

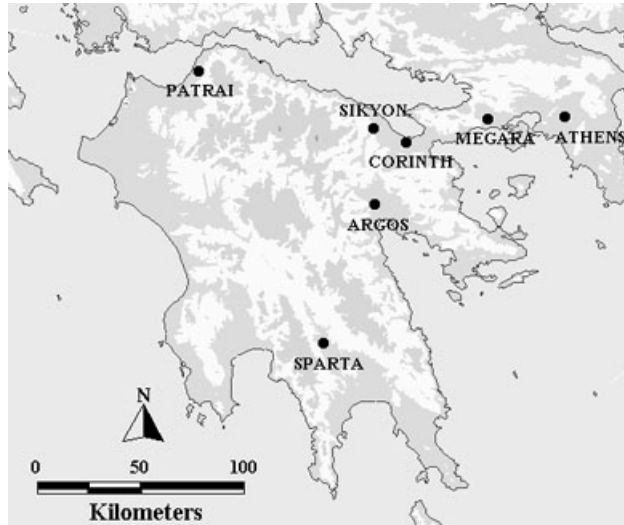
# Epistle to the Romans

## Walking Out the Word

### I. Introduction to the Letters to the Corinthians

#### A. The City of Corinth:

1. The Geography of Corinth: Corinth was strategically located 48 miles from Athens on a narrow strip of land called the Isthmus of Corinth. The Isthmus connected Athens in mainland Greece to Sparta in Southern Greece. The Isthmus of Corinth was only four miles wide. Ancient travelers would choose to use this overland route called the *Diolkos* (Greek for “haul across”) to literally drag smaller ships out of the Saronic Gulf, put the ship on wheels and drag them across to the Gulf of Corinth to re-launch the vessel. This was much safer, easier, and faster than sailing the two hundred mile perilous journey around southern Greece and the Cape of Malea.
2. The History of Corinth: From Ancient times, Corinth became a leading center of Commerce because of its geography. Called the *The Bridge of Greece*, travelers crossed through Corinth in order to travel between Northern Greece and Southern area called Peloponnesia. The Isthmian Games began in 582 BC, commemorating the sea god of Poseidon. In 550 BC, in the height of the city’s wealth, the temple to Apollo was constructed. Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC but rebuilt around 46 BC by Julius Caesar.
3. The City of Corinth: By the time Paul came to Corinth around 50 AD, Corinth had grown again to at least 800,000 inhabitants. It was the capital of Greece during the Roman time period. The mixed population was made up of a number of groups of people looking for opportunity. Retired Roman soldiers, granted citizenship by Julius Caesar, settled near Corinth. Merchants of all kinds gathered in this cosmopolitan city. Many Jews following financial opportunities settled in Corinth along with Phoenicians and Phrygians. Opulence was the seal of Corinth. Because the storms of the Aegean Sea were hazardous and recurrent, sailors came into one of the harbors to transport their wares. Exorbitant prices were charged to transfer cargo on the backs of the 400,000 slaves located in Corinth.
4. The Reputation of Corinth: “To live as a Corinthian” was synonymous with wickedness and meant to live with drunken and depraved decadence. The Greek verb *korinthiazomai* literally means, “to fornicate” or “prostitution.” Immorality, filth, and debauchery was centered on 26 pagan shrines and temples. The temple of Aphrodite (goddess of “love”) was located on the hill of the Acropolis. In the evenings, one thousand temple prostitutes who served as priestesses to Aphrodite, would descend into the city of Corinth to conduct their vile “sexual worship” practices.



#### B. Paul’s Relationship with the Church of Corinth

Paul first visited Corinth on his second missionary journey around 50-51 AD. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla and lived with them in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:1-18). Together they supported themselves as tentmakers. Paul first preached the gospel with some success in the synagogue where the ruler of the synagogue was converted. The Jews eventually silenced Paul by forcing him in front of the Roman governor Gallio who diplomatically threw his case out of court. Paul

continued his missionary assignment in Syria. Paul stayed in Corinth longer than any other city besides Ephesus.

**C. Background and Dates:** The following is a synopsis of the communications between Paul and the Corinthians as summarized in *The New Spirit Filled Life Bible*<sup>1</sup>:

1. The *founding visit* to Corinth (see Acts 18).
2. Paul wrote an *earlier letter* than 1 Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9).
3. Paul wrote *1 Corinthians* from Ephesus, about A.D. 55.
4. A brief but *painful visit* to Corinth caused “sorrow” for Paul and the church (see 2 Corinthians 2:1; 13:2).
5. Following the painful visit, Paul wrote a *severe letter*, delivered by Titus (see 2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:6-8).
6. Paul wrote *2 Corinthians* from Macedonia, while on his way to Corinth again, in A.D. 55 or 56.
7. Paul’s *final visit* to Corinth (Acts 20) was probably when he wrote Romans, just before returning to Jerusalem. The *painful visit*, which Acts does not record, and the *severe letter* provide immediate background for the writing of 2 Corinthians.

We do not possess the *severe letter*, although some scholars have suggested that 2 Corinthians 10-13 may have been part of that epistle. There is no manuscript evidence to support this view, however.

**D. Unique Features:**

1. The First Letter to the Corinthians is a straightforward letter in which Paul discusses a number of practical issues. Those coming out of the Corinthian culture were finding it difficult to know how to live as a Christian. He addresses divisiveness in the church, immaturity, church discipline, moral differences, and the appropriate use of Spiritual gifts.
2. The Second Letter to the Corinthians is Paul’s most agonizingly personal letter. He exposes his indignation and his anguish, his affection and his principles. Paul is clear about his God-given objective and calling as an apostle who is both tender and tenacious. Paul uses the first seven chapters to defend his behavior and his ministry. In chapters 8 and 9 of Second Corinthians, Paul urges the believers to be cheerful givers in an offering raised for the poor in Judea. Finally, Paul reprimands and reproves the critics in the church and responds to his opponents and asserts his apostolic authority over the Corinthian church.

## II. Outline of 1 Corinthians

### A. Introduction (1)

1. An Apostolic Greeting (1:1-3)
2. Giving Thanks (1:4-9)

### B. Paul’s reply to News of the Conditions in the Corinthian Church (1-6)

1. Factions and quarreling in the church (1:10-39)
2. Comparison of carnal, soulless & spiritual Christians (2:1-3:4)
3. Paul showed that the Lord Jesus is the foundation of the Church (3:5-23)
4. Faithfulness is necessary for God’s stewards (4:1-13)
5. Paul promised to deal severely with them in person (4:14-21)
6. Paul ordered them to deal with immorality (5:1-13)
7. Prohibition against going to secular courts (6:1-11)
8. They are believers bought with a price (6:12-20)

### C. Paul’s reply to the Corinthians Letter of Concern

1. Marriage and divorce (1 Cor. 7)
2. Eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8)
3. Praise for obeying ordinances (1 Cor. 11)
4. Rebuke for abusing the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11)

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Hayford, Executive Editor, *The New Spirit Filled Life Bible*, 2002, page 1608.

5. Spiritual Gifts (I Cor 12)
6. Gifts exercised with love (I Cor. 13)
7. Regulations (I Cor. 14)
8. Resurrection (I Cor. 15)
9. Instruction for collection (I Cor. 16)

### **III. Outline of 2 Corinthians**

#### **A. Greeting (1:1, 2)**

#### **B. Explanation of Paul's Ministry (1:3-7:16)**

1. Comfort in Suffering (1:3-11)
2. Paul defends his change in plans (1:12-2:4)
3. Paul is ready to forgive and comfort the offender (2:5-11)
4. Distraction in Troas (2:12-13 – continued in 7:5-16)
5. Nature of Christian Ministry
  - a. Triumph in Christ (2:14-17)
  - b. Credentials from God (3:1-6)
  - c. Problems (4:1-15)
  - d. Encouragement (4:16-5:10)
  - e. Motives (5:11-15)
  - f. Message (5:16-21)
  - g. Responsibilities (6:1-10)
  - h. Call to holiness (6:11-7:4)
6. Rejoicing in the report from Corinth

#### **C. Grace of Giving (8:1-9:15)**

1. Macedonians Example (8:1-7)
2. Christ's Example (8:9)
3. Principle of Equality (8:13-15)
4. Reap what you sow (9:6-15)

#### **D. Defense & Use of Apostolic Authority (10:1-12:13)**

1. Charges against Paul
  - a. Bold when away (10:1)
  - b. Boasts of authority (10:8)
  - c. Unskilled Speaker (11:6)
  - d. Accepted no support (11:7)
  - e. Takes advantage (12:17)
2. Response to Charges
  - a. Sincerity (11:13 cp. 2:17)
  - b. Suffering (11:21-30)
  - c. Revelations (12:1-10)
  - d. Miracles (12:12)

#### **E. Announcement of Third Visit (12:14- 13:10)**

#### **F. Concluding Greetings (13:11-14)**

## Walking Out the Word

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**Guided Study:** Use the questions below to help you go deeper in your study and reflection of 1 Corinthians 1:1-10:33. Consider using these questions as a springboard to writing personal entries in *The Daily Life Journal*. Your teacher-facilitator will choose discussion questions to use from this lesson during your group meeting. Enjoy walking out the word together!

### 1 Corinthians 1

Paul's Greeting (1:1-3)

- Why do you think Paul opens his letter to the Corinthians informing them that he is an apostle? Paul calls the church "sanctified" and "called to be saints..." After reading the Introduction to Corinthians, reflect on why Paul is beginning the letter in this way.

Spiritual Gifts at Corinth (1:4-9)

- What is Paul thankful for in the Corinthian Church? Who does Paul place his confidence in? Why?

Sectarianism is Sin (1:10-17)

- How does 1 Corinthians 1:10 relate to our New Song Christian Fellowship theme of "*One Vision, One Voice*"? Why is this so important?

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God (1:18-25)

- Write down and discuss the key ways this passage contrasts the wisdom of God to the wisdom of men. Discuss the message of the cross. How is the cross seen as foolish to some and life changing to others? What does the message of the cross mean to you? How does this affect your daily life choices?

Glory Only in the Lord (1:26-31)

- At the heart of true wisdom is to know the words, the ways, and the will of God. Reflect on where you were personally before you knew Christ. Reflect on 1:26-31, and share a personal testimony of what Christ has done in you.

### 1 Corinthians 2

Christ Crucified (2:1-5)

- How did Paul present himself to the Corinthians when they first met? Do you have a tendency to talk about all your accomplishments when you first meet others? Do you like to appear strong to others? Does it make you uncomfortable to be weak?

Spiritual Wisdom (2:6-16)

- In what ways is God's wisdom "hidden"? What does it mean that "none of the rulers of this age knew"? Who are the rulers of this age? (Hint: The "god of this age" is talked about in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and "principalities and powers" are talked about in Col. 2:15).

### 1 Corinthians 3

Sectarianism is Carnal (3:1-4)

- Compare the "natural man" (2:14), the "spiritual" man (2:15) to the "carnal" man (3:1) (Note: For those of you who have taken *Freedom in Christ*, refer to the three diagrams by Neil Anderson on the natural, spiritual, and carnal).

Watering Working Warning (3:5-17)

- Paul uses three illustrations to describe the church in 1 Cor. 3:5-4:5. Each illustration puts into proper perspective the Corinthians tendency to "glory" in their leaders. Paul's first illustration is "You are the field" (3:6-9). How is this image of being the field help our understanding of the church? His second illustration is that "you are God's building" (3:9-17). Take an inventory of your life service so far. What things in your life will endure? What will be burned? (3:11-15)

Avoid World Wisdom (3:18-23)

- Have you ever deceived yourself? (3:18) Refer to James 1:22.

### 1 Corinthians 4

Stewards of the Mysteries of God (4:1-5)

- Paul's third illustration is that we are "stewards" in God's household. How well are you stewarding what God has given you? In what areas have you not been a faithful steward?

Fools for Christ's Sake (4:6-13) and Paul's Paternal Care (4:14-21)

- Who are your spiritual fathers and mothers in Christ? Do you imitate them?

### 1 Corinthians 5

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)

- What is Paul's reaction to the way the Corinthians had dealt with the immoral brother? What does he instruct them to do? Why? Have you ever needed to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"? (5:5) What did you learn from this process?

Immorality Must Be Judged (5:9-13)

- Paul challenges the church of Corinth to judge the immoral people in their midst who claimed to be Christians and to cut off fellowship with those who refused to repent. Does most of the Christian church in America walk out this biblical principle today? Why or why not?

### 1 Corinthians 6

Do Not Sue the Brethren (6:1-11)

- Paul challenges the Corinthian Church to grow in their ability to judge disputes because the "saints will judge the world" (6:2; see also Matt. 19:28 and Rev. 20:4). How does this relate to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged"? (Hint: Carefully study the context of both passages and read footnotes to help you).

Glorify God in Body and Spirit (6:12-20)

- Meditate on two phrases: "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (6:19) and "you were bought with a price" (6:20). In view of Christ's redemption, how do you honor Him with your body? How are you caring for the Lord's "temple"? Reread 6:12-20 and look for the connection between the "physical" and the "spiritual." Reflect on the unique harm of sexual sin to the believer.

### 1 Corinthians 7

Principles of Marriage (7:1-40)

- After reading and meditating on this entire passage, what does it teach us about marriage, sexual intimacy, divorce, remarriage, and singleness?

### 1 Corinthians 8

Be Sensitive to Conscience (8:1-13)

- What is the background and context of issues concerning food in the Corinthian church? What is your conscience? Why is it important not to become a stumbling block to someone's conscience?

### 1 Corinthians 9

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-27)

- Why did Paul need to defend his own apostleship to the Corinthians? In 9:24-27 Paul encapsulates the main emphasis of this chapter by talking about the importance of discipline in the Christian life. Connect this with Pastor Dale Eyring's phrase that a disciple of Christ is not devoted to discipline but is disciplined to devotion.

### 1 Corinthians 10

Old Testament Examples (10:1-13)

- What temptations did you face this week? What four things do you learn about temptation in 1 Cor. 10:13? How does this knowledge help you to overcome temptation?

Flee from Idolatry (10:14-22)

- Describe idolatry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What does it mean for us to flee idolatry? How are demons related to idolatry?

All the Glory of God (10:23-11:1)

- Describe your daily life this week. Did you do everything (even the mundane) to the glory of God? Be specific.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16:24

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### 1 Corinthians 11

Head Coverings (11:2-16)

- Describe the cultural issues that Paul was addressing to the Corinthian Church. In applying this principles to today, what does it mean to be “covered” or “uncovered”?

Conduct at the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)

- What was the central issue that Paul was addressing in this passage? Reflect on 11:23-32. What do you glean here about the meaning of the Lord’s Supper? What does it mean to examine yourself?

### 1 Corinthians 12

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)

- What questions do you have about Spiritual gifts in the church? Look closely at 12:4-6. What do the words “spirit,” “Lord,” and “God” reference? Why are spiritual gifts given (12:7)? Who distributes the gifts (12:11)?

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12-31)

- What is Paul’s main emphasis in this passage? Who is appointed first? Who is appointed second? Who are appointed third? (vs28) Is this order important? Why or why not?

### 1 Corinthians 13

The Greatest Gift (13:1-13)

- Why is this chapter sandwiched in the middle of chapters on Spiritual Gifts? What is the more excellent way? What never fails? What will happen to prophecies? What will happen to tongues? What will happen to knowledge? (13:8) What three things abide? What is the greatest?

### 1 Corinthians 14

Prophecy and Tongues (14:1-5)

- In chapters 11-14 of I Corinthians what are the three main problems that Paul is addressing? (Hint: Look at the Spirit Filled Life Bible note in 11:2) What does Paul mean when he tells us to pursue love, desire spiritual gifts, but especially that we may prophesy? What does prophecy do in the church? Why does Paul encourage everyone to speak in tongues? (14:5)

Tongues Must be Interpreted (14:6-19)

- Why is he who prophesies in church, greater than he who speaks with tongues in public? What is needed for the public use of tongues?

Tongues a Sign to Unbelievers (14:20-25)

- How are tongues a sign for? (14:22) How will an unbeliever respond when prophecy freely flows within the church? (14:24-25)

Order in Church Meetings (14:26-40)

- According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:31, who may prophesy? What does it mean that the “spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (14:32)? What is God the author of? (14:33) I Corinthians 14:34-35 must be interpreted in the context of the full revelation of Scripture. Read 1 Corinthians 11:5, Acts 2:18; 21:9 and additional notes before responding to this question. What is Paul prohibiting in I Corinthians 14:34-35? What is Paul’s conclusion in I Corinthians 14:39-40?

### 1 Corinthians 15

The Risen Christ, Faith’s Reality and Our Hope (15:1-58)

- What are the main points of Paul’s message to the Corinthians? If you were talking to a non-Christian, how would you describe the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

### 1 Corinthians 16

Closing Words (16:1-18)

- Is it difficult for you to talk about “money issues” at church? What is Paul’s attitude on giving? Look at Paul’s concluding exhortation in 16:13-14 and take time to apply it personally to your life through journaling. How has the book of 1 Corinthians impacted you personally?