

The Authorship of the Epistle

From the very first verse of the first chapter, it is manifest that this Epistle was written by *Saint Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*.

Not only do the *internal evidences* within the letter itself confirm this truth, but the *external witnesses* of the early Church also bear record unto it.

Clement of Rome, who is said to have been the first of the early Fathers and who, as tradition declared, was ordained by the Apostle Peter himself, did in his letter written about *A.D. 95* affirm that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was authored by Saint Paul.

Likewise, *Bishop Polycarp* (*A.D. 135*) and *Tertullian* (*A.D. 200*) confirmed the same that this holy Epistle proceeded from the hand of the Apostle.

The Date and Circumstances of Writing

It is believed that Saint Paul wrote this Epistle about *A.D. 55*, during his *third missionary journey*, while he abode at *Ephesus* (1 Corinthians 16:8–9, 19).

This letter was not written of Paul's own initiative, but as a *reply* to a letter which the Church of Corinth had first sent unto him (1 Corinthians 7:1; 16:17).

The Church at Corinth had been founded by the Apostle during his *second missionary journey* (Acts 18), when he met *Aquila and Priscilla*.

When the Jews opposed his message and refused the Gospel, Paul departed from them; yet certain Gentiles believed, and thus the Church was established (Acts 18:1–11).

Over time, however, the Church became divided into *four factions* (1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 3:9–13), and the moral corruption of the surrounding society began to influence the believers. Some members had fallen into grievous sin, even into the same *fornication and uncleanness* that marked the city (1 Corinthians 5:9–13).

Therefore, the Apostle wrote sternly to rebuke and correct them, for he loved them as a father in Christ.

Saint Paul wrote *more than two letters* to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9), but only two are preserved for us within the Canon of Scripture.

The Occasion and Purpose of Writing

Certain brethren from *the household of Chloe* brought word unto Paul concerning the disorders within the Church (1 Corinthians 1:11), and the Corinthians themselves had also written to him, seeking counsel upon many matters (1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 17).

Because Corinth was a great city filled with diverse *cultures, religions, and philosophies*, the Church there was beset by many conflicts of faith and conduct.

The principal cause that moved Paul to write was a *gross immorality* that had been tolerated within the congregation (1 Corinthians 5:1).

A man was living in sin with his father's wife, and the Church, rather than mourning, was proud of its false tolerance.

Yet this was but one among many evils which the Apostle addressed. He wrote as a wise master-builder, correcting error, restoring order, and exalting the holiness of Christ's body, the Church.

Major Issues Addressed in the Epistle

1. **Divisions, Envy, and Strife** – (*1 Corinthians 1:10–3:11*)
The believers were divided into parties, saying, “*I am of Paul,*” “*I am of Apollos,*” “*I am of Cephas,*” and “*I am of Christ.*”
The Apostle rebuked them, showing that Christ is not divided.
2. **Lawsuits Among Brethren** – (*1 Corinthians 6:1–11*)
Some brethren were taking one another before heathen judges; Paul exhorted them rather to suffer wrong than to dishonour the name of Christ.
3. **Uncleanness and Immorality** – (*1 Corinthians 6:12–20*)
Many were indulging in fleshly lusts; Paul reminded them that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.
4. **Marriage, Divorce, and Celibacy** – (*1 Corinthians 7:1–40*)
The Apostle gave godly counsel concerning the estate of marriage and the calling of each believer.
5. **Christian Liberty and the Use of Idols' Meat** – (*1 Corinthians 8:1–13*)
He taught that liberty must be governed by love, lest our freedom become a stumbling block unto the weak.
6. **Headship and the Covering of Women** – (*1 Corinthians 11:1–16*)
Paul declared the divine order of authority—God, Christ, man, and woman—and the proper demeanour of worship.
7. **The Lord's Supper and Irreverence at the Table** – (*1 Corinthians 11:17–33*)
some came drunken and careless to the Lord's Table; Paul warned them that such contempt brought judgment.
8. **The Misuse of Spiritual Gifts** – (*1 Corinthians 12–14*)
The Apostle corrected their confusion concerning the gifts of the Spirit, especially *tongues and prophecy*, showing that all must be exercised in love and decency.
9. **The Resurrection and the Coming of Christ** – (*1 Corinthians 15*)
False teachings had arisen denying the resurrection of the dead.
Paul expounded the glorious truth that “*as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*”

The Prominent Features of This Epistle

This epistle is of great importance, for it provided us with a guide to resolve matters that arise within the local church. (*1 Corinthians 10:3*)

1. The Call unto Holiness

If the Church desired to be a witness in the world, she must needs be holy.

2. The Necessity of Unity

The unity of the Church is most essential for her testimony before the world.

3. The Duty of Leaders

Let the leaders not only pray concerning the troubles of the Church, but also take practical steps toward their resolution.

4. The Ministry of Love

A part of Christian love is this—that when problems arise, they be faced and dealt with in the spirit of truth and meekness.

5. The Readiness for Change

Every believer ought to be willing to change himself if such change be needful for the unity of the body of Christ.

Matters Contained within This Epistle

This epistle is also of great value because it contained instruction concerning the worship and order of the Church:

1. **Ecclesiastical Discipline**
2. **Corporate Worship**
3. **The Lord's Table**
4. **The Ministry of the Body of Christ**
5. **The Gifts of the Holy Ghost**
6. **Speaking with Tongues**
7. **Prophecy**

The Lordship of Christ

This letter speaketh most clearly concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest mark of carnality in a believer's life is that he refused to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ over himself.

Throughout this epistle, the Lordship of Jesus Christ is greatly emphasized; for in the first ten chapters, He is called by His full title—**“the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The Excellence of Love

This epistle is likewise notable for its most glorious and unmatched description of love—such as hath not been uttered in all human history.

For it is written in the thirteenth chapter of this book, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” (1 Corinthians 13)*