



The Message of the Bible

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## Week 29: 1, 2 Corinthians

### The Structure of 1 Corinthians

<b>Introduction</b> 1:1–9	<b>Response to the Report</b> 1:10–6:20	<b>Response to Questions</b> 7:1–16:9	<b>Conclusion</b> 16:10–24
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### The Teaching of 1 Corinthians

#### *The Prologue (1:1–9)*

1. Interestingly, Paul begins his letter by strongly asserting the identity of the Corinthian believers as true believers. They were, therefore, united as called saints.
2. Moreover, Paul thanked God for the grace He gave them both in their knowledge of Christ and their spiritual giftedness.
3. Thus, Paul's confidence centered upon God's faithfulness to strengthen the church.

#### *Paul's Response to the Report He Received (1:10–6:20)*

1. In 1:10–4:21, Paul responded to the divisions in the Corinthian church.
  - a. Reply #1: The word of the Gospel destroys the wisdom of men (both Jew and Greek). Thus, only those who have accepted the simple, seemingly foolish, word of the cross have a reason to boast.
  - b. Reply #2: Flattering speech, which Paul purposely avoided, may win a crowd, but it will never convince one of the truth of the Gospel. This is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the church is united around the common, God-given knowledge of its members.
  - c. Reply #3: Arrogance is not consistent with leadership in the body. God's leaders are servants, like Paul and Apollos. Thus, they labor together toward a common goal, which only comes about because of the work of God.
  - d. Reply #4: The church is a corporate body, the temple of God. To boast in men is a contradiction to the nature of the church, which belongs to Christ. As it stands, each one's labor will be judged upon its own quality.
2. In 5:1–13, Paul responded to immorality in the Corinthian church.
  - a. The church failed to deal appropriately with a blatant case of incest in the body.

- b. Bewilderingly, the church had become boastful about this, whether because of their understanding of liberty or because they were blinded by the stellar spirituality in their midst.
  - c. Paul argued that this one should have already been put out of the church, so that he might repent and be saved. Such sin contaminates the entire body.
  - d. Paul uses the example of the one to teach about the larger principle of not associating with those who claim to be believers but who live immorally.
3. In 6:1–11, Paul responded to lawsuits in the Corinthian church.
    - a. Saints being judged by the world is a contradiction to the teaching of Daniel 7.
    - b. Believers should rather be intent on living out the principles of the coming kingdom even now.
  4. In 6:12–20, Paul responded to sexual immorality in the Corinthian church.
    - a. Sexual immorality is a sin of the body, which is highly prized by God (v. 14).
    - b. Therefore, it is a desecration of the Temple of God (cf. Dt 31:16).

*Paul's Response to Questions Asked by the Corinthian Church (7:1–16:9)*

1. What about marriage and virgins (7:1–40)?
  - a. There is virtue in remaining unmarried and untied to the everyday concerns that marriage brings. This is particularly in light of the imminent coming of Christ (cf. v. 31). One so focused on the things of God can give greater attention, time, and effort to the work of the kingdom.
  - b. Yet, on this side of the resurrection, men and women have physical desires, and marriage is an integral part of the world. Therefore, godly marriage is beneficial to men and women, particularly those who find self control in this area difficult.
2. What about things offered to idols (8:1–11:1)?
  - a. Matters of liberty should be governed by love, especially by those who have greater knowledge than their weaker brother.
  - b. Specifically in regard to food offered to idols, Paul warns that the issue is not that the meat is necessarily tainted but that it may become a stumbling block to the weak.
  - c. Paul, as an example of this, set aside his rights and privileges as an apostle for the sake of the Gospel (9:23).
  - d. Such concerns by Paul were so that he would not become disqualified, like Israel in the wilderness (ch. 10).
  - e. Believers should not presume upon their rights and privileges; rather, they should exercise their freedom cautiously and responsibly.
3. What about covering the head in worship (11:2–16)?
  - a. Paul appeals to the general principle of headship (11:3), which is based upon the pattern of creation. Thus, the issue at hand was ultimately a question of authority (cf. 1Tim 2:12).

- b. Apparently, praying while removing head covering (for men) and praying with the head covered (for women) were regular practices of the early church (v. 16).
4. What about observance of the Lord's Supper (11:17–34)?
    - a. Paul aggressively went after the church's misunderstanding of communion.
    - b. The purpose, as Paul explains, was not to satisfy their hunger but to commemorate the Lord's death. Greedy feasting and drunkenness were inconsistent with this commemoration.
    - c. Presumption in this area brought judgment.
  5. What about spiritual gifts (chs. 12–14)?
    - a. Like other parts of the book, Paul's reply to questions about spiritual gifts centers on their benefit to the body as a whole and the unity that they bring.
    - b. Since each member of the body plays a part and since no member possesses every gift, proper exercise of one's gift(s) is done with love. Gifts, which build maturity in the body, are also temporary.
    - c. Spiritual gifts are for edification, not self-satisfaction. Thus, Paul places the most importance upon those gifts that speak to the church (see 14:3).
    - d. As such, the gift of tongues is beneficial for the church only when interpreted. Thus, the Acts 2 passage gives an apt illustration of this principle (see for context the quotation of Is 28:11f. in 14:21).
    - e. Paul gives the guiding principle for exercising spiritual gifts in worship: "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner" (v. 40).
  6. What about the resurrection (ch. 15)?
    - a. Consistent with OT teaching (see Dan 12:2)
    - b. Central to an understanding of Christ's return and the establishment of His kingdom (vv. 23—28)
    - c. Means new, spiritual, imperishable bodies for those who are dead and decayed
    - d. Is the basis for the Christian's work in the Lord (v. 58)
  7. What about the collection (16:1–9)?

*Epilogue (16:10–24)*

### **The Purpose of 1 Corinthians**

Paul applied spiritual solutions to significant issues in the church at Corinth so that the church might be built up in and conformed to the truth of the Gospel.

## The Structure of 2 Corinthians

<b>Introduction</b> 1:1–11	<b>Paul's Apostolic Ministry</b> 1:12–7:16	<b>Paul's Collection</b> 8–9	<b>Paul's Apostleship Defended</b> 10:1–12:13	<b>Conclusion</b> 12:14–13:14
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## The Purpose of 2 Corinthians

Paul defended his ministry and apostleship in light of attacks from Corinth.

**How should I respond?**