

1st Corinthians: Overview of Epistle

Ian Gibson (January 2014)

New Testament Scriptural order:

The 4 gospels - *the history of the gospel*.

The Acts - *the spread of the gospel*.

The NT epistles - *the continuance of the gospel*.

Romans - *the doctrine of the gospel & the outworking of the gospel*.

1st Corinthians - 1st Church epistle, '*The Charter of the Church*' (JR Caldwell).

- the gatherings of a local company of believers; "*when ye are gathered together / come together*" used 8x (ch5v4, ch11v17,18,20,33,34, ch14v23,26).

Acts 18v1-11: The planting of "*the church of God which is at Corinth*" (ch1v2).

V1-3: The providence of God regarding Aquila & Priscilla.

V4-6: The gospel preached to the Jew first, and upon their rejection of it, to the Gentiles.

V7-8: The response to the preaching of Christ; Jews & Gentiles, the rich & the poor, were saved & baptized.

V9-11: The goodness of God to Paul, giving him a special word of promise & encouragement to continue.

1st Corinthians: Written by Paul from Ephesus (see ch16v8), i.e. on his 3rd missionary journey, approx. 5 years after the assembly had been planted; but they had not progressed spiritually (see ch3v1-3).

Problems had arisen in the assembly at Corinth; divisions, difficulties, disorder & doctrinal error.

Paul writes his corrective ministry with a tremendous burden, with a deep exercise & genuine heart of love for their spiritual recovery, restoration & progress (see 1st Cor 4v21, 2nd Cor 2v3-4, 2nd Cor 7v6-9).

Paul's sorrow was turned to joy, when he heard of how they had responded appropriately to his 1st epistle.

The basic problem at Corinth was that the assembly had become man-centered, rather than Christ-centered, they had become puffed up in human pride, their own abilities & had begun to glory in themselves and the wisdom of this world. So the apostle brings them back to what they were made in Christ; ch1v30-31 "*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*".

- Ch1-4: "*Christ ... is made unto us wisdom*".
 - Ch1: Christ & the gospel is the wisdom of God & the power of God (ch1v17-31).
 - Ch2: Christ's wisdom is imparted to us by the Spirit of God (ch2v12,16).
 - Ch3: Paul as the "*wise masterbuilder*" (ch3v10) built the foundation of Jesus Christ. We need wisdom as to what we are building into God's assembly; "*let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon*" (ch3v10), in view of a coming day of review & reward (see ch3v13).
 - Ch4: Wisdom needed in our stewardship of the things of God. The apostles were made a spectacle unto the world, seen as fools, weak & despised in the eyes of men, but "*wise in Christ*" (ch4v10).

- Ch5-7: “**Christ ... is made unto us righteousness**”.
 - Ch5: Need for personal righteousness & moral purity (ch5v8), and to judge unrighteousness.
 - Ch6: Righteousness in our dealings with fellow believers & as to our body.
 - Ch7: Righteous relations between men & women, husbands & wives.

- Ch8-10: “**Christ ... is made unto us sanctification**”.
 - Ch8: Maintaining a separated / sanctified life in this defiling world, yet also to be considerate of the consciences of our brethren, and be willing to be marked by Christ-like self-sacrifice.
 - Ch9: Living sanctified & disciplined lives in this world, in view of obtaining a prize (ch9v24-25).
 - Ch10: Lessons from the history of the nation of Israel in their wilderness pathway (ch10v1-11), that we might live sanctified lives now. We have “**the Lord’s table**” of daily provision to sustain us in our separated / sanctified lives, so we are not eating at “**the table of demons**” (ch10v21).

- Ch11-16: “**Christ ... is made unto us redemption**”.
 - Ch11: Truth of headship & head coverings, and our remembrance of the great redemptive work of our Saviour at Calvary at the Lord’s supper (ch11v26).
 - Ch12: The redemption wrought for us by our Savior at Calvary, and the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit of God at Pentecost has brought us into the truth of being “**one body**” (ch12v13).
 - Ch13: Our redemption in Christ is to be displayed in our lives, as we reflect something of the great love of Christ in our behaviour & manner of living one with another.
 - Ch14: Our redemption in Christ is to be displayed in our gatherings being orderly, gifts operating only for edification, in keeping with the presence of God among us (ch14v33,40).
 - Ch15: Truth of the resurrection of Christ, and the full redemptive work of Christ as it touches the raised & changed bodies of believers, bodies that will be incorruptible & immortal, fitted for a heavenly sphere of glory (ch15v54,57).
 - Ch16: Our redemption in Christ is to touch upon our willingness to freely give of what we have materially, for the service & things of our God (ch16v1-2).

Christ is the answer to all the divisions, difficulties, disorder & doctrinal error:

Ch1: Problem of divisions among them, v13 “**Is Christ divided?**”

Ch3: Problem of carnality, Christ is the foundation of the assembly (v11), v23 “**ye are Christ’s**”.

Ch5: Problem of immorality, Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary should preserve us (v7-8).

Ch8: Be considerate of those “**for whom Christ died**” (v11), lest we “**sin against Christ**” (v12).

Ch12: Function as members of “**body of Christ**” (v27) for the good of the whole assembly.

Ch15: Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the saints that sleep (v20-23).

Paul’s knowledge of all the issues at Corinth based upon a report from “**them of Chloe**” (ch1v11), what was “**reported commonly**” (ch5v1), and their written requests of him, hence “**Now concerning / as touching ...**” (ch7v1, 8v1, 12v1, 16v1). Paul gives comprehensive advice covering home life, public life & assembly life.