

CORINTHIANS

comfort to the apostle in later years, when the believers' moral laxity might have given him reason to doubt the genuineness of the work there. After concluding his ministry in Corinth, Paul returned to Jerusalem and Antioch.

Authorship of the Letter. The external and internal evidences for the Pauline authorship of the letter are so strong that it is really unnecessary to give the subject more than cursory attention. Clement of Rome, writing about A.D. 95, refers the epistle to "the blessed Paul, the Apostle." This is the earliest instance of the quotation of a New Testament writer identified by name (ICC, p. xvii). Ignatius, Polycarp, and others provide abundant additional external evidence. The internal evidences—of style, vocabulary, and content—harmonize with what is known of both Paul and Corinth.

Place of Writing. Paul wrote the letter from Ephesus (cf. I Cor. 16:8), not from Philippi, as the AV subscription has it.

Date of Writing. The date cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, but it seems probable that the epistle was written during the latter part of Paul's stay at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:1—20:1). That would put it about A.D. 55.

Occasion of Writing. Before suggesting the occasion of the letter, it would be wise to outline the order of Paul's contacts and correspondence with the Corinthian assembly.

1. Paul's initial contact was the visit to preach the good news to the Corinthians.

2. Paul wrote the church a letter which has been lost (cf. 5:9).

3. Disturbing news came from the believers requesting information, Paul wrote I Corinthians.

4. The problems were not solved and the apostle paid the church a hurried, painful visit.

5. After this visit, Paul wrote a third letter, very severe, to which he refers in II Corinthians 2:4.

6. The apostle's anxiety was so great he could not wait in Troas for Titus, the bearer of the severe letter, but hurried to Macedonia. He met Titus there and learned that the letter had produced results; all was well in Corinth.

7. After writing II Corinthians, he paid his final recorded visit to the church (cf. Acts 20:1-4).

There had come to Paul, reports of divisions in the church (cf. I Cor. 1:11; 16:17), the more serious may have been Judaists (cf. 1:12; 9:1). Also, there arrived in Ephesus from the Corinthian church Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (cf. 16:17). They brought a letter which

The City of Corinth. Corinth was a wealthy commercial center, situated on the narrow isthmus that connected the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnesus.

The importance of the city influenced the Apostle Paul in his missionary endeavors. It was the hub of commerce and contained a population of mixed character. Corinth was a strategic center.

Corinth's moral character made it a fertile field for the good news of the Messiah. It was a city noted for everything depraved, dissolute, and debauched. It was providential that Paul was in Corinth when he was writing the Epistle to the Romans. From no other city could he have received more of an incentive to write of the sin of man. A gaze from Gaius' house may well have been the occasion of the great catalogue of man's wicked deeds set forth in Romans 1:18-32. From this background came this epistle of sanctification. It is as if one today were to address an epistle of holiness to a group of believers in a modern city of sin.

Origin of the Church. The founding of the church at Corinth is told by Luke in Acts 18:1-17. Paul reached the city on his second missionary journey in A.D. 50, and became the first to preach Christ's gospel there. While working with Aquila and Priscilla, he began his eighteen month ministry in the synagogue. A striking insight into the apostle's method of preaching is afforded by the Western text of Acts 18:4. He preached Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. He, therefore, followed the methodology of the Lord himself, who, on the Emmaus Road with the two disciples, began at Moses and all the prophets and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things that concerned him (cf. Luke 24:27).

The response to Paul's preaching was different from the response to Jesus' teaching. For the most part, the hearts of Paul's listeners did not burn with interest in the truth; they burned with opposition to the truth. And Paul was forced to leave (Acts 18:6). Moving next door to the house of Titus Justus (possibly the Gaius of I Cor. 1:14 and Rom. 16:23); Paul continued to preach "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Cor. 2:3). And who would not fear under the circumstances? The meeting place of the little assembly was next door to the synagogue! The Lord, however, came to Paul in a vision and encouraged him with the promise that He had "much people" in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:9,10). This promise must have been of great