

# The Church With a Bad Reputation

Soon we will begin reading the letter of 1 Corinthians. The church in Corinth has a bad reputation. It is well-known for being a church that had problems. What was at the core of their problems, and what relevance does Paul's letter to these saints have today?

## The Background

- Paul planted this church on his second preaching journey (Acts 18:1-11). Paul labored in the city of Corinth for 18 months.
- Corinth was a big city in Achaia. There were over a million people who lived in it. It was a city immersed in Greek culture and all forms of wickedness.
- Corinth was a major commercial and port city. It was famous for its pottery and two massive theatres. The city also hosted the famous Isthmian games. These games were held every two years. This may explain Paul's sports references (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
- The main attractions in Corinth were its pagan temples. The temple of Aphrodite housed one thousand prostitutes who attracted "worshippers" of pagan gods.
- Corinth was such a wicked city that to be called a "Corinthian" was degrading! The term referred to those who were immoral, gross, and full of debauchery.

## The Makeup

- The churches planted by Paul on his first journey were full of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (Acts 13:43). This explains how elders were able to get appointed in these churches quickly (Acts 14:23).
- While some Jews were converted in Corinth, most rejected the gospel (Acts 18:6-17). The majority of converts were people coming from wicked lifestyles. They were people who were once involved in worshipping pagan gods and the sins Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- Understanding this helps explain why this church had so many problems. The "occasion" for 1 Corinthians was Paul's hearing of problems in this church and his desire to help them fix them (1 Corinthians 1:11-12). He also wanted to answer questions they had asked him in a previous letter (1 Corinthians 7:1-2).

## The Problems

- They were divided (1 Corinthians 1-4).
- They were tolerating and celebrating sin (1 Corinthians 5).
- They were suing one another (1 Corinthians 6).
- They were being spiritually arrogant and not considering one another (1 Corinthians 8-10).
- They were perverting the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
- They were competing over spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14).
- They were spiritually immature (1 Corinthians 3:1-8).

## The Lessons

- Churches have problems. We can still face the same kinds of problems found in Corinth.
- God has solutions (1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:6; 5:1-2; 11:1-2; 13:4-7).
- An evangelistic church looks like Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:2). It is full of people who have left behind worldly and sinful living, and they need us to patiently help them grow.
- The gospel is powerful (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

## Conclusion:

Do you need to be transformed by the gospel?

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