

11-2017

Article 46: First Corinthians at a Glance

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/owners_manual



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Article 46: First Corinthians at a Glance" (2017). *The Owner's Manual File*. 66.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/owners_manual/66

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Owner's Manual File by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

FIRST CORINTHIANS AT A GLANCE

This book records Paul's rebuke to a number of problems in the Corinthian church (sectarianism, pride, immorality, etc.), and the apostle's answers regarding some questions asked of him by the church (concerning marriage, Christian liberty, the Lord's Table, spiritual gifts, the doctrine of the resurrection, etc.)

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

GOD'S MEDICAL JOURNAL—A DESCRIPTION OF AND PRESCRIPTION FOR VARIOUS LOCAL CHURCH DISEASES

With incredible restraint and patience Dr. Paul systematically diagnoses each individual virus and prescribes the divine cure.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Paul**. He was also known as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11). This relentless enemy of Christians (Acts 8:3; 22:5, 19; 26:11; Gal. 1:13) would, following his conversion (Acts 9:3-9), become the greatest missionary, church planter, soul winner, and theologian in church history, authoring nearly half of the New Testament books!
2. What? The books of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
3. When and where?
 - 1 Corinthians: 55 A.D., from Ephesus
4. Why and to whom?
 - **1 Corinthians**: to rebuke sin in a local church and answer some of their questions. Written to the church at Corinth

KEY EVENTS

1. Sin of the church in elevating human leaders and exalting human wisdom
2. The message of the cross in regard to this world
3. The future Judgment Seat of Christ
4. Contrasts between faithful and faithless stewards
5. Rules governing church discipline
6. Warnings against lawsuits and fornication
7. Rules regarding marriage
8. Christian liberty – part one: the eating of meat sacrificed to an idol
9. Christian liberty – part two: an example from the life of Paul himself
10. Christian liberty – part three: an example from Old Testament Israel

11. Guidance regarding clothing and communion in a local church
12. An overview of the spiritual gifts
13. The supremacy of love
14. Contrasting and comparing the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy
15. Facts regarding the past resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of Christians
16. Rules for the offering; Paul's personal comments

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Paul**, author of First Corinthians and at least 12 other New Testament books, church planter, evangelist, missionary, and perhaps the greatest of all the apostles
2. **Apollos**, Bible teacher and preacher from Alexandria (Acts 18:24) who had served as pastor in the Church at Corinth
3. **Immoral church member**, this unrepentant and sexually impure man was to be excommunicated from the church as instructed by Paul
4. **Adam**, referred to by Paul to contrast his failure with that of Christ's victory

KEY PLACES

1. **Corinth**: capital city of the Roman province of Achaia which church in that city would receive two letters from its founder, the apostle Paul (1 and 2 Corinthians)
2. **Ephesus**: city where Paul planned to visit during the season of Pentecost

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. There is almost no modern-day church problem that is not covered in 1 Corinthians.
2. The church was filled with theological and personal problems.
 - They had perverted the doctrine of baptism (ch. 1).
 - They were bragging about what little human wisdom they had (ch. 1).
 - They were carnal to the core (3:1).
 - They had deceived themselves (3:18).
 - They had defiled their bodies (3:17).
 - They were puffed up (4:18).
 - They were tolerating horrible immorality (5:1).
 - They were suing each other in heathen courts (6:1).
 - They were confused about marriage (7:1).
 - They had abused the doctrine of Christian liberty (8:9).
 - They were not dressing properly in the house of God (11:6).
 - They had made a mockery of the Lord's Supper (11:30).
 - They had corrupted the gifts of the Spirit, especially tongues (ch. 14).

- They were confused on the subject of the resurrection (ch. 15).
 - They had let down on their offerings.
3. It has been said that if sins were horses, this church could have filled many stables.
 4. Of all his church letters, Romans is no doubt the most important, but 1 Corinthians is probably second in importance. This is so because of its great section on the resurrection of Christ and the believer (1 Cor. 15), and, if for no other reason, because of its sheer bulk, for 1 Corinthians is by far the longest epistle written by Paul.
 5. In a nutshell, through Paul's efforts, the church was now in Corinth, but somehow Corinth had gotten into the church. This is probably the second most carnal New Testament church. The church at Laodicea was undoubtedly the worst.
(See Rev. 3:14-22.)
 6. This then is Paul's description of their problem. He therefore offers the proper prescription for their problems.
 - The reminder— *"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* (6:10).
 - The solution— *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1:10).
"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (10:31).
"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).
 7. This epistle records the first of two accounts regarding the personal sufferings of Paul (4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-18).
 8. Paul answers more questions submitted to him by his readers than in any other biblical book (7:1).
 9. The Corinthian church may have been the only one to have received four letters from Paul. These are:
 - First letter (referred to in 1 Cor. 5:9)
 - Second letter (1 Corinthians)
 - Third letter (referred to in 2 Cor. 2:3, 4; 7:8, 9)
 - Fourth letter (2 Corinthians)
 10. It provides the only account of believers being instructed to turn another believer over to Satan (5:1-5).
 11. It is the only New Testament epistle referring to Simon Peter's wife (9:5).
 12. It offers one of three reasons for the writing of the Old Testament (10:11—compare with Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
 13. It gives the first of two New Testament passages describing the Rapture of the church (15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

14. It is the only book referring to Jesus' resurrection appearances before the 500 and before James (15:6, 7).
15. The most exciting single word in the Bible is found here in 1 Corinthians: MARANATHA! (16:22).
16. The book also includes perhaps the greatest verse on temptation in an apostolic church (10:13).
17. In essence, 1 Corinthians provides the most amount of information on the following subjects:
 - Worldly wisdom as contrasted with godly wisdom (1:18-2:13)
 - Characteristics of the natural, carnal, and spiritual person (2:14-3:4)
 - The judgment seat of Christ (3:9-15)
 - Church discipline (5:1-13)
 - Christian usage of the secular courts (6:1-8)
 - Rules concerning the married and single life (7)
 - Christian liberty (8-10)
 - Communion (11:17-34)
 - Rules for personal conduct in God's house (11:1-6)
 - Spiritual gifts in general (12)
 - The gift of tongues in particular (14)
 - The importance of love (13)
 - The doctrine of the resurrection (15)
 - Contrasting the old body with the new body (15:35-50)
 - The chilling results had not Christ been raised from the dead (15:12-19)
 - 1 Corinthians reveals more about the character of the early church than any other of Paul's letters
18. Background to the founding of the church at Corinth
 - It was founded by Paul during his second missionary journey
 - Acts 18 relates the "ground breaking" ceremonies
 - a. He leaves on his second trip with Silas (Acts 15:40)
 - b. At Lystra they pick up Timothy (Acts 16:1)
 - c. At Troas Paul receives his Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9)
 - d. At Philippi a woman named Lydia, a demon-possessed girl, and a Roman jailer are all three saved (Acts 16:14-34)
 - e. From Philippi Paul moves to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1)
 - f. From there to Berea (Acts 17:10)
 - g. From Berea to Athens (Acts 17:15)
 - h. From Athens, finally to Corinth (Acts 18:1)
 - In Corinth Paul soon meets Aquila and Priscilla. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, is saved (Acts 18:8)

- God comforts Paul in a vision (Acts 18:9-10)
 - Paul stays at least 18 months in Corinth before departing (Acts 18:11)
 - The Corinthian church was then pastored by a man called Apollos
19. Background of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth
- During the summer of A.D. 53, Paul starts on his third missionary journey, apparently alone (Acts 18:23)
 - He arrives at Ephesus and spends three years there (Acts 20:31).
 - While at Ephesus he is visited by a delegation from Corinth with news concerning the tragic situation in their local church
 - With a heavy heart, Paul sits down and writes 1 Corinthians

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1. Romans:

- Romans lays the foundation for all New Testament teaching on salvation; 1 Corinthians lays the foundation of all New Testament teaching on church life.

2. Romans and Galatians:

- Romans and Galatians are the foundation for Christian doctrine; 1, 2, Corinthians are the foundation for Christian ethics.

3. Ephesians:

- Both emphasize Christian unity.

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Jesus Christ (1:1)
2. Christ Jesus (1:2)
3. The Lord Jesus Christ (1:3)
4. God's son (1:9)
5. The Lord of glory (2:8)
6. Our Passover (5:7)
7. The Exodus Rock (10:4)
8. Christ the first fruits (15:23)
9. The last Adam (15:45)
10. The second man (15:47)