

1st Corinthians - Introduction

The City of Corinth in the 1st Century

- Considered to be a modern Roman city - Impressive, affluent, and shameless.
 - Much like a combination of our New York, Las Vegas, and New Orleans

Location

- It was a prominent Roman colony and the capital of the whole province.
- Located on a 4 ½ mile isthmus connecting Achaia to the mainland of Greece

Mythology and History

- According to legend, it was founded by King Sisyphus.
- His grandson Bellerophon famously rode a winged Pegasus, which became the city's symbol and was featured on their coinage.



- As a Greek city-state, Corinth had backed the enemies of Rome in a coup attempt, and so as retribution, it was entirely decimated by the Romans in 146 BC.
- Corinth then lay ruined for nearly a century until Julius Caesar began rebuilding the city in 44 BC. So, when Paul walks in, the marble and architecture are all new.

Wealth and Commerce

- Due to its ideal location, Corinth was both a crossroads for trade by land, north and south, as well as by sea, east and west.
 - The eastern port was Cenchreae, from which was Phebe, the deaconess who carried the epistle to the Romans. (**Romans 16:1**)

Population

- In Paul's day, it was estimated to hold about 200,000 (5 to 8 times larger than Athens)
- The demographics were made up of a sizable Jewish population, many free Roman citizens, many slaves, many freed criminals, many sailors, and so many prostitutes.
 - There was a significant disparity between the rich and poor in ancient Corinth.

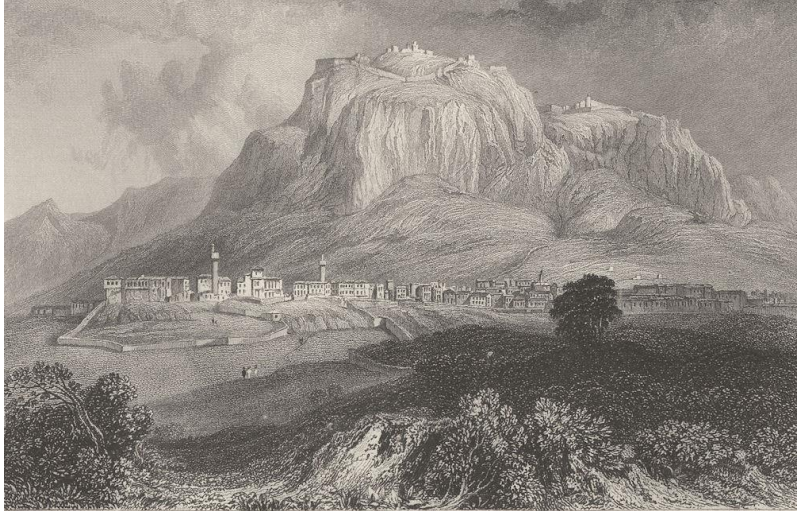
Culture and Religion

- The Corinthians valued competitiveness, self-achievement, and self-promotion
- Every two to three years, Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games (second only to the Olympics).
- Just south of the city is an approximately 1,900 ft. high mountain peak, where the Corinthians built the Acrocorinthus – a temple for Aphrodite.
 - Part of Aphrodite's worship was with temple prostitutes (priests and priestesses).

Corinthians Theme: How does the gospel shape every part of our lives?

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- According to the Greek geographer Strabo, the temple of Aphrodite employed about 1,000.
- Plato, in his famous work *The Republic*, referred to prostitutes as “Corinthian girls.” (Plato, *The Republic* 404d)
- The Corinthians were also renowned for their excesses in eating and drinking.
 - The Greek writer Aelian wrote that if a Corinthian character ever appeared in a play, he was always drunk.



Acts 18:1 – 17

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, **3** and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.

8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent,

10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”

11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal,

13 saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.”

14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint.

15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.”

16 And he drove them from the tribunal.

17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

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