

8. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

I. Introduction: One item in an ongoing exchange of letters. A prior letter written by Paul (1 Cor 6:9) A letter that Paul received, to which 1 Corinthians is an answer Nevertheless, the "first" letter to the Corinthians. Shorter than 2 Corinthians Presumably the oldest of the extant letters to the Corinthians, probably written in 63 A.D. A letter that speaks to the ordinary problems of human beings living with other human beings

II. The letter opening (1:1-3), rich in ecclesiology: Paul, called apostle A co-sender Sosthenes, perhaps the synagogue official beaten in Gallio's courtroom (Acts 18:17) The church of God, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. At Corinth. "Together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

III. The thanksgiving (1:4-9), which functions as a prologue to the letter (prologos, proemium) Enriched in every way. Blameless on the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Called into the fellowship (koinonid) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the fifth time that Paul has called Jesus "our Lord"

IV. A major problem: divisions in the church – Introduction. The thesis of Paul's letter (1:10) How Paul found out about the issue (1:11) Paul's explanation of the problem (1:12) Paul's Response (I): Paul preached Jesus Christ, crucified, the power and wisdom of God (2:1-5) Paul's Response (II): The unity of the church. God's field (3:5-9) God's building (3:10-17)

V. Another problem, the tolerance of sexual immorality (5:1-13; 6:9-20) Paul takes the Corinthians to task (5:1-8). A reminder, avoid the kinds of people mentioned in the vice lists of 5:10, 11, 6:9-10 The latter includes "male prostitutes (malakoi), sodomites (arsenokoitai)" among the nine vices. Four vices are mentioned on each of the little lists: the sexually immoral, the greedy, the robbers, and idolaters, the four vices mentioned in the first list. An instruction on the body, members of Christ (6:12-20)

VI. Yet another problem, lawsuits against one's brothers and sisters (6:1-8)

Review Questions

1. What is Paul's theological understanding of the church according to 1 Corinthians?
2. Why is the thanksgiving of 1 Corinthians an important part of the letter?
3. What does Paul's image of the church as a building say about the church?