

ALSOM

CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE

From the poetic passages of love and resurrection, the instructions on proper church worship like offerings and the Lord's Supper, to the tense texts of church discipline, Paul's epistles to the Corinthian Church confirm what the author of Ecclesiastes writes: *"There is nothing new under the sun."*

In other words, whatever era of human history in which we find ourselves, loving God and God's people, living for God and God's people, comes with similar challenges. In 1-2 Corinthians, Paul reminds the church that they are called to:

1. Unity.

1Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

2. Holiness.

*1Cor. 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:
3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. Faithfulness.

*1Cor. 15:1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.
34 Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.*

There are of course other themes in the books. Nevertheless, throughout both books, whatever Paul is saying at a particular moment, he usually connects it to one or more of these 3 themes. Remember them for later!

For centuries, a saying has existed, which sums up the ALSOM approach to how we conduct our courses ... "it is a poor teacher who only teaches the textbook." We assume you have studied the textbook and know that

you will be tested on certain aspects of the textbook. Our goal is to not just repeat what you have already heard.

Our goal is to expand your horizon:

- ***In Scholarship.***
 - We want to expose you to what the best and most reliable New Testament scholars have to say about Corinthians.
- ***In Historical Cultural Proficiency.***
 - The ancient world was radically different than ours – we are separated by distance of time, culture, language, etc. Learning to cross that distance responsibly, and seeing Corinthians through a 1st century worldview, deepens our understanding.
- ***In Bible Literacy.***
 - A course like this should set you on a lifelong trajectory of learning how to read the Bible well. Biblical Literacy is more than memorization; rather it is comprehension of what we study.
- ***In Application***
 - Having learned what the best scholars say, having endeavored to comprehend Scripture, having deepened our understanding of the ancient world ... we will find ourselves able to apply the truth of scripture to our lives, our churches, our modern world, as never before. Making the move to the modern world will come more naturally, more organically, and with increasing insight as you see that *“there is nothing new under the sun.”*
- ***In Worship***
 - You should view your studies as a spiritual act of worship.
 - Seeing Jesus more clearly, seeing his intention for his church more clearly, should send us to our knees as we lift our hands in gratitude that his love is “patient, kind, keeps no record of wrongs.” (1 Cor. 13)
 - Death has lost its sting. (1 Cor. 15)
 - We serve the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1)
 - God is willing to use jars of clay. (2 Cor. 4)
- ***Thinking Theologically for the sake of God’s Church***
 - God needs good people to rightly divide His Word for His Church, to think deeply, to answer the pressing questions of our day.

FOR GOD’S GLORY, AND OUR GOOD.

We will be engaging numerous scholars:

1. *Dr. Tom Wright - primary*
2. *Dr. Michael Bird - primary*
3. *Dr. Frank Thielman – primary*
4. *Dr. Ben Witherington*

5. Dr. Douglas Moo
6. Dr. D.A. Carson

Other Resources:

- Video/Graphics
 - i. Please watch the brief graphic illustrations and read the accompanying notes at the following links:
 - ii. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/1-corinthians/>
 - iii. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/2-corinthians/>

Our Methods:

- Observe the Big Picture of the books together as a whole.
- Discover the Historical Cultural Background.
- Look at Paul's Pastoral Ministry
- Simplify General Issues (Sinful Cultural Characteristics of the Roman Empire, Specific Issues in Corinth, which Paul must address.
- Application Exercises – we want you to pray, think, and share as you continue your journey into God's Word.
- Study Detailed Outlines of the books, and try to understand the different types of outlines.
- Frame all of this in an understanding of how the Gospel comes to human cultures and incarnates itself there in order to transform culture.

FOR THIS COURSE:

1. **Pray** – Dedicate your studies to the LORD. (As Paul would)
2. **Read** – Be sure to have read 1-2 Corinthians before you begin these notes, if you want to take one book at a time, that is fine.
3. **Bible** - Follow along in your Bible. (NIV, ESV, NASB recommended)
4. **Notes** - Write down Questions, Observations, etc.
5. **Engage** – Participate when asked to, think deeply and precisely.

THE BIG PICTURE

A brief summary from “The New Testament in its World”
by Wright and Bird, (p.499-500).

Two short reflections on Paul's correspondence with Corinth. First, the biggest lesson may be the importance of creating a Christ-culture in our churches. Christians often simply reflect the values and behaviors in their surrounding culture.

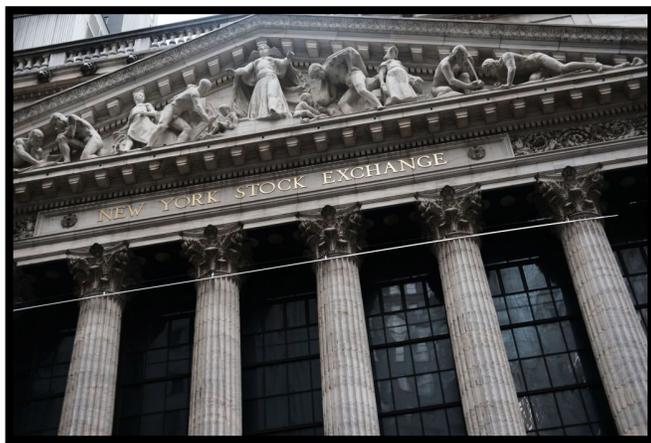
As any experienced missionary will confirm, when a tribe or ethnic group becomes Christian, the people rarely get the whole package at once.

More often than not, Christianity simple becomes an add-on to their existing worldview. This can result in a confused semi-Christian worldview, or, in the worst cases, syncretism. It can take years of even a generation for their faith to transform what they believe about gender, outcasts, the spirit-world, or how to relate to old tribal enemies.

Nor is this a problem for the Global South only; the western world (Western Europe, America) is even worse, often assuming that its culture is in some sense 'Christian' and hence needing no critique, when many aspects of western culture are every bit as 'pagan' as that of Corinth.



Ancient Corinth



New York Stock Exchange

APPLICATION EXERCISE: According to each issue below, briefly explain how Christians *in our cultural context* might (like the Corinthians) have a flawed worldview more carnal than Christlike, and/or also an improper view of church:

1. Catering to the rich and disregarding the poor - _____

2. Materialism & Greed - _____

3. Sexual Immorality - _____

4. Preference for “Charisma” in teachers, rather than good character & content –

5. Rebellious attitudes vs. humble hearts - _____

EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD “SPIRITUAL GIFTS,” THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH WAS PLAGUED WITH THESE AND OTHER SINFUL THINGS.

- God bless the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements with Spiritual Gifts.
- God forbid the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement be similar to Corinth in our failings. EACH of the above categories is a form of idolatry.
- May we be willing to live in Unity, Holiness, and Faithfulness.
- May God give us a love for His Word rightly taught.

The Corinthian believers offer a case-study of a church struggling, and frequently failing, to be like Christ rather than like pagan Corinth; hence Paul's repeated theme of imitation (1. Cor. 4:16; 11:1).

*His theological and pastoral exhortations are aimed at creating a different culture, one characterized by the cross, grace, love, and reconciliation.
That is our task too.*

Second, these letters show that Christian service takes place in a series of strange paradoxes:

- Power in weakness
- Triumph in tragedy

- *Strength in vulnerability*
- *Death blossoming into life*

(Note from ALSOM: As you read the books of 1-2 Corinthians, begin making some intuitive connections to the challenges of the modern Christian life, the challenges of modern ministry in a neo-pagan world, the challenges of helping people be shaped by Christ rather than culture. Doing this will help put you in Paul's Pastoral Shoes!)

Paul's most profound summary of Christian ministry is these words:

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. 2 Cor.4:10-12

A pastor or servant of Christ's body is called to be a personified Passion story, a walking and talking parable of Jesus' death and resurrection. That is the living proof that God uses death, vulnerability, and weakness to bring about life, hope, and triumph.

(Note from ALSOM: Compare this analysis from Dr. Wright with the mentalities common in some American churches, ministers, and ministries, which are often *not* "personified Passion stories," but rather driven by ego, money, superficiality, and self-help sermons rather than true biblical exposition, etc. Corinthians is truly relevant to our current ecclesial climate! In the next section, Dr. Wright refers to some of the very issues, which Paul says are endemic of the church at Corinth. Note the contrast between what is truly Christian and what it actually carnal.

Christian ministry is about being outwardly battered and bruised but inwardly renewed; this is why we can rejoice with thanksgiving even amid hardship.

- *To the world, such a life smells of death and defeat, but actually it is spreading an aroma that brings life.*
- *To the cultural elites, such people often look pathetic and defeated, but in reality they are champions of God's Kingdom.*

- *To sophistic professors, their message sounds foolish and dishonorable, but in God's eyes they embody his wisdom and righteousness.*
- *To the political powers, they are the scum of the earth, but in God's design they are the ones upon whom the end of ages has come, jars of clay concealing the all-surpassing power of God.*

How can this be, Paul himself asks. Well, he answers: 'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.' - 2 Cor.5:18

HISTORICAL – CULTURAL BACKGROUND

General Issues (Sinful Characteristics) : Roman Empire Corinthian Culture

Everything happens in a context.

In other words – everything happens in or at a specific time, place, with a certain people, language, etc.

The cultural context of the city of Corinth contributes heavily to their struggles, and explains why Paul must address certain issues.

CORINTH

- **Capital of the Roman Province of Achaia**
 - Historically Greek or Hellenistic in culture.
 - Exposed to Empire wide cultures due to trade & travel.
- **Destroyed by Rome in 146 BC**
- **Julius Caesar restored Corinth in 44 BC**
 - As a result of this, the city was remade as a Roman city, yet still maintained much of its historic Greek or Hellenistic culture.
- **By the 1st century AD, the population was around 80,000.**
 - That number increases to 100,000 if you include small outlying communities, towns, etc.
- **On the map below, you can see that Corinth is in a prime location:**
 - In many ways it is a gateway connecting one half of Achaia to the other half.

- This is an excellent geographic location for trade, business, etc.
- Further, note that it is perfectly situated for trade not just by land, but also by sea, and was a successful port city.



- **Inhabitants**
 - Romans dominated public life, institutions, etc.
 - Historic natives not allowed to serve in higher public offices.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - A center of art, orators, philosophers, religious diversity, etc.
 - Very prideful, reputation for arrogance, personal rights, etc.

GENERAL ISSUES (SINFUL CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS) **IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

1. IDOLATRY

- a. *Idolatry was integrated into virtually every aspect of ancient life – your home, your family, your job. And you were expected to appease the gods by sacrifice, sleeping with temple prostitutes, etc., etc.*

2. SEXUAL IMMORALITY

- a. *Only in the past 20 years have we in Western Civilization (by this we mean North America and Western Europe) begun to see glimpses of the type of sexual deviancy that was common in the Roman Empire. Sexual Immorality was common across all classes.*
 - i. *Those in the upper classes often used servants, slaves, etc., for sexual pleasure. Many religious cults were shackled by*

sexual deviancy, many temples had prostitutes with whom you could have sex. Paul confronts the Corinthian church about this very issue.

3. CLASSISM & MATERIALISM

- a. The Roman Empire had well established class systems.
- b. These social classes were only highlighted in wealthy cities like Corinth. If you have money, you want people to know you have money. In cities like Corinth, money often equaled public power or prestige. All too often that power was used to keep lower classes in their place, to remind them of their powerlessness, to demean them as human beings, servants, slaves, etc.

4. CELEBRITY WORSHIP

- a. This seems like an odd phrase or description so let's unpack it.
 - i. Oratory skills were highly praised in the Roman Empire, especially in more cosmopolitan cities like Corinth.
 - ii. Those excelled in public speaking, those who had honed their rhetorical flourish, were basically treated like celebrities at times.
 - iii. Content of what was being said did not matter as much as HOW good one was at speaking. In other words, style mattered over substance. (*Today: Simplistic rhymes and clichés, looking good for the livestream camera, sound byte sermonettes.*)

***Paul confronts the Corinthian Church about each one of these Sinful Cultural Characteristics. These issues are interrelated in the ancient world, they manifest in a multitude of ways.**

***CORINTH WAS KNOWN FOR BEING SO DEBASED THAT EVEN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE PAGAN IDOLATROUS, IMMORAL EMPIRE ... BEING CALLED A "CORINTHIAN" WAS AN INSULT !!**

PAUL'S PASTORAL MINISTRY

The Flow of Events in and around Corinth

Background Information:

- **Scholarship suggests that during his missionary travels, Paul's first stop in Corinth lasted about a year and a half, 18 months or so.**
 - This was before either 1-2 Corinthians were written.

- It was during this time that Paul was simply preaching, teaching, making disciples, confronting the idolatrous Corinthian culture, and bringing together a church.
- ***During Paul's first visit (50-51 AD) he meets Aquila and Priscilla.***
 - *It seems that they had once been in Rome, but left after the Jews were expelled in 49 AD.*
- ***What happens on the first visit? Paul and the Synagogue.***
 - Paul's common practice at this point in his ministry was to try and take the gospel first to the synagogues of the cities he visited. In Corinth, he found few results and he was forced to take leave.
 - Nevertheless, when he left a few folks took note and followed: a mixture of Jews, Gentile converts to Judaism, and some pagans who found his Messianic message interesting.
 - Soon, Jewish religious leaders in Corinth grew angry, they brought Paul before the governor of Achaia, attempting to press legal action.
 - Gallio, the governor, perceived these to be "jewish" squabbles and he stayed out of the fray. The significance of this, is that, at least in parts of the empire (like Corinth) Christianity was still seen as a sect of Judaism.
 - Soon after these events, Paul leaves Corinth.
- ***We do not know for certain the exact number of trips or "stays" which Paul had in Corinth, but we DO know that he had at a minimum ... 2 more visits.***
- ***Paul is not the only Christian minister to visit the church in Corinth.***
 - Characteristic of Paul's ministry was the practice of sending his protégés, faithful lay ministers, or pastors in training, to visit churches which Paul had either founded or had a primary foundational influence upon.
 - These emissaries from Paul would take news, teaching, letters, instructions, etc., from Paul, to the local churches.
 - These emissaries would also gather news, concerns, etc., from the local churches, and deliver them back to Paul.
 - Pertaining to the Corinthian church, we see Titus and Timothy both at work. Further, we see Apollos, though he was not as close to Paul.
- ***Scholarship suggests that Paul wrote as many as 4 letters to the church in Corinth, of which we have 2.***

THE FLOW OF EVENTS IN PAUL'S LIFE IN RELATION TO CORINTH

***NOTE: Every issue Paul addresses in Corinth is some variation of the 4 Sinful Cultural Characteristics of the Roman Empire which we have listed.**

1. **Paul's 1st Visit – 50-51AD – an extended stay.**
2. **Paul leaves after 18 months or so.**
3. **Paul's 1st Letter – 51-52AD**
 - a. *We don't have this letter, which among other things is believed this letter addressed sexual immorality in the church.*
4. **Paul writes 1st Corinthians- @ 53AD**
 - a. *Likely from the city of Ephesus*
 - b. *Issues Paul addresses: doctrinal (some were denying the resurrection), church discipline, sexual immorality, gifts of the Spirit, divisions in the church as groups coalesce around "Paul, Peter, Apollos," immodesty of behavior and clothing, lack of propriety in worship services,*
5. **Timothy visits Paul and tells him that the Corinthians did not obey his pastoral wisdom.**
6. **Paul returns to Corinth.**
 - a. *This visit was very difficult for both Paul and for the church*
 - i. *1 Cor.16:5-7, 2 Cor.1*
7. **Paul returns to Ephesus.**
 - a. *This is likely the period of time when Paul is imprisoned and in declining health.*
8. ***Paul possibly writes his 3rd letter to the Corinthians at this point.**
9. **Paul's imprisonment ends and intends to travel to Corinth.**
10. **While Paul is passing through Macedonia, he is met by Titus, who is coming from Corinth.**
11. **Titus tells Paul several things, which mostly bring him joy, but also a bit of sorrow.**
 - a. *The church in Corinth settled divisions.*
 - b. *The church in Corinth align their love and loyalty to Paul and get rid of those who had risen against Paul.*
 - c. *Nevertheless, the church is now dealing those known as the "super apostles."*
12. **Paul writes 2nd Corinthians @ 55AD**
 - a. *Due to the "start – stop" composition of this letter, some scholars think it was written over a period of time. Macedonia is believed to be the traditional location of Paul when he began authorship.*
 - b. *Paul affirms his love for and loyalty to the Corinthians.*

- c. Paul addresses the “super apostles.”
- d. Paul informs them he needs an offering collected for other Christians in need.
 - i. Paul corrects the Corinthians for not being as generous as they should be.
- e. Paul extols human weakness as the means through which God often reveals His Grace.

GENERAL ISSUES OF ANCIENT WORLD (ROMAN EMPIRE) RESULT IN SPECIFIC ISSUES IN CORINTH

RECALL THESE GENERAL ISSUES (*sinful cultural characteristics*) OF THE ANCIENT WORLD:

1. IDOLATRY
2. SEXUAL LASCIVIOUSNESS
3. CLASSISM & MATERIALISM
4. CELEBRITY RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

In this section, you are going to see how these General Issues (*sinful cultural characteristics*) manifest in the Corinthian church as *sinful attitudes and behavior*.

Space is given for you to make application for today's church and culture.

APPLICATION EXERCISE: *Mapping the Issues.*

- On subsequent pages, you will see a graphic illustrating how the “General Issues of the Roman Empire” contribute to **the Specific Problems** (*sinful attitudes and behaviors*) at Corinth.
- Your job is to craft statements about each main category in the center circle, and how it applies to various sub-categories (*Specific Problems*).

Ex: The Corinthian preoccupation with wealth, social class, etc., (*the sinful cultural characteristic of Classism and Materialism*) leads them to:

1. **Devalue Paul's Pastoral Authority** because he is a middle lower class tradesman (tentmaker) and therefore they don't receive his correction as they should.
 - They have trouble receiving pastoral instruction because of his lower and their higher social class.
 - They discount Paul's world-class education because he is not of their social status.

2. **Exclude or mistreat poor members** of the congregation from fellowship meals and The Lord's Supper.
 - The poorer classes often had more work to do before they could join the church functions. The rich were not waiting on them, but pressing ahead without them.
3. **Misperceive Christ and the Cross** - where the Son of God makes himself nothing on our behalf.
4. **"Bigger is Better" "Prosperity Gospel"** – it is much the same in modern times, people tend to be overly impressed with wealth.

What we just did is highly theological. We just did:

1. **Pastoral Theology** – how does this relate to pastoral authority & teaching ministry of the Church.
2. **Ecclesiology** – how does this relate to the Church.
3. **Christology & Soteriology** – how does this relate to Christ, sin, salvation.
4. **Practical Theology** – Modern Application

Your work should look something like this:

1. **Idolatry (General Issue 1 (sinful cultural characteristic 1))**

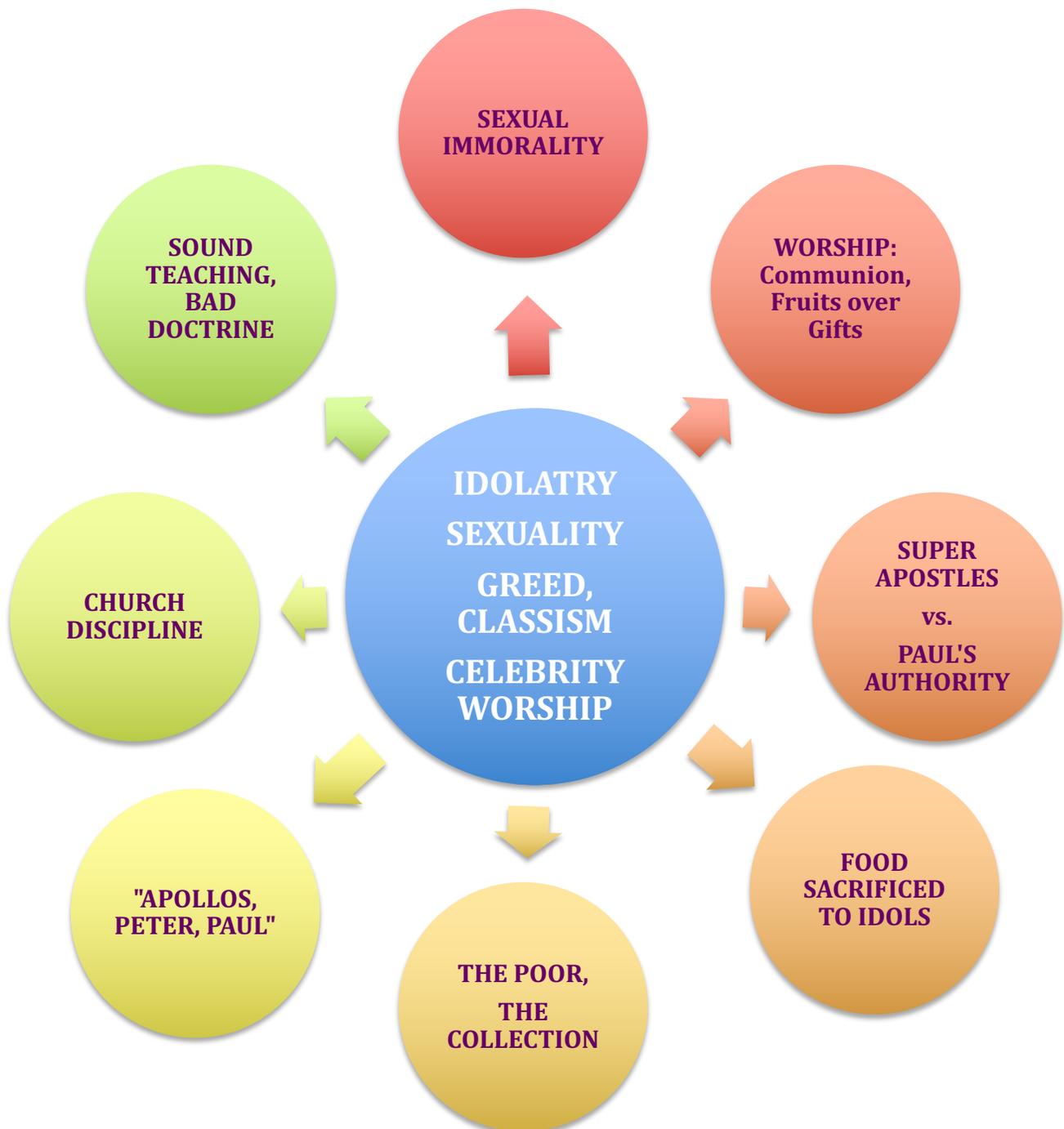
- a. Statement 1 connecting IDOLATRY to Specific Problem at Corinth (Example: "The practice of idolatry in the Roman Empire resulted in some Corinthian believers continuing to attend idol temples and even eat there.")
 - i. Scripture reference(s) identifying issue. (Example: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22)
- b. Statement 2 connecting to specific issue at Corinth
 - i. Scripture reference identifying issue.

***Do this for all four "General Issues (sinful cultural characteristics) of the Roman Empire"**

See the graphic illustration below for the General Issues (center sphere) and the Specific Problems (perimeter spheres).

(NOTE: More than one General Issue (like Idolatry plus Sexuality) sometimes contributed to a Specific Problem (worshiping at the idol temples and having sex with the temple prostitutes instead of being faithful to your wife).

Sometimes a single General Issue (such as Celebrity Worship) contributed to more than one Specific Problem (such as elevating those who manifested spiritual gifts that involved "speaking", such as tongues, AND putting your favorite preacher (Apollos, Peter, etc.) on a pedestal over and above others.)



NOW CONSIDER HOW THESE 4 GENERAL ISSUES AT THE CENTER OF THE ANCIENT WORLD ARE OPPOSED TO THE FIRST 3 THEMES of the CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE THAT WE MENTIONED:

UNITY

HOLINESS

FAITHFULNESS

(Paul was intentionally emphasizing these essential Christian characteristics to illustrate to the Corinthians their sinful attitudes and practices!)

OUTLINES OF 1ST & 2ND CORINTHIANS

Note: Different authors organize their outlines in different ways.

1. **Thematically** - around main themes.
2. **Chronologically** - by chronological order of verses.
3. **Doctrinally** – by specific doctrines addressed.
4. **Theologically** - according to overall theological structure.
5. **Topically** - by topics mentioned.
6. **Eclectic** - weaving everything together.

EXERCISE:

1. **Below will present several different outlines so that you can see this in practice.**
 2. **ALSO would like you to follow along in your bible as you walk through each outline.**
 - a. You should read both 1-2 Corinthians in entirety as you walk thru these outlines.
 - b. If you have already read both of Paul's letters, feel free to skim the scriptural passage, making connections with the outlines along the way.
- As you continue your ministerial careers, biblical studies, and teaching ministries, you will find different types of outlines helpful.

>>> WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE YOU, AS YOU HAVE TIME, TO READ CORINTHIANS ACCORDING TO DIFFERING OUTLINES IN ORDER TO MORE FULLY APPRECIATE AND COMPREHEND WHAT EACH SCHOLAR/THEOLOGIAN HAS TO OFFER. <<<

For our purposes in this course, we want your first focus to be on:

[“The New Testament and its World”](#) – Dr. Tom Wright & Dr. Michael Bird

Book Description

- While written at the level of the lay reader, this book nonetheless is composed by excellent scholars.
- The goal of this book is to give the reader a brief but thorough introduction to world (both Jewish and Gentile) into which Christianity emerged and the challenges Christianity presented to

both Judaism and various forms of paganism in the ancient world.

- Both laity and leaders alike will discover this outline to be a simple summary. **Open your bibles now!**

Dr. Wright & Dr. Bird present us with an “Eclectic / Chronological” outline. They deal with the natural flow of the text, unpacking things as they “pop up.” As you read, remember these words from Dr. Wright & Dr. Bird:

Two short reflections on Paul’s correspondence with Corinth.

First, the biggest lesson may be **the importance of creating a Christ-culture in our churches. Christians often simply reflect the values and behaviors in their surrounding culture.**

Second, these letters show that Christian service takes place in a series of strange paradoxes:

- Power in weakness
- Triumph in tragedy
- Strength in vulnerability
- Death blossoming into life

**ALSO → NOTE THE CONCEPTS OF
UNITY, HOLINESS, AND FAITHFULNESS**

God’s People in every age, are called to Unity, Holiness, Faithfulness.

As you work back through this outline, take the opportunity:

1. To pause
2. To think deeply
3. To pray, to worship
4. To synthesize (put together) what you’ve studied thus far
 - a. The Big Picture
 - b. From Historical-Cultural Analysis – General Issues of the Empire
 - c. Paul’s Pastoral Ministry & Flow of Events
 - d. Issues Specific to Corinth

Outline of 1 Corinthians – p.486

1. Introduction, Grace, Thanksgiving (1:1-9)

1Cor. 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God

- Upon hearing of leaders within the church opposing his apostolic authority, Paul begins his letter by giving his credentials – he is building the case for his pastoral authority – he was called by God. The Corinthian

church would have undoubtedly heard of his conversion story on the Damascus Road upon which he saw the Lord Jesus (which was a qualification for being one of the original 12 apostles). Those who oppose him do not have such credentials.

- The New Testament gives us a witness of ministers who have been tested, trained, and approved for ministry. Remember Paul's humility and submission to be taught, to be prayed for, after struck blind.
- Paul's example of humility is an indictment on those "leaders" who oppose him in 1 Corinthians, as well as the "super apostles" of 2 Corinthians.

Vs. 2 sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: ...7Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Sanctified, holy, together, strong to the end – Paul lays out themes of unity, holiness, faithfulness.

2. Corinthian factions and the folly of the cross (1:10-3:23)

1Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1Cor. 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? 1Cor. 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1Cor. 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the philosopher of this age?

- Again, Paul emphasizes Unity over and against devilish divisions in God's Church. Divisions display arrogance, excessive self-confidence, susceptibility to "Celebrity Worship" or "Cult of Personality." Remember, Corinthians are wrongly impressed by style instead of substance, charisma over character.

3. Paul: servant of the Messiah, father in the gospel (4:1-21)

1 Cor. 4:10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! **11** To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. **12** We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; **13** when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

1 Cor. 4:14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. **15** Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16** Therefore I urge you to imitate me. **17** For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you.

- Paul exposes that the Corinthians have things upside down. They look at everything from a worldly perspective and they are impressed by the wrong things. Paul's sufferings are actually part of his qualifications and authority. He is willing to suffer for Christ and the Church. If a pastor is not willing to do this, he is not qualified.
- Paul establishes his familial love – the kind of love good pastors SHOULD have.
- Paul is seeking Doctrinal Unity, Doctrinal Holiness, Doctrinal Faithfulness – he teaches the same thing “everywhere in every church.”

4. Sexual perversity has no place (5:1-13) CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1 Cor. 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. **2** And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? **3** Even though I am not

physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present.

1Cor. 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? **13** God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

- Again → the focus on Holiness and Faithfulness by highlighting that sexual immorality is the opposite.
- CHURCH DISCIPLINE → Paul has a word for the modern church!
- A church without discipline is not a true New Testament Christian Church.
- In our age of easy believe-ism, fast track membership, and lack of accountability – PAUL SAYS “NO!”
- People love to quote “Do not judge!”
- Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God – Paul tells the Local Church, that the Local Church must inspect its membership, require accountability, and if someone refuses to repent of gross sin – bring church discipline.
- It is not the job of Christians, nor the Church to inspect the lives of those who do not claim to be Christians. The world will be the world. Sinners will be sinners. However, if someone claims to be a Christian, then we must hold ourselves to a high standard, we receive correction and rebuke, we must allow our lives to be inspected.

5. Lawsuits among believers (6:1-11)

1Cor. 6:7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? **8** Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

1Cor. 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders **10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- Paul is fighting against the DISUNITY AND DIVISION which lawsuits among believers will bring in this local church.
- Paul puts unethical business practices on a list with what modern Christians might consider more “serious sins.”
- One of the reasons is that the wealthy often exploited the poor.

- Remember that GREED is deadly.
 - Paul is telling these wealthy Corinthians – “you cannot do better business with God than you are doing with your servants and the poor among you.” *Caring for the pastors and the poor in your local church are your top financial / material priorities! ALWAYS!! There is no basis anywhere in Scripture for giving beyond your local church until you have taken care of those two priorities.*
 - Paul is telling the lower class Corinthians – “work well, serve well, be above approach in all you do, do not be tempted by the love of money.”
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6. The body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:12-20)

1 Cor. 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” **17** But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. **1Cor. 6:18** Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. **19** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

- Again, Paul is fighting against Idolatry & Sexual Immorality, two of the sinful cultural characteristics of the Roman Empire.
 - He reminds the Corinthians that they are not united to Christ, united to one another.
 - Again, the themes of UNITY, HOLINESS, FIDELITY.
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7. Marriage, divorce, and singleness (7:1-40)

8. Food sacrificed to idols (8:1-13)

1Cor. 8:4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. **5** For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), **6** yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. **7** But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. **8** But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. **9** Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. **10** For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? **11** So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. **12** When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **13** Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

- Again → Paul is emphasizing UNITY, HOLINESS.
 - Paul is concerned that people are sensitive to the personal convictions of others in the local church – to not use Christian Freedom in a way which might cause others to stumble.
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9. *The Apostle Paul's rights and struggle (9:1-27)*

1Cor. 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? **2** Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. **3** This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

- Paul gives us his ministerial credentials once again.
- Read the rest of the passage to understand more fully how he is fighting for his position as a pastor, a spiritual father over this flock.

10. *Living as the people of the new exodus, avoiding idolatry (10:1-11:1) – READ THE EXTENDED PASSAGE*

1Cor. 10:1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. **2** They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. **3** They all ate the same spiritual food **4** and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

11. *Abuses in worship (11:2-34)*

1 Cor. 11:17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. **18** In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. **19** No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. **20** When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, **21** for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

- Again, Paul returns to the theme of UNITY.
 - Paul also pushes back against the CLASSISM common in the Roman Empire. Rich Corinthians were not waiting on the lower classes to have fellowship meals.
 - Regarding the Lord's Supper, the wealthy were not waiting on the poor, further they were treating the Lord's Supper the way pagan feasts were conducted in pagan temples. Paul is indicting the lack of holiness.
 - Those who had servants and slaves could come to the meeting early, while the servants and slaves had to hurriedly finish their work at the master's home, then rush to the meeting. The free (sometimes affluent) masters had already started the meeting, and often the fellowship meal / Communion.
 - Propriety in Worship is important to Paul.
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12. Gifts, Love, and Worship (12:1-14:40)

1Cor. 12:12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. **13** For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1Cor. 12:14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. **15** If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. **19** If they were all one part, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

1Cor. 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" **22** On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, **24** while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, **25** so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should

have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

1Cor. 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

- As he does throughout the book, Paul emphasizes UNITY, both to Christ and to one another.
 - Paul fights religious elitism which was prevalent in the pagan religions. IN the Body of Christ, every person is a part and has a role to play. Every person is to be treated with care, with respect, etc.
 - Further, Paul is battling those who claim to have more “desirable” gifts – ecstatic utterances, charisma and demonstrable displays, etc.
 - Paul is pushing back against what was common in idolatrous cults, pushing back against the elevation of gifts.
 - Paul is not downplaying gifts, but Paul is saying that FRUIT is more important. Fruit of the Spirit is actually what authenticates Christian character and legitimizes gifts.
 - Gifts can be faked at times.
 - Fruit cannot be faked for long – your character will eventually show!
 - Paul emphasizes that the gifts discussed [here](#) are “manifestations” of the “Spirit” – [sudden supernatural expressions of the Spirit’s power through whomever HE chooses to use to meet a need](#). They reside in the Holy Spirit, not in the believer or the church. **No particular gift – tongues, prophecy, etc. – should be expected to be manifested in every service. The Spirit distributes them “AS HE WILLS” – whenever, wherever, through whomever, according to God’s will.**
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13. The resurrection of the body (15:1-58)

1Cor. 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

1Cor. 15:12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified

about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. **16** For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. **17** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. **19** If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

- Paul is seeking for the Corinthians to have Doctrinal Unity and Doctrinal Faithfulness. He wants the church to hold fast to the faith he has passed onto them.
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14. Instructions about the Collection, final exhortations, and letter closing (16:1-24) – Read the section.

- Again, we see themes of UNITY, HOLINESS, FAITHFULNESS.
 - We see Paul pushing back against Sinful Cultural Characteristics of the Roman Empire.
 - Paul asserts his pastoral love and authority.
 - Paul grounds his relationship with this church in the grace of God.
 - NOTE that it is NOT in the tithe that we decide on our own how much we give. *It is in special offerings: giving beyond the tithe, especially beyond the local church.* In this case the offering Paul is receiving for the poor Christians in Jerusalem / Judea. They were being persecuted by unbelieving Jews.
 - Each believer, when giving beyond the tithe – and especially beyond the local church (because we are responsible to care for our pastors and for the poor in our church) – is to pray and decide what they will give.
 - (NOTE: Paul later wrote to Timothy that he was to “command” wealthy believers in a local church to give generously to the needs of their church.)
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In the outline of 2 Corinthians:

- Look for the main themes of UNITY, HOLINESS, FAITHFULNESS.
- Look for why, how, & when Paul pushes back against the Sinful Cultural Characteristics of the Roman Empire.
- Note that Paul is always very humble about himself and his ministry. Like Jesus, Paul hated all pride, arrogance, or boasting about ministry!
- Note that Paul wants to be gentle, but warns the church that as their pastor he has great authority to be very stern and bring discipline.
- Note the PASTORAL tone of the letter. Paul was the founding pastor of the Corinthian church. Hear his pastor's heart.
- Note that Paul said he wrote to test their loyalty to him as their pastor.
- Note that Paul's ministry team "acts in the same spirit and follows the same course" as Paul. (God requires UNITY in a local church and in a local church ministry team.)
- Note that in the matter of their giving, it IS a test of their love for God.
- Note that, instead of writing 2 Corinthians and returning there to see how the church was doing, Paul COULD have gone elsewhere to evangelize and preach the gospel where no one had ever heard.
- **Note that Paul prioritized discipleship – making certain that his converts were properly disciplined, properly taught, that their church was well established – OVER more evangelism / missionary opportunities! He did not consider his evangelism / missions work completed until his converts were properly disciplined and the church was strong. His pastor's heart won out over his evangelist's heart.**
- Make your own notes.

Outline of 2 Corinthians – p, 494

1. Letter opening (1:1-11)

2. Paul's defense of his ministry (1:12-2:13)

3. Paul and the ministry of the new covenant (2:14-4:6)

4. Paul's ministry as a paradox of power in weakness (4:7-6:10)

Note: Godly ministry may or may not be marked by great power or outward success. However, it will often be marked by weakness, and will always be marked by humility, sacrifice, faithfulness to God's Word, and sometimes suffering.

5. Paul seeks reciprocal affections and corporate holiness (6:11-7:16)

6. Paul's call to complete the Collection (8:1-9:15)

7. Paul versus the super-apostles (10:1-13:10)

Note: Godly ministry is marked by humility, sacrifice, unity, and sometimes suffering. Ungodly ministry is marked by pride, affluence, boasting, and sometimes great success. *Paul says NEVER evaluate a minister or ministry by their charisma, seeming success, size, money, or power.* ALWAYS evaluate them by their character, humility, and ability to correctly teach God's Word and correctly preach the gospel.

8. Letter closing (13:11-14)

HOW HAS STUDYING “CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE” CHANGED YOU PERSONALLY IN YOUR:

1. Understanding of the Importance of Scholarship

2. Historical Cultural Proficiency.

3. Bible Literacy.

4. In Application

5. In Worship

6. Thinking Theologically for the Sake of the Church

THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE

“Theology of the New Testament:

A Canonical and Synthetic Approach” – by Dr. Frank Thielman

Book Description:

- Dr. Thielman’s work is used by world-class seminaries.
- It is written at a higher level, meaning it is less for laity, and more for those training for high-level pulpit ministry or academics, etc.
- Dr. Thielman focuses more on the overall theology of the book.
- Note how each section of hi outline is structured around theological concerns at the micro level and the macro level.
 - o IOW – Thielman shows how Paul connects little issues to BIG ISSUES – Gospel issues!

Outline of 1 Corinthians → “A Plea for Peace, Holiness, and Fidelity”

Intro: Confusion at Corinth

1. PEACE WITHIN THE CHURCH

- a. *The Divisive Wisdom of the World and the Unifying Wisdom of God (1:10-4:21)***
 - i. Wisdom and Division at Corinth*
 - ii. Grace and Eschatology in Paul's Reply*
 - 1. The Gracious Nature of the Gospel**
 - 2. The "Day" as the Moment of Truth**
- b. *Destructive Knowledge and Edifying Love (8:1-11:1)***
- c. *Unity and Edification in Corporate Worship (11:2-14:40)***
 - i. Disunity over Head-coverings (11:2-16)*
 - ii. Socioeconomic Divisions at the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)*
 - iii. A Divisive Emphasis on Gift & Tongues (12:1-14:40)*
- d. *Paul's Admonitions to Unity in First Corinthians: The Common Ground.***

2. HOLINESS BEFORE THE WORLD

- a. *God's Eschatological Passover and the Leaven of Immorality (5:1-13)***
- b. *Civil Litigation and Christian Holiness (6:1-11)***
- c. *God's Eschatological Temple and the Problem of Prostitution (6:12-20)***
- d. *Idolatry and Immorality in Eschatological Israel (10:1-22)***
- e. *Salutary Holiness (7:12-16)***
- f. *The Critical Importance of Corinthian Sanctity***

3. FIDELITY TO THE GOSPEL

- a. *Body and Soul in Greco-Roman Anthropology***
- b. *The Corinthian Error and Paul's Response***

SUMMARY

Outline of 2 Corinthians → “Power Perfected in Weakness.”

Intro → Developments in Corinth

1. **COMFORT THROUGH DESPAIR (1:3-11)**
2. **LIFE THROUGH SORROW (1:12-2:13, 7:5-16)**
3. **LIFE THROUGH DEATH (2:13-7:4, 10:1-13:10)**
 - a. **Apostolic Weakness**
 - b. **Sincere Speech**
 - c. **Things Unseen**
 - i. *Letters Written by the Spirit and the Human Heart (3:1-18)*
 - ii. *Faith, not Sight (4:1-7:4)*
4. **POVERTY AS AN OCCASION FOR GOD’S GRACE**
 - a. *The Corinthians’ Failure in Generosity*
 - b. *The Central Role of Grace in Paul’s Appeal*
5. **HUMAN WEAKNESS AS THE CONTEXT OF GOD’S GRACE IN 2 CORINTHIANS**

SUMMARY