Some of those young men have been preparing their entire lives, but they are NOT intellectuals. They are messengers.
- Elder Bednar experience...
- **What can we learn from what Paul is teaching us about the power of the Spirit here?**
- **How can understanding this help us gain confidence in today’s world?**

1 Corinthians 3

- **V 1-2** ... Here is **the great irony**. *The very people, who want to so badly be intellectuals, are holding themselves back from receiving it.* “I haven’t given you anything you can’t digest”. You aren’t ready for meat yet, so I gave you milk. Like a baby. I am giving you what you can handle. You may want meat, but I won’t give it to you. It will make you sick, even though you think you want it. You have to be ready for it.
- **How many times in your past have you had a question that now seems as clear as day? But at the time you just couldn’t understand it?**
- Understanding comes line upon **line, precept upon precept**. There is order there. **Like math**, you must learn the basics before you can advance, and if you skip a course, you won’t be able to digest the next one.

- It shows wisdom and faith if when we don't understand a certain doctrine, that **we put it on the shelf**, *trusting that we will understand someday*. **Some may call that naivety, but rather the naivety is thinking that if we have the capacity to understand everything right now**. Wanting meat when you can only handle milk will only make you sick all of the time.
- Likewise, **giving someone meat** before they can handle it will only make them confused or worse, bitter.
- **Vs 12-13**. Paul had come and laid in Corinth **a foundation built on Christ** – which is gold. But after he left, others built on that foundation. Some good, some not good. **Paul compares their teachings to building materials**: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble.
- **What out of those things would last?**
- **What do you think they represent?** ...Truth, light, pure knowledge
- **What things can be burned in a refining fire?**
- **What do you think they represent?** ... opinions, false teachings, worldly teachings...
- **Vs 13**: "It shall be revealed by fire"
- **How can we compare these verses with our lives?**
- **What things in our lives will be revealed as eternal and what things would be revealed as stubble?**
- **Vs 16-18** This is one of the **most quoted scriptures** in the New Testament – but it is usually quoted **out of context**.
- **To build temples, they use the most fine and glorious materials**. They import stones, marbles, and all manner of fancy things. But Paul is saying, **"Don't you know that YOU are the Temple?"** Temples are built for US, WE weren't made for the Temples. Yet we treat each other with such frivolity sometimes.
- When we go to the Temple, we are so **respectful**. We watch our **language**, we watch our **thoughts**, we **smile** at everyone... What if we treated each other this way? **We would be the ultimate realists!** Seeing things as they REALLY are.
- **The warning in verse 17** is not about physical temples, **it is about each other**. **Don't destroy what God holds most holy... his children**.

1 Corinthians 8

- The **Christians** in Corinth were **submerged in a Greek culture**. Part of that included being surrounded by Greek Temples and the sacrifices being offered to Gods in there.
- Sacrifices often involved **sacred meals**, but **not every meal** in the temples were sacred. The line between secular and sacred was often very gray.
- Those Greek temples were also centers of **social gatherings**, dinner parties, etc. **Many members were invited to such events and partaking of these meals**. This caused other members to shake their heads and complain that they were involved in inappropriate activities. It is this that Paul was addressing.
- **Which side do you think he is going to take?**
- **Vs 1**: This response may be confusing at first – but it will show itself to be absolutely brilliant!
- First, he says... concerning the meat being offered up to the idols in the Temples... we possess knowledge. That knowledge is that **there are no idols and it is just meat**.
- Then he addresses the real problem... Knowledge will only make you puffed up (Elder Holland said that when he hears this phrase, he pictures the Pillsbury Dough Boy walking around holding his OWN hand), but **Charity** will edify you – and neither of you were considering this.
- You are **BOTH** wrong, he will say to the 2 groups pointing their fingers at each other.
- **Vs 4-6**: *First to the ones pointing their fingers at the Temple Meat Eaters* – We know who God really is and he isn't in those temples. **They aren't eating sacred meat** there and defiling themselves or stealing from Him.

- **Vs 7-10:** *Now to the ones going to the Temples.* One thing about **gaining a testimony** is that it is line upon line, and while you may understand some things about what you are doing – **others may not.** **Not everyone possesses the same knowledge as you.**
- **Vs 7:** some of you that are going **ACTUALLY think that you are eating meat** that is being offered to a God – **yet you still partake.** You are wrong because you are **going against your conscience and weakening yourself.**
- **Vs 8-9:** a warning to those **who know that that it is JUST meat.** Not everyone knows what you know... **be careful lest they misinterpret your actions and it harms them.**
- **Vs 10:** others who actually think it is wrong to eat the meat will be emboldened to go eat it themselves. **Their integrity will be weakened** as they do such things. If they think it is wrong, they should not do it because they are defiling their integrity.
- **Vs 11:** Whoa...
- **Vs 12-13: Paul's commitment.** If it is going to hurt someone else – I will not do it. **Charity over personal liberty.**
- **What are some modern day examples of this?**
- **What are some things in your life that is a GREAT example to others who are growing in the Gospel, or observing you live it?**
- **What are some things that may seem confusing to them?**