

I. Introduction (1.1-9)

II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)

III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)

¹ Cor 7.1 ¶ Now concerning the things about which you wrote...

“The remainder of the body of this epistle deals with questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul in a letter. Paul introduced each of these with the phrase *peri de* (‘now concerning,’ 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).”¹

- A. Questions about marriage (7.1-40)
- B. Questions about things sacrificed to idols (8.1-11.1)
- C. Questions about worship services
 - 1. Head coverings (11.2-16)
 - 2. Communion practices (11.17-34)
 - 3. Spiritual Gifts (12-14)
- D. Questions about the Resurrection (15)

IV. Closing Instructions (16.1-24)

Paul begins chapter 16 with the words, “now concerning...” We have seen these words before in 1 Corinthians. What *might* they indicate as Paul changes his topic once again?

Possibly an answer to another question from the Corinthians

I am treating this as part of the closing instructions, despite the opening phrase.

A. Instructions about the offering (1-4)

Let’s pick out the facts about the offering:

For the **saints** (1)

Involved the churches of **Galatia** (1)

Directed to **Jerusalem** (3)

What did Paul instruct the Corinthians to do?

Put aside funds on the **first** day of the week (2)

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 7.1.

Appoint **men** to accompany the gift (3)

Observations:

1. First mention of Sunday as the day of worship, quickly became customary in the church. (Never called the Sabbath in the NT.)
2. No regulation of amount of offering, only according to how one might prosper.
3. Paul organized the offering to be under strict accountability: representatives from each church accompanying the gift.

“Christians are not under the Mosaic Law (Rom. 10:4; et al.). It is therefore understandable that neither Jesus Christ nor the apostles commanded tithing. Some Christians believe that because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20), and Jacob tithed (Gen. 28:22), tithing thus antedates the Mosaic Law and is therefore binding on Christians. Nevertheless a biblical practice is not the same as a biblical precept. Moreover, the absence of any reference to tithing in the New Testament, plus the teaching of other guidelines, strongly suggest that God wants Christians to follow a different method. The principles that should govern Christians in our giving appear throughout the New Testament but mainly in 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 8–9, and Philippians 4.”²

“No pressure, no gimmicks, no emotion. A need had to be met, and the Corinthians were capable of playing a role in it. In a day of highly visible campaigns for money on every side, there is something to be said for the more consistent, purposeful approach outlined here.”³

B. Travel plans (5-12)

1. Paul (5-9)

Where does Paul plan his first stop? (5) **Macedonia**

How long does Paul wish to stay on his visit to Corinth? (6-7)

Over the winter, several months

² Constable, 1 Cor 16.4.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 817.

What is the timeline for Paul's journey? (8)

Leaving Ephesus after Pentecost (May/June)

Why does he want to stay in Ephesus for some time? (9)

Open door for ministry opportunities

Note: Paul ended up staying longer in Ephesus than he expected but did have a "painful visit" to Corinth during that time. These changes became another offense between the Corinthians and Paul. We will touch on this again in 2 Corinthians.

2. Timothy (10-11)

In the meantime, Paul determined to send Timothy to Corinth. What kind of reception did Paul expect the Corinthians to give Timothy?

Kind, respectful

Commentators often suggest that Timothy was youthful and inexperienced. At the point of writing 1 Corinthians that might be so, but Timothy already had years of ministry experience with Paul.

What other reason could motivate disrespect on the part of the Corinthians?

Their general bad attitude towards Paul

What did Paul mention that might make the Corinthians behave better towards Timothy? (11)

He expected other brethren with Timothy who could corroborate whatever Timothy said

3. Apollos (12)

What travel plans did Apollos have?

NOT Corinth

C. Final Exhortations (13-18)

The pithy exhortations in 13-14 summarize Paul's expectations for Christian living. How would you describe these expectations?

Various answers

Paul generously commends Stephanas and his household (who evidently brought the Corinthian questions). What attitude does Paul call the Corinthians to have to such men?

Respect, submission

D. Final Greetings and Benediction (19-24)

The churches of Asia are those that we will look at in our Wednesday series on the Seven Churches of Revelation, starting this week.

Aquila and Priscilla were key members of Paul's team in Ephesus, after serving in the same role in Corinth. Later, they will precede Paul to Rome.

Personal greetings are exchanged, and Paul closes the letter in his own hand, a mark of authenticity when using the services of a secretary.

Maranatha is an Aramaic word meaning, "Our Lord, come!" — a prayer of expectation for the Second Coming.

2 Corinthians: A Few Introductory Thoughts

Paul's interactions with Corinth after founding the church there:

- Paul left Corinth in the fall of AD 52, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him as far as Ephesus (Ac 18.18-28)
- During Paul's subsequent ministry in Ephesus, AD 53-55/56, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians (now lost) (1 Cor 5.9)

1 Cor 5.9 ¶ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

- Later, Paul learned that his first letter was misunderstood, and that there were additional problems in Corinth (1 Co 1.11). Near this time, an official delegation from Corinth arrived with questions (1 Co 16.17)
- Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in response to the situation and the questions, approx. AD 54/55
- Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (perhaps bearing the letter) (1 Co 4.7, 16.10), but apparently the Corinthians remained hostile
- Paul took the time to visit Corinth himself, calling it "the painful visit" (2 Cor 1.15, 2.1, cf. 13.1)

- Back in Ephesus, Paul sent another letter by Titus, a “grievous letter” (2 Cor 2.4, 7.8-9)
- Paul left Ephesus after the silversmith’s riot (Ac 19), heading for Corinth by way of Macedonia, hoping to see Titus with news from Corinth, initially not finding him, but rejoicing that the “grievous letter” was well received (2 Cor 2.12-13, 7.5)
- Prior to arriving in Corinth, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians; partly as a pastoral letter (ch. 1-9) and partly in response to news of further problems in Corinth (ch. 10-13).
- When Paul arrived in Corinth, all was well, with Paul staying for three months at the end of the Third Missionary Journey (Ac 20.1-4) [Paul wrote Romans at this point, during his stay in Corinth.]

The Messages of 1 & 2 Corinthians

G. G. Findlay says 1 Corinthians is “*the epistle of the cross in its social application.*”⁴

“First Corinthians provides a glimpse of life inside one first-century church, and far from saintly it was. Yet that is the reason Paul wrote this letter—to make positional sanctification practical.”⁵

We could call 2 Corinthians *the epistle revealing the heart of pastoral application.*

Three main topics in 2 Corinthians

1. To defend Paul’s ministry against the hostility and suspicions raised by false teachers present in the Corinthian church (1-7)
2. To exhort Corinthian readiness for the offering they already pledged to support (8-9)
3. To defend Paul’s apostleship and denounce those who opposed him and consequently also opposed Christ (10-13)

The remarkable thing to note is that despite Paul’s strong language, the Corinthian church preserved these two letters for the rest of the church to share.

⁴ G. G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, n.d.), 739.

⁵ Lowery, “1 Corinthians, BKCNT,” 506.