AUTHOR

The author of this letter is identified as "**Paul**, called by the will of God to be an **apostle of Christ Jesus**…" (**1:1**). This singularly identifies the writer as the Apostle Paul who planted the church at Corinth in **Acts 18:1-17**.

In addition to the internal citation, Paul was also identified as the author by Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

RECIPIENTS

The recipients are "***the church of God that is in Corinth***…" (**1:2**). This would be the believers in the church Paul planted during his second missionary journey (**Acts 18:1-17**).

DATE AND OCCASION

The epistle of 1 Corinthians was written while Paul was evangelizing **in Ephesus** during his third missionary journey (**Acts 19**). This was most likely in the spring of **AD 55 or 56**.

Upon leaving Corinth (second missionary journey), Paul sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquilla. After a brief visit in Ephesus, he left Priscilla and Aquilla and returned to his home church at Antioch in Syria (**Acts 18:18–23**). After some time, Paul then left on his third missionary journey and visited the churches of Galatia and Phrygia (**Acts 18:23**) before coming to Ephesus (**19:1**), where he stayed up to three years (**19:10; 20:31**).

While at Ephesus, Paul heard of the Corinthians' troubles ***through reports from Chloe's house*** (**1:11**), a ***letter*** (**7:1**), and possibly ***through a delegation from Corinth*** (**16:17**).

Evidence that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus during Paul's the third missionary, and in the spring of AD 55 or 56, includes:

1. Within the letter, Paul says he is writing from Ephesus (**1 Cor 16:8-9, 19**).
2. The letter was written ***several years after Paul's departure from Corinth*** (~AD 51: *from the Gallio inscription*). It was also written after Apollos's stay at the city (**Acts 18:26-27; 1:12**) and after Timothy and Erastus had been sent by Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia (**Acts 19:22**) and Timothy had been sent on to Corinth (**4:17**).
3. The letter was written before the beginning of summer, since Paul indicates (**16:8**) it is a relatively short time to Pentecost (late spring) after which he intends to leave Ephesus. The time of writing is certainly before winter, for Paul states that he wants to come and winter with them (**16:6, cf. Acts 20:3**). This likely adds up to some four or five years after his initial departure from Corinth in AD 51.

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Purpose and Theme

In letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul is responding to the reports of trouble within the congregation and answering the questions. It was his purpose to address these issues and exhort the church in Corinth to ***reframe their view of EVERYTHING through the lens of their faith in Christ***. Some of the problems Paul addressed include:

- Incest, adultery, and other sexual immorality (**5**)
- Taking fellow Christians to court (**6**)
- Misuse of Christian liberty (**8-10**)
- Disorders in observing the Lord's Supper (**11:17–34**)
- Chaos in the worship service (**14**)
- False views of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the body (**15**)

Outline

I. Introduction (1:1–9)

II. Addressing Divisions (1:10–4:21)

- **Cliques in the Church:** The community had split into factions
- **True Wisdom:** Human "wisdom" vs. the "foolishness" of the Cross
- **Stewards of Christ:** Leaders are servants; God is the one who makes things grow

III. Moral and Ethical Disorders (5:1–6:20)

- **Sexual Immorality:** Addressing a specific case of incest
- **Lawsuits among Believers:** Rebuking members for taking one another to court
- **The Body as a Temple:** A call to honor God with physical actions

IV. Answers to Specific Questions (7:1–14:40)

The phrase "Now concerning..." marks Paul's responses to a letter...

- **Marriage and Singleness (Ch. 7):** Advice on relationships
- **Food Sacrificed to Idols (Ch. 8–10):** Balancing Christian liberty with love for others
- **Order in Worship (Ch. 11):** Proper conduct during the Lord's Supper
- **Spiritual Gifts (Ch. 12–14):** ***The Body of Christ:** Many parts, one body
    - **The Way of Love:** Defining the motive for all gifts
    - **Tongues and Prophecy:** Prioritizing order that builds up the whole church

V. The Resurrection (15:1–58)

- **The Core Gospel:** Proving the physical resurrection of Jesus
- **The Future Hope:** Explaining the "resurrection body" and the final victory

VI. Conclusion (16:1–24)

- **The Collection:** Organizing money for the poor in Jerusalem
- **Personal Notes:** Final greetings and a signature of authenticity

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Author

1 Corinthians 1:1 (ESV)

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

Recipients

1 Corinthians 1:2 (ESV)

2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours

Church in Corinth

Acts 18:1–17 (ESV)

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Paul Travels to Syria / 3rd Missionary Journey

Acts 18:18–23 (ESV)

18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into

the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. [20] When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. [21] But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.

[22] When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. [23] After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Paul in Ephesus

Acts 19:1 (ESV)
[1] And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.

Acts 19:10 (ESV)
[10] This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 20:31 (ESV)
[31] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Word from Corinth

1 Corinthians 1:11 (ESV)
[11] For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

1 Corinthians 7:1 (ESV)
[1] Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

1 Corinthians 16:17 (ESV)
[17] I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence,

Writing from Ephesus / Before Pentecost

1 Corinthians 16:8–9 (ESV)
[8] But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, [9] for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

1 Corinthians 16:19 (ESV)
[19] The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.

Apollos in Corinth

Acts 18:26–27 (ESV)
[26] He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. [27] And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed,

1 Corinthians 1:12 (ESV)
[12] What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

Sending of Timothy & Erastus

Acts 19:22 (ESV)
[22] And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

1 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)
[17] That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

Before Winter

1 Corinthians 16:6–8 (ESV)
[6] and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. [7] For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. [8] But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,