

**Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (now lost) (c. 52 or 53)**

1 Corinthians 5:9–11

9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

10 In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world.

11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person.

**Paul's Third Missionary Journey—Timothy and Erastus Sent to Macedonia (early 54)**

Acts 19:21–22

1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:8–9

21 Now after all these things had taken place, Paul resolved to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. He said, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22 So after sending two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia,

he himself stayed on for a while in the province of Asia.

4:17 For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my dear and faithful son in the Lord. He will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

16:8 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a door of great opportunity stands wide open for me, but there are many opponents.

**Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians – Part 1 (early 54)**

1 Corinthians 1–4

**Address and Greeting**

1:1 From Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother,

2 to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints, with all those in every place 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!

**Thanksgiving for Corinth's Spiritual Gifts**

4 I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus.

5 For you were made rich in every way in him, in all your speech and in every kind of knowledge—

6 just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed among you—

7 so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Reaction to Chloe's Report of Factions in the Church**

10 I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose.

11 For members of Chloe's household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you.

12 Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," or "I am with Cephas," or "I am with Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Paul wasn't crucified for you, was he? Or were you in fact baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name!

16 (I also baptized the household of Stephanus. Otherwise, I do not remember whether I baptized anyone else.)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—and not with clever speech, so that the cross of Christ would not become useless.

**The Foolish Wisdom of the Cross**

18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent.*" [Isa 29:14]

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the Mosaic law? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish?

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the

foolishness of preaching.

22 For Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks ask for wisdom,

23 but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

#### **God's Choice of the Foolish**

26 Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position.

27 But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong.

28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something,

29 so that no one can boast in his presence.

30 He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

31 so that, as it is written, *"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."* [[Jer 9:24](#)]

#### **Paul's First Visit to Corinth**

2:1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with superior eloquence or wisdom as I proclaimed the testimony of God.

2 For I decided to be concerned about nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and with much trembling.

4 My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God.

#### **The Spirit's Revelation of God's Wisdom**

6 Now we do speak wisdom among the mature, but not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are perishing.

7 Instead we speak the wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery, that God determined before the ages for our glory.

8 None of the rulers of this age understood it. If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But just as it is written, *"Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him."* [[Isa 64:4](#)]

10 God has revealed these to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

11 For who among men knows the things of a man except the man's spirit within him? So too, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things that are freely given to us by God.

13 And we speak about these things, not with words taught us by human wisdom, but with those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.

14 The unbeliever does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 The one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is understood by no one.

16 *For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to advise him?* [[Isa 40:13](#)] But we have the mind of Christ.

#### **A Correct Understanding of Christian Service**

3:1 So, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but instead as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

2 I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready. In fact, you are still not ready,

3 for you are still influenced by the flesh. For since there is still jealousy and dissension among you, are you not influenced by the flesh and behaving like unregenerate people?

4 For whenever someone says, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," are you not merely human?

5 What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in the ministry the Lord gave us.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow.

7 So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth.

8 The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work.

9 We are coworkers belonging to God. You are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master-builder I laid a foundation, but someone else builds on it. And each one must be careful how he builds.

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than what is being laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- 12 If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw,  
 13 each builder's work will be plainly seen, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will test what kind of work each has done.  
 14 If what someone has built survives, he will receive a reward.  
 15 If someone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as through fire.  
 16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?  
 17 If someone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, which is what you are.

#### **How to Regard Self and Others**

- 18 Guard against self-deception, each of you. If someone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish so that he can become wise.  
 19 For the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God. As it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness." [[Job 5:13](#)]  
 20 And again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." [[Ps 94:11](#)]  
 21 So then, no more boasting about mere mortals! For everything belongs to you,  
 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future. Everything belongs to you,  
 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.  
 4:1 One should think about us this way—as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.  
 2 Now what is sought in stewards is that one be found faithful.  
 3 So for me, it is a minor matter that I am judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.  
 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not acquitted because of this. The one who judges me is the Lord.  
 5 So then, do not judge anything before the time. Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the motives of hearts. Then each will receive recognition from God.

#### **Apostles as Models of the Wisdom of the Cross**

- 6 I have applied these things to myself and Apollos because of you, brothers and sisters, so that through us you may learn "not to go beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of the one against the other.  
 7 For who concedes you any superiority? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not?  
 8 Already you are satisfied! Already you are rich! You have become kings without us! I wish you had become kings so that we could reign with you!  
 9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to die, because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people.  
 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, we are dishonored!  
 11 To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, brutally treated, and without a roof over our heads.  
 12 We do hard work, toiling with our own hands. When we are verbally abused, we respond with a blessing, when persecuted, we endure,  
 13 when people lie about us, we answer in a friendly manner. We are the world's dirt and scum, even now.

#### **Appeal to Imitate Their Father Paul**

- 14 I am not writing these things to shame you, but to correct you as my dear children.  
 15 For though you may have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, because I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.  
 16 I encourage you, then, be imitators of me.  
 17 For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my dear and faithful son in the Lord. He will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.  
 18 Some have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you.  
 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord is willing, and I will find out not only the talk of these arrogant people, but also their power.  
 20 For the kingdom of God is demonstrated not in idle talk but with power.  
 21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

## Chronological Notes

### 1) Date.<sup>1</sup>

- A) According to 1 Corinthians 16:8, Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians (called 1 Corinthians or Corinthians B) during his third missionary journey when he was well into his 2½ year stay in Ephesus (Summer 52 to Summer 54). The fact that he wanted to stay in Ephesus “until Pentecost” indicates that he was writing early in the year, and so a date in early AD 54 is most likely.

### 2) Paul and the Corinthians.<sup>2</sup>

- A) Paul’s history with the Corinthians is complex, but it’s possible to reconstruct the course of the apostle’s dealings with this difficult congregation from the available evidence in Acts and 1 & 2 Corinthians with reasonable certainty. As the following list shows, Paul made at least three visits to Corinth and wrote at least four letters, only two of which have been preserved in the Christian canon. The sequence of these visits and letters is as follows:

- (1) First visit—Paul started the church in Corinth in late 49–Summer 51 (Acts 18:1–11).
- (2) Paul wrote the “previous letter” in c. 52 or 53 (1 Cor 5:9–11; “Corinthians A”).
- (3) Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in early 54 (1 Cor 16:8; “Corinthians B”).
- (4) Second visit—the “painful visit” c. Summer 54 (2 Cor 2:1; see 12:14; 13:1–2).
- (5) Paul wrote the “severe letter” c. Summer 54 (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8; “Corinthians C”).
- (6) Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in Fall 54 (2 Cor 7:5; 8:1; 9:2; “Corinthians D”).
- (7) Third visit in the Winter 54/55 (Acts 20:2).

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (B&H Academic, 2009): 469–70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 469.