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**A1135 – August 28, 2011 – 1 Corinthians**  
**Corinthians In Paul's Writings**

Alright, we're going to move on today from 2 Thessalonians to 1 Corinthians. But before we do the last words of 2 Thessalonians communicate that it was at this time that Paul started penning the closing greeting of his letters with his own handwriting. Paul had gained notoriety and people were writing letters pseudonymously in his name. So from here forward he's saying, this is the way I write, so if you get any more letters in my name that aren't this writing then it's a false letter.

So with that said today we're going to move to the next letter in Paul's corpus of writing, 1 Corinthians. So as always, when we begin one of Paul's epistles we want to review the whole corpus of Paul's writings. I debated not doing this since it was not long ago that we covered this material but I made some changes and it gives me more time to do up front study and that pays dividends in the exposition of these book. And besides, it's just so helpful to see all of Paul's writings as a corpus and not just bury yourself in the details of the individual books. You need both, you need the big picture and you need the individual pieces. So today we'll be looking at the big picture and then we'll introduce the individual piece called 1 Corinthians.

If you look at the index in your Bible you have OT and NT. In the OT there are 39 books and in the NT there are 27 books. The total number of books is 66, these books and these only constitute the divine library, they are the only books God ever wrote as evidenced by the cohesiveness of this unit of books in one book, the Bible. He didn't write the Koran, He didn't write the Pearl of Great Price or the Book of Mormon, and Glenn Beck is not a Christian, he's a Mormon and he believes in the Mormon god, which is a very different god. He's actually a man who lives on the planet Kolob, he believes in the Mormon Jesus, who is a very different Jesus, he's the offspring of Elohim who had sex

with Mary and Jesus is the brother of Lucifer. So when Glenn Beck says God and Jesus and all the rest of it, understand it's loaded with all these Mormon idiosyncrasies and I think it's a tragedy that Christians like David Barton, who is a wonderful American Historian, are now calling Glenn Beck a Christian. Glenn Beck is a Mormon who believes Mormon doctrine and it's not even close to Christian doctrine because it's based on the Book of Mormon not on the word of God. We're studying the word of God not the word of Joseph Smith.

And down in the NT section you see the four Gospels listed; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first three are called the synoptics because they look at the events from the same perspective, they report historical facts, Jesus did this, Jesus did that. John is not part of the synoptics because John writes later and he's interpreting the historical facts, this is what it meant, this is the significance. Then you see Acts and Acts is the first church history book, it covers the transition period when God's kingdom offer for Israel was still on the table but gradually fading out and God's program for the Church had already begun but was only gradually realized. Then you see Romans. Romans is the first book in the list written by Paul. And Paul wrote everything from Romans straight down to Philemon, 13 books in a row and Paul wrote all of them. But Romans is not the first letter Paul wrote, the order here is not the order Paul wrote them. Does anyone remember why this is the order they were put in? Because Romans is the longest book and Philemon is the shortest book. So someone went in and ordered them from the longest to the shortest. So the longest book is Romans, then 1 Corinthians, then 2 Corinthians. Those three books alone cover more than half of Paul's writings; they are longer than all the other books combined. And we're going to study them boom, boom, boom, 1, 2, 3 in a row because they were all written boom, boom, boom, 1, 2, 3 in a row, all within about 1 year. So that said we're following the actual order Paul wrote, the actual order they were divinely inspired through the apostle Paul, the actual chronological order they come in the canon of Scripture and we are embarking on the monster portion of Paul's writings, 1 Cor, 2 Cor and Romans, more than 50% of Paul's writings are included in these three books.

Now we're studying Paul's corpus in a chronological order rather than just hopping around and I hope you learn to appreciate this approach. To remember the approach I use this chart. I'm indebted to a professor

at Dallas Theological Seminary for the basic ideas of this chart. What he pointed out was that if you look at Paul's writings in light of his four missionary journeys then you've got a memory device for these books. If you've seen this before bear with me, others haven't, and it will help Paul's writings come together for you as the years go by.

Paul the Learner	Paul the Evangelist					Paul the Trainer	
Paul spends nearly 3 years at Damascus and 10 years in obscurity in Syria and Cilicia before he is ready for mission work	1st Journey Acts 13-14:28	The Jerusalem Council (A.D. 50) Acts 15	2nd Journey Acts 15:36-18:22	3rd Journey Acts 18:23-19:14	4th Journey 1st Imprisonment (Caesarea & Rome) Acts 21:15-28:31	Freedom	2nd Imprisonment (Rome)
	Galatians (A.D. 49)		1 Thessalonians (A.D. 51)	1 Corinthians (A.D. 51)	Ephesians (A.D. 60)	1 Timothy (A.D. 62)	2 Timothy (A.D. 67)
			2 Thessalonians (A.D. 51)	2nd Corinthians (A.D. 55)	Colossians (A.D. 61)	Titus (A.D. 66)	
				Romans (A.D. 56, 57)	Philemon (A.D. 61)		
					Philippians (A.D. 62)		

Observe Paul's missionary journeys and start with Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Journey and stay with me. The 1<sup>st</sup> Journey is recorded in Acts 13-14. And how many letters did Paul write out of that Journey? One. What is it? Galatians. He actually wrote it between Acts 14 and 15, Paul got back to Antioch, some time passed and then the Galatian problem surfaced which prompted the letter. What year did he write it? AD49. Galatians was the first work of Paul that we studied. Then on the chart, the next box to the right is the Jerusalem Council, that occurred in Acts 15, it was AD50. After the Jerusalem Council you see Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey. And out of that journey how many epistles did Paul write? Two. 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, both in the year AD51. The verse frame for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey is Acts 15:36-18:22. Next we have Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Journey. How many letters did he write? Three. Do you see the pattern? 1<sup>st</sup> Journey, one letter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey, two letters, 3<sup>rd</sup> Journey, three letters. To be thorough, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Journey Paul writes 1 Corinthians, 2

Corinthians and Romans. Then we come to the 4<sup>th</sup> Journey, or what they call the 1<sup>st</sup> Imprisonment, which was actually a missionary journey too since Paul evangelized the whole Praetorian Guard in Rome. And during that 4<sup>th</sup> Journey he writes, you guessed it, four epistles, so that keeps with the pattern. He writes Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians, the prison epistles. Then the last three epistles break the pattern; they come after the Book of Acts was published, and they are 1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy. So you'll have to remember those on your own but they're the pastorals. In all Paul wrote 13 epistles, about half of the NT.

We've already taught Paul's earliest epistle, Galatians, people will debate this order so the order I'm teaching them is the order I've decided through personal study; Galatians first, 1 Thessalonians second, 2 Thessalonians third and 1 Corinthians, fourth. Actually there's very little debate on when 1 Corinthians was written, almost everybody puts it between the years AD54-56. So we're going 1, 2, 3, 4 and there is a strategy here. I devised this strategy by looking at the Book of Acts and how it charts early church history. The Book of Acts charts the movement of the witness in three stages; stage one Jerusalem, stage two Judea and Samaria and stage three the remotest parts of the earth. As the gospel went out in stage three to the remotest parts of the earth Paul and his missionary journey's become central. And this is when all of Paul's writings were written, during and after his missionary journeys. So Acts gives a historical platform for understanding Paul's writings to the churches he planted on his missionary journeys.

So the first thing we did, a few years ago now, was study verse by verse analysis of the Book of Acts. And the Book of Acts argues that the Messiah had come to His own, His own received Him not, they crucified Him, God raised Him from the dead, He ascended, passing through the heavens and is now seated in session at the right hand of the Father. From there the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. So Christ left in one sense but He didn't leave in another sense. He is still here with us in that He poured forth the Spirit to continue His work which was to form a new body called the Church. It began in Jerusalem, Acts 2, it continued in Judea and Samaria, Acts 8 and eventually grew into the remotest parts of the earth, Acts 10ff. The Book of Acts charts the progress of the gospel beginning with Jews, then adding Samaritans and finally Gentiles. Each of these people groups, that had tremendous barriers between them, were all Spirit baptized

into new body called the Church, and they were all Spirit baptized the exact same way, by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. So Acts is reporting how this took place and the signs and miracles God the Holy Spirit did to authenticate that this indeed was a new work of God in the transition from God's dealing with nation Israel to God's dealing with the Church, from the OT Kingdom offer to the NT Church. There are differences here that should not be overlooked.

The second part of this strategy is to understand that most of the NT epistles were written during this period. Now this makes sense because if a new body had been formed then new revelation would be given to govern this new body. So the NT epistles are the new instruction and it is gradually being written. Paul says in 1 Cor 13, for we know in part and we prophecy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." And his point is that little by little the new revelation was being given but that it will be completed and when it's completed certain spiritual gifts will pass off the stage, the reason being, they're purpose is accomplished. The new revelation given to govern the new body, the church, will have been completed and then "we will see face to face...then we will know fully just as we also have been known." So certain spiritual gifts will cease but faith, hope and love will abide, they never cease. So the NT epistles are an unfolding of God's will for the church.

And as far as Paul's corpus is concerned we're just following the order the Holy Spirit revealed these books. We might take that as a hint that He has a curriculum, that there's a pedagogy involved here. And if that's so then you have to go through lesson 1, then lesson 2, then lesson 3 and so forth. You don't do lesson 54 before you do lesson 4 because there's an order to the curriculum and if you miss lesson 5 you miss lesson 6, 7, 8 and so forth. So we've been following his order.

And finally, the third aspect of this strategy is to recognize God's plan for Paul's life. Paul likened God's plan for his life to a course he was running. . And it's a natural course. On the top of your chart I've got three phases of Paul's ministry. Notice on the far upper left corner, "Paul the Learner." This starts with Paul's conversion in Acts 9 on the Damascus Road. If you look at the box beneath it, "Paul spends nearly 3 years at Damascus and 10 years in obscurity in Syria and Cilicia before he is ready for mission work." I impress that intense training upon you because those 13 years of intense training

were after he had virtually memorized the entire OT word for word. Some people today think you're born again on Monday and you go to the mission field on Tuesday. Not so, there are years and years of training involved. Training is not a hardship; training is a means to tremendous effectiveness. And I think we can safely say that apostle Paul proves this. And we'll review again today how it was the apostle Paul took the gospel west into Europe. It wasn't Peter who did it, it wasn't Thomas. They did other things, Peter went to Mesopotamia and Thomas went to India. But Paul went West to Europe and that's our heritage. So first, Paul was a learner, you have to get well-grounded in the truth before you head out on the mission field. Second box in the center, "Paul the Evangelist." Paul started off heavily with evangelism, he was vocal, he was interactive, he was in the synagogue, he was in the streets, so early on he's very public in his ministry and very evangelistic. That's for most of his journeys. But toward the end Paul, realized his time on earth was coming to a close, began to shift from evangelism to training. Third box, "Paul the Trainer." He began to lecture for hours and hours in the halls of the ancient world, he began to isolate himself and spend time with his best students, men who were elders, and pour into them his knowledge through teaching so they could carry on the ministry when he was gone. So he begins to teach more, he begins to write more, he can't do much, he's in prison, so he writes a series of letters. And what he's doing is getting as much written down so that he can leave it in the hands of the people so they can go back over it and over it and get more and more men established in the faith so they can lead the church.

Having looked at the strategy let's do a survey of Paul's epistles. Galatians, how is a sinner justified before God and how does a justified sinner then grow spiritually, get sanctified? That's fundamental, if you don't have that what do you have? Paul's answer is that a sinner is justified by grace through faith and a justified sinner is sanctified by grace through faith. You're not saved by grace and then sanctified by works. No, it's the same mechanics, both justification and sanctification proceed on the basis of grace and through the means of faith, trusting the Lord's word. Then you have 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, they are both about the Rapture and how the Rapture should effect our practical day to day living, we should be living as if He is arriving today, making sure we have broken with paganism, making sure we are gathering with one another, making sure we are loving one another, His any-moment return should purify us. Do you really love the Lord's

appearing? Does it mean anything to you that Christ might come back today? Or is this just a part of your creed? Then you have 1 and 2 Corinthians, they're both dealing with problems of living in a very worldly society, they are struggling with the surrounding culture, they are struggling to break old sin patterns, they are struggling with solving disputes among themselves, they are struggling with arrogance, they are struggling with fads, they are struggling with popularity, all these struggles are coming into that church and it's manifesting itself in their priority of spiritual gifts, they're exalting the flashy gifts like tongues, which, by the way Paul says is the lowest gift on the totem pole, necessary yes, but at the bottom so far as importance is concerned. Then you have Romans and Romans is the church's first systematic theology, the Bible is not written systematically, that is, it doesn't lump all the teachings about the Holy Spirit in one book and then all the teachings about the Father in one book and all the teachings about Salvation in one book; the teachings are scattered throughout, so a systematic theology is going through all the books and pulling out what is said about each of these topics and putting it all together. Romans does that, Paul puts together the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of sanctification, the doctrine of Israel and then says, now what difference should it make in your life. It's the church's first systematic theology.

Then we come to Ephesians and Ephesians addresses mainly Gentile believers who did not have a good handle on the plan of God for history or where they were in history, how the church differs from Israel so far as the purpose of the church, which is to wage a war in the heavenlies, not on earth as Israel waged. We have entered a new conflict and in this conflict there are Jews and Gentiles and we all need one another because the Holy Spirit has gifted each of us differently and we all need one another to engage in this spiritual conflict that is waging in the heavenlies. Philippians deals with like-mindedness. Believers should share the same mindset. This mindset must center on Jesus Christ who showed us how to live the Christian life. He showed us that dependence upon the Holy Spirit is the only means of victory. So if He humbled Himself before God, taking to Himself true humanity and putting aside the independent use of His divine attributes and depending on the Holy Spirit to successfully face temptation, then how much more should we follow Him and humble ourselves before God and depend upon the Holy Spirit when we face temptations. Then we have Colossians and it's about the pre-eminence of Christ, how Christ in hypostatic union as the God-man is the

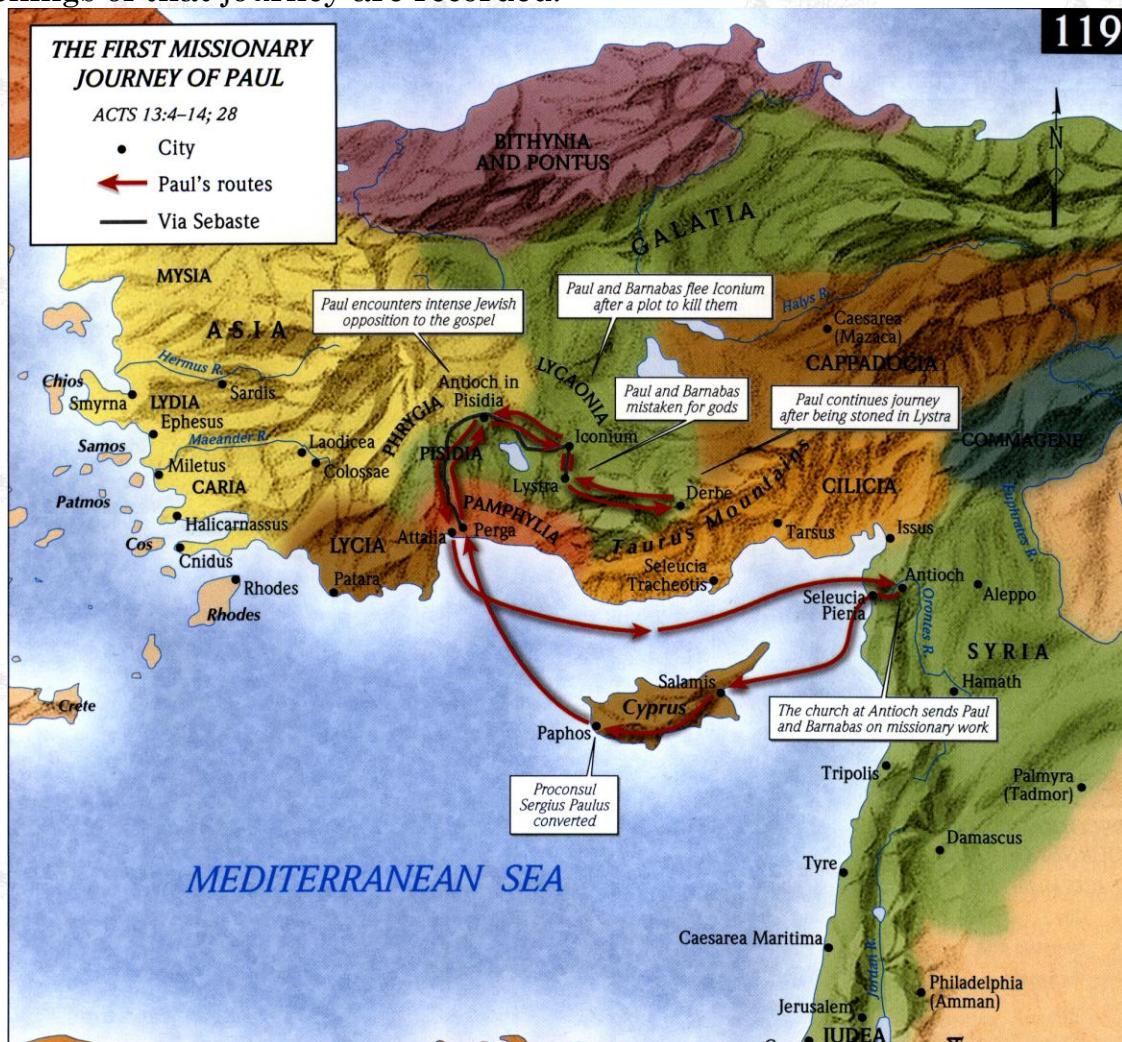
central category for rational thinking, not Greek Aristotelian thought and the law of non-contradiction, but Christ in hypostasis, it is a terrible thing for a Christian to be taken captive by the philosophy of this world because Satan's strategy is to get us to start somewhere other than Christ in our thinking so that he can disarm us in the conflict. But every thought is to be taken captive to Christ, He is the starting point for all proper thinking, whether it's math, science, language, music, art, in Christ are hidden all the riches of wisdom and knowledge, not in the world. Philemon gives us a street look at the doctrine of justification by faith through the illustration of a slave being set free.

Then we come to the last three books, called the Pastorals, which means they are all about shepherding. They are very important because they were written near the end of the transitional period, near AD70, the apostles are dying off and so we have emphasis placed on eldership and deacons since they will shepherd the church of God. The apostles were passing away from the scene. The church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus the cornerstone. But as the foundation is completed the elders take over in the building phase of the church. So the pastorals deal with the various groups in the church, men, women, elders, deacons and how each group should function for a healthy church. 1 Timothy deals with order in the church, the role of men in the assembly, the role of women in the assembly, the role of the elder and the deacon, what is of primary importance, which is the preaching of the word of God and the dangers that the church will face, the incessant false doctrine that ravages the sheep. This requires mature leadership that knows what is going on in the culture outside the church and inside the church so that you can guard the sheep people against false doctrine. It also shows how to deal with various groups in the church that are upsetting people. Titus gives you the qualifications of elders and again, how to spot false teachers. It is very intensely concerned with the dangers of false teaching both from the world outside the church, the wolves that are satanically inspired to come into the church and destroy, as well as from within, people inside the church that unwittingly destroy. Finally 2 Timothy gives a challenge to endure, in it Paul predicts the church will go apostate, that things will go from bad to worse, and so the sheep will be tempted to go after every new wind of doctrine. Therefore Paul encourages pastors to endure with sound teaching to their flocks trying to protect them from the apostasy that will grow worse and worse.



Alright, now that we've given a survey of Paul's corpus of writings let's narrow in on the piece called 1 Corinthians. And I think the easiest way to work our way into this letter is to tie it in to Paul's missionary journeys and in particular Thessalonica since both epistles to the Thessalonians were written while Paul was in Corinth.

So if you look again at your chart, Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Journey, that journey began in Antioch of Syria, over here, Antioch was the missionary base, Paul and Barnabas went out and traveled into South Galatia and in Acts 13-14 the happenings of that journey are recorded.



Then they returned to Antioch and gave a full report to the church there. And this report contained information that bothered a lot of Jews, it bothered unbelieving Jews and it bothered believing Jews. The thing that bothered them was that Paul had allowed Gentiles to be saved apart from circumcision, and Paul did not instruct these saved Gentiles to follow the

Law of Moses. The difficulty they were dealing with was they didn't know what dispensation they were in. Now that the Messiah had come and had offered the kingdom, an offer which was rejected by the nation Israel, and subsequently they crucified Him, now what dispensation were they in? Were they still in the OT dispensation of the Law? And therefore under the Law of Moses? Or were they in a new dispensation with a new law, the law of Christ. Because if a new dispensation has come then new revelation will come. So where were they? This resulted in the first Church Council in Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem. So Paul trotted down to Jerusalem and this dispute was solved. And they solved it on the basis of Scripture. James cited an OT text from Amos 9 that proved that Gentiles from every nation had to be saved prior to the kingdom's arrival and that had never occurred so evidently that was occurring through the ministries of Peter and Paul. So this satisfied everyone and it was concluded that Gentiles were saved by grace through faith in the same way as Jews and it was not necessary to circumcise them, circumcision was nothing, and it was not necessary to put upon them the yoke of the Law of Moses.

Then on the chart we have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey. And once again Paul goes out from Antioch, this time with Silas, (Paul and Barnabas split at this time, so you really have a couple of missionary journey's going on). Luke only records Paul's because Luke is interested in tracing the journey of the witness from Jerusalem to Rome and it's Paul that ends up in Rome.



So Paul sets out with Silas and they return to Galatia where Paul had been before, and they gave them some more training and picked up a young disciple named Timothy and the three set out toward Asia, they wanted to go to Ephesus but they get blocked by the Holy Spirit and so they turned north and Paul gets a vision up in Troas of a man in Macedonia. And the man is saying, "Come over here and help us," and so Paul, Silas and Timothy take this as a command to go to Europe. They are going to invade Europe with the gospel and this is going to stir things up in Europe because Europe is a very different place, Europe is much more pagan than Asia and there are not nearly as many Jewish communities in the big cities of Europe as there were in Asia and therefore there is much less biblical influence. So Paul is in for some very interesting and trying times. Paul is going to have to confront paganism on its own turf. And so he goes to Philippi and there's no synagogue there. He meets a small group of Jews down at the riverside, eventually the pagans there imprison him and Silas and you have the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his family. Then Paul gets out because the pagans imprisoned him illegally, paganism always oversteps its bounds, and so Paul heads through Apollonia and Amphipolis, following the major highway and ends up at Thessalonica. Now here there was a synagogue of the Jews and so, as always, Paul enters; he reasons with the Jews from the OT Scriptures showing that Jesus was the Christ, that the OT predicted that the Messiah had to suffer and die and rise again and that this indeed is what Jesus did

and therefore Jesus is the Christ. And he got a tremendous response among the Gentiles, but also a number of the leading women and some Jews. But the dominant response is Gentile and the majority of Jews responded defiantly and they started a big riot and blamed it on Paul and Silas and so the city authorities headed down to Jason's house where they were staying and they couldn't find them so they just took Jason and some of the other believers and blamed the whole riot on Jason and accused them of treason against Caesar, which was a capital offense. And this story ends with Jason and the others paying a sum of money to the authorities so they could get off the hook. But consequently Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica with no right of return. This is what Paul claimed in 1 Thessalonians was a satanic hindrance. So Paul and Silas are out, Timothy still has access, but they all end up meeting down at Berea and at Berea you have the finest response anywhere to Bible teaching, they were more noble-minded than those believers in Thessalonica and therefore Paul never had to write them a letter, we have no epistle to the Bereans because there was nothing to write, these believers just got with the word and stuck with it. But Paul's visit there didn't last long because the Jews came down from Thessalonica and started stirring up the crowds there too. So they took Paul, leaving Silas and Timothy, over to the coast like he was going to set sail, but he didn't set sail, it was a decoy to lead them to think Paul was going one way when he was going another. So he went up to the sea but he travelled by land down to Athens being escorted by believers from Berea and he sent back a report with them that Silas and Timothy should come to him as soon as possible. And while Paul was waiting for them he did a little ministry in Athens. And this is when he ends up going head to head with the pagan philosophers up on Mars Hill and it's where Paul destroys paganism, that speech at Mars Hill before the Greeks is a total annihilation of Greek philosophy. He rips it to shreds. And while he was there apparently Silas and Timothy joined him and they sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how they were doing and Paul sent Silas to Philippi to see how they were doing. The plan was they would all meet back up in Corinth.

That brings us to Acts 18, still on the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth." So he's there alone, Timothy and Silas are out on their individual missions and they'll meet back up with Paul in Corinth in verse 5, but while they're gone Paul is going to get the lay of the

land in Corinth. So let's get the lay of the land as Paul did and we'll work our way into Paul's ministry at Corinth this week and the next.



Why did Paul go to Corinth? First, location. They say in real estate, location, location, location. Well, Athens was located here on the Greek peninsula and it connected to the Peloponnesian peninsula by way of this very famous isthmus. So what I'm going to do now is zoom in on this isthmus. Corinth is west of this isthmus and because it sat by this isthmus it was a major city of commerce. So major was it that the ancient historian Strabo wrote, "Corinth is called "wealthy" because of it's commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbors, of which the one leads straight to Asia, and the other to Italy; and it makes easy exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other..."<sup>1</sup> So it was located where East met West and therefore the commercial epicenter of the Roman Empire. The ships, rather than sailing 200 miles around the dangerous cape of Malea, would dock, unload their cargo and haul it across a specially constructed road called the *diolkos*, the "haul across," a road about 3 ½ miles long, a road Paul would have crossed to get from Athens to Corinth. And so it's that isthmus that brought great wealth to Corinth because Corinth is right smack dab in the middle making it a prime location for Paul to take the gospel. Today that road has been replaced with a canal but you can see the archaeological remains of the road running alongside the canal.

Second, it also had a high population, about 300,000 citizens and 460,000 slaves, many of whom served in the Roman navy. It was no small city. It was in fact the capital city of the province of Achaia. So it's the center of government in this region and there was a lot of activity. Paul is going to stand before the *bema* with the Politarch Gallio adjudicating at the *bema* in Acts 18, which we'll see next week. So it was a major population center and Paul wanted to reach as many people as he could with the gospel.

Third, Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, it's where East met West and therefore you had a melting pot of cultures in Corinth; Italian met Spanish, Spanish met Egyptian, Egyptian met Asian and so forth. Corinth was where these cultures met and so it was a city where the great ideas were always moving in and out. Paul carried the greatest ideas, the ideas that toppled Athens just weeks before so if you want to put your ideas up against the world's ideas Corinth was the place to do it.

Fourth, Corinth also housed a Jewish synagogue and Paul preferred to enter a city with a synagogue. Paul believed that the Jewish people had first rights to the gospel that they might respond and be a light to the Gentiles. So in Acts 18 he's going to go into the synagogue and reason with the Jews laying Jesus next to the OT Messianic prophecies. So the fact there's a Jewish synagogue attracted the apostle Paul to take the gospel there.

Fifth, Corinth was home to the Isthmian games, just over here near the east end of the haul across road was the temple of Poseidon, the god of the sea, the games were held in honor of Poseidon.<sup>ii</sup> The Greeks computed time based on the Olympiad, a period of four years reckoned from one celebration of the Olympic Games to the next. The Isthmian games were held in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years between the Olympic Games. And they drew great crowds to Corinth. AD51, the year when Paul travelled to Corinth, the Isthmian games were being held. And from Paul's writings we can tell that Paul attended the games and had intimate knowledge of how they were refereed. Paul would have come into contact with people from all over the Mediterranean world which was a great opportunity for the gospel witness.

A sixth thing about Corinth that I want to highlight, not that attracted Paul so much, but a major attraction nonetheless, was it housed the temple of

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and sex. Known to the Romans as Venus, and after which the planet is named, because of its beauty, Corinth was the home of Aphrodite and consequently the sex capital of the ancient world. The little temple was situated up on top of the Acrocorinth, the highest elevation, 1,886 feet above sea level and Strabo says of it, "...the Temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owns more than 1000 temple slaves, courtesans, who both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. And therefore it was also on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich; for instance, the ship captains freely squandered their money, and hence the proverb, "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth." A lot of sea farers went broke at Corinth because of these religious prostitutes. It was so bad there came to be a saying in the ancient world. Instead of using the common verb "to fornicate," one would simply be said "to Corinthianize." And if you were a "Corinthian Girl" you were a prostitute.

So Paul at Corinth enters the sex capital of the ancient world. And to a city of almost 750,000 people from Italy, Egypt and Asia—indeed, all of the Mediterranean world; merchants and sailors, anxious to work the docks, professional gamblers and athletes, betting on the Isthmian games, slaves, sometimes freed but with no place to go, roaming the streets day and night, and prostitutes (both male and female) commonplace, Paul would preach the gospel. These are the people who would eventually make up the Corinthian church. This is the church that will struggle to resist the immorality of the world system. A church not very unlike the church in the West today. A church that Paul will reprove, rebuke and exhort in this very timely epistle.

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<sup>i</sup> Strabo Geog. 8.6.20

<sup>ii</sup> Known to the Romans as Neptune.

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