

Quarter Three: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

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Lesson 1—Paul's Ministry in Corinth

Monday: From Athens to Corinth

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- **Last Quarter:** "Growing in a Relationship with God"
 - Last week: "Into Eternity" - Hope of heaven & eternity with Jesus

This Quarter: "1 and 2 Corinthians"

- **Author:** Apostle Paul
 - Spent 18 months in Corinth
 - Planted church on 2nd missionary journey (Acts 18)
- **Timeline:**
 - Paul wrote the lost epistle to the Corinthian church
 - 1 Cor 5:9 – "I wrote to you in my epistle..."
 - Wrote about need for separation from sexually immoral people
 - Either lost epistle or partially preserved in 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1
 - Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in Spring of AD 55 from Ephesus
 - Most likely sent with Timothy
 - On 3rd missionary journey toward end of 3-year stay in Ephesus
 - Paul sent Timothy to assess the situation
 - Paul made a painful visit to Corinth to assess the situation himself
 - Corinthians did not receive him well: strained relationship & questioning of Paul's authority
 - Visit breaks Paul's heart
 - Still 3rd missionary journey
 - Paul possibly wrote severe / sad letter
 - Most likely sent with Titus
 - 2 Cor 2:4 – "For out of much affliction & anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears..."
 - Most likely letter was lost; but could be partially preserved as 2 Cor 10 – 13
 - Paul received report from Titus on positive developments in Corinth
 - Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in fall of AD 56 from Macedonia (Philippi)
 - 2 Corinthians is actually 3rd or 4th Corinthians then (1 or 2 lost epistles)
 - 2 Cor 1 – 9 is positive – letter of reconciliation
 - Based on news from Titus on positive developments in Corinth
 - 2 Cor 10 – 13 is either severe / sad letter on negative issues in church from earlier, or it's a "throwback" to previous issues in the church
 - Discussed impending 3rd visit to Corinth, spent winter in Corinth

- Themes:
 - If you think your church has problems, get ready for the avalanche of quarrels & strife & issues Paul had to confront.
 - 1 Corinthians:
 - 1. The power of God
 - Paul asserts that God's power as manifest in the Cross demonstrates the inability of the wisdom of the world to provide salvation – much like Paul rejects the law as a means of salvation in Romans
 - 2. Correct disorder & immaturity in the church: many of the issues arose over a faulty understanding of baptism & resurrection. Paul taught that believers experienced the power of Christ's resurrection at baptism, while others at Corinth taught a different experience after baptism. Some of the issues in the church at Corinth, as follows:
 - Schisms in the church
 - Incest
 - Lawsuits between members
 - Sexual immorality
 - Marriage & divorce & singleness
 - Idolatry
 - Spiritual gifts & order in worship
 - Resurrection
 - 2 Corinthians = Paul's most personal, vulnerable & defensive letter
 - Comfort in suffering
 - Forgiveness & restoration
 - Authentic ministry vs false apostles
 - Strength in weakness
 - Generosity & giving
- This Week: "Paul's Ministry in Corinth"
 - Study Paul's ministry to the church in Corinth
 - Many schisms, sins, issues in the church there
 - Paul faces those problems with the message of the Cross

Memory Text: "One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people'" (Acts 18:9, 10, NRSV).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Paul, a God-called Apostle of Jesus (John L)
 - 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1 – Paul's understanding of his calling, mission & relationship to Christ
- 2. **Monday:** From Athens to Corinth (Jill)
 - Acts 17:16 – 34; 18:1 – 11 – Paul planting the church in Corinth on his 2nd missionary journey; his evangelistic methods
- 3. **Tuesday:** The City of Corinth (John D)
 - Acts 18:1 – 3 – Corinth's economy & status as a Roman city; also it's immorality & idolatry

- 4. **Wednesday:** “Many in This City” (Ryan J)
 - Acts 18:4 – 10 – the opposition as well as the converts in Paul’s gospel ministry; the encouragement he received from Christ
- 5. **Thursday:** Paul’s Letters to the Corinthians (SQ)
 - Various Scriptures – the theme & timeline of the Corinthian letters

Monday: From Athens to Corinth

Acts 17:13 – 34; 18:1 - 11

7 Takeaways from Paul’s ministry

- Paul’s call to share the gospel to the Gentiles
 - Acts 9 – on way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Paul encounters Jesus
 - Physically blinded
 - Acts 9:15 – “But the Lord said to him (Ananias), ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.’”
 - **Takeaway #1: Answer the call**
 - When God calls, answer
 - Influence of Paul on early Christian Church
 - One of the primary individuals God used to shape Christianity into a global, gospel-centered movement
 - Paul
 - Took the gospel to the Gentiles (Peter in Acts 10)
 - Clarified the gospel message (pulled away from legalism to the gospel)
 - Founded churches
 - Wrote letters of instruction
 - Helped to shape doctrine, church practice & Christian living
 - Defined church life & leadership
 - Mentored future leaders
- 1st missionary journey (AD 46 – 48)
 - Paul & Barnabas & John Mark
 - Split over John Mark
 - Traveled throughout Asia Minor (Acts 13 & 14)
- 2nd missionary journey of Paul (AD 49 / 50 (following Jerusalem Council) – 52)
 - Paul & Silas
 - Timothy joined in Lystra
 - Titus joined
 - Traveled throughout Asia Minor – then, took gospel to Europe (Acts 16 – 18:22)
 - Macedonia was a Roman province = modern day Greece
 - Acts 16:9 – “... a man of Macedonia stood & pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”
 - Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica
 - Return to Takeaway #1: Answer the call

- Achaia was a Roman province = modern day southern Greece
 - Athens
 - Corinth (spent 18 months in Corinth)
 - Acts 18
- 3rd missionary journey of Paul (AD 53 – 57)
 - Spent much time in Ephesus (over 2 years)
 - Wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (modern day Turkey)
 - Previously wrote a lost letter to Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9)
 - Possibly portions of it are 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1
 - Traveled back to Corinth & was not welcome in the church
 - Wrote sad / severe letter
 - Letter was lost (or possibly 2 Cor 10 – 13)
 - Received news from Titus on positive development in Corinthian church
 - Wrote 2 Corinthians from Philippi (in Macedonia)
- Opposition to the gospel
 - Philippi
 - Paul & Silas beaten
 - Jailer converted
 - Officials afraid because they were Roman citizens – asked them to leave city
 - Thessalonica
 - Paul & Silas preached the gospel 3 Sabbaths in the synagogue
 - Acts 17:4 – “And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”
 - Mob attacked their host (Jason)
 - Acts 17:6 – “...crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’”
 - They left by night for Berea
 - Berea
 - They preached & “many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” (Acts 17:12)
 - Jews from Thessalonica heard about the preaching in Berea, they came to cause trouble
 - Paul departed for Athens - & Timothy & Silas stayed behind to strengthen church & later join Paul
 - Pattern:
 - Preached the gospel – people converted – opposition arose – left to another place
 - **Takeaway #2: Leave the results with God**
 - Often, we measure success by numbers, time spent, “metrics & analytics”
 - How do we measure the work of the Holy Spirit?
 - Churches established in every place where they worked

- Athens (Acts 17:16 – 34)
 - Corinth (Acts 18:1 – 11 – mostly covered by Johnson & Dinzey)
 - Acts 17:16, 17 – “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. (17) Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace **daily** with those who happened to be there.”
 - **Takeaway #3: Evangelize everywhere**
 - Sharing Jesus is a way of life
 - Paul witnessed to the church & unchurched
 - Paul witnessed in the synagogue with the Jews & Gentiles (some translations, “God-fearing Greeks”)
 - He witnessed in the marketplace (the unchurched)
 - **Takeaway #4: Witness consistently**
 - Paul shared Jesus **daily** in the marketplace
 - Acts 17:18, 19 – “Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. (19) And they took him and brought him to the Aeropagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?’”
 - **Takeaway #5: Allow God to open doors**
 - Did Paul ask to speak at the Aeropagus?
 - God opened the door; because of His faithful, consistent witness
 - Paul’s preaching in Athens led to an invitation for him to address the Areopagus, known as Mars Hill, where the influential thought leaders with authority over legal, religious, and political matters gathered in Athens.
 - Athens no longer the political center of the Greco-Roman world
 - Corinth now was
 - However, Athens still the university center of the world
 - Cultural center of Greco-Roman world
 - Highly intellectual metropolis where Plato & Aristotle had taught
 - At this time, most popular philosophers were the Stoics & Epicureans
 - Filled with temples and false gods
 - One ancient writer said, “easier to find a god in Athens than a man”
 - Upwards of 30,000 gods in Athens
 - Acts 17:22, 23 – “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Aeropagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; (23) for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him, I proclaim to you.’”
 - **Takeaway #6: Contextualize the gospel**

- Begin with what they know & bridge to the unknown
- Make the truth in God's Word relevant to your audience, while not compromising or altering the message of truth
- Acts 17:30 – “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,”
 - **Takeaway #7: Call for a decision**
 - Don't be afraid to ask for decisions for repentance or truth

7 Takeaways from Paul's ministry

- 1: Answer the call
- 2: Leave the results with God
- 3. Evangelize everywhere
- 4. Witness consistently
- 5. Allow God to open doors
- 6. Contextualize the gospel
- 7. Call for a decision