

**Introduction to
Paul's Ministry
to the
Corinthian Community**

SESSION 1

BEFORE WE BEGIN

- What do we already know about Paul? (How do we know what we know? Sources?)
- Do you have any questions up front?

Sources for Paul

- **His own writings** (7 Undisputed Letters)
 - 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, & Romans.
- **Acts of the Apostles** (Luke's 2nd Volume)
- **Deutero-Canonical Letters** (Disputed)
 - 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians
- **Pastoral Letters** (Not Pauline)
 - 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus
- **Non-Canonical Writings**

Saul the Convert

- Basic Story (**Acts 9:1-31**)
- Three Other Versions
 - Galatians 1:11-2:14
 - Acts 22:3-16
 - Acts 26:9-18
- Conversion = Call



On the Road to Damascus



- Official permission to persecute Followers of “the Way” (Jesus movement)
- Interruption on the way
- “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*”
- Stricken **Blind**
- To **Damascus**

Saul In Damascus

- **Blind & Afraid**
- **Ministry of **Ananias** (9:10-19)**
 - **Baptized & Healed Saul**
- **Saul “**sees**” anew**
- **Proclaiming Jesus in the Synagogues, saying “He is the Son of God” and proving that Jesus was the Messiah. (9:20-22)**
- **Plot to Kill Saul**
- **Escape over the Wall in a Basket**

Paul the Missionary

- **Antioch** sponsors his ministry
- **Three Missionary Journeys ***
- **Paul's *Modus Operandi***
 - **Tentmakers' Guilds**
 - **Pharisee in the Synagogue (Jewish converts)**
 - **Roman Citizen in the Marketplace (Gentiles)**
 - **Establish congregation in someone's home**
 - **Move on/Start over/Keep in touch by letter**

The First Missionary Journey



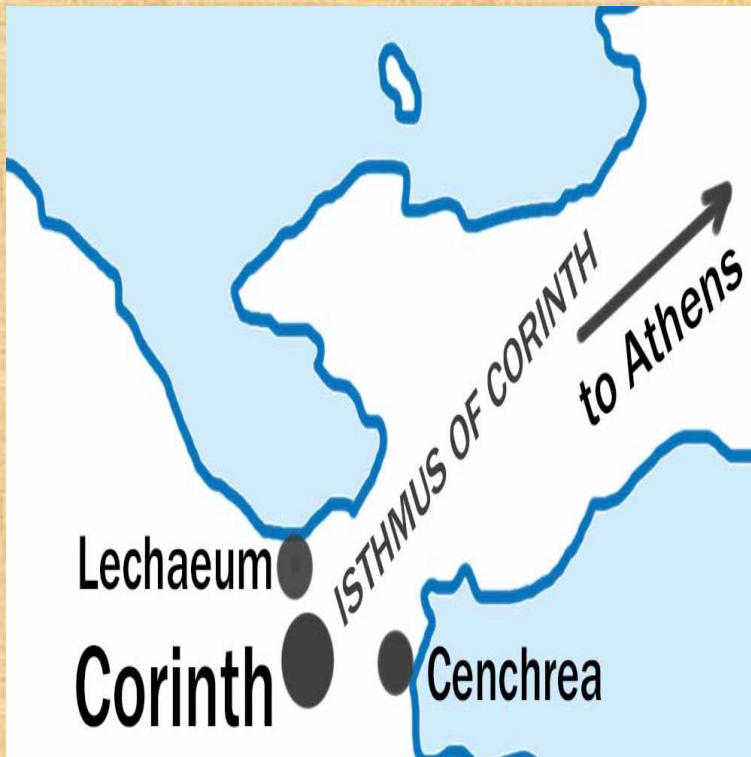
Second Missionary Journey



ACTS 18: Paul in Corinth

- Paul arrives from Athens (18:1).
- **Priscilla & Aquila**, fellow tentmakers, had been expelled from Rome by Claudius (18:2-3).
- Paul is opposed in the synagogue; he turns his attention to the Gentiles. (18:4-6) [Remember his *modus operandi*].
- He stays with **Titus Justus**; Synagogue official **Crispus** becomes a “believer in the Lord,” as do many others who are baptized (18:7-8).
- Vision leads Paul to remain in Corinth **18 months** (18:11).
- **Proconsul Gallio** rules that the controversy surrounding Paul is a sectarian religious matter and not political. In response the Jewish tribunal seizes and beats **Sosthenes**, another official of the synagogue (Acts 18:12-17)

CORINTH: “LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION”



Corinth was called by some, *“the second most important city in the Empire next to Rome.”*

Corinth’s **wealth** was a product of its prime location on the isthmus that served as the north/south trade route between the Peloponnese and Upper Greece. ...Also featuring two seaports, **Lechaenum** and **Cenchrea**, Corinth was the central trade route for ships traveling east and west.

Corinth: The City

- **Wealthy and Worldly**
 - Thriving city known for its bronze, ceramics, textiles, shipbuilding, & architecture.
 - Described by some as a “wicked” city, as one might expect from a seaport.
 - **Aristophanes** coined the Greek verb *korinthiazesthai*, by which he meant, “to fornicate.”
 - **Plato** used the phrase “Corinthian girl” to mean “prostitute.”
- Think **Las Vegas + New Orleans**
(Bourbon Street)

Corinthian Culture

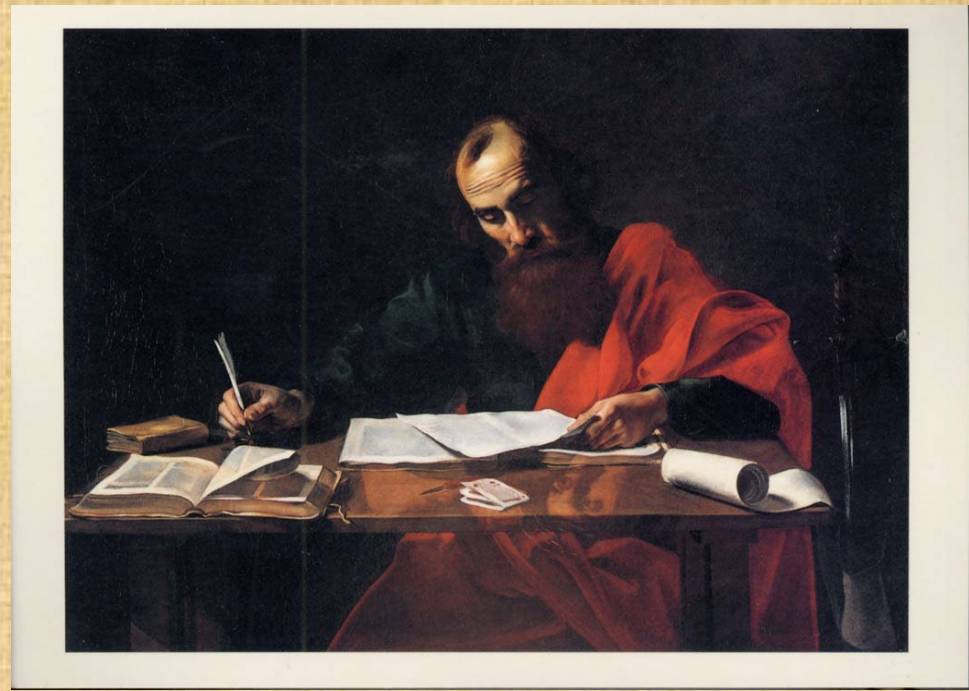
- **Isthmian Games** (2nd to Olympics)
 - J. Murphy-O'Connor suggests that Paul could have attended these games (see 1 Cor. 9:24-27 for his first use of athletic imagery)
- **Shrines:** Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Egyptian Isis. Jewish Synagogue.
- **Gallio** served as Proconsul (51-52 CE)
- **Cutting Edge:** Corinth was a city open-minded and eager for fresh ideas, but not passive nor docile about posing challenging questions.

Third Missionary Journey



The Pastoral Correspondent

- **“Occasional Nature”** of Paul’s Letters
 - Continuing to minister to his church communities
- **Dates: 48-62 C.E.**
- **Seven (7) Undisputed Letters:**
 - 1 Thessalonians
 - Galatians
 - 1 & 2 Corinthians
 - Philippians
 - Philemon
 - Romans



Structure of Ancient Letters: The Example of 1 Corinthians



- **Signature (1:1)**
- **Address (1:2)**
- **Salutation or Greeting (1:3)**
- **Thanksgiving (1:4-9)**
- **Body (1:10-15:58)**
- **Conclusion/Plans/Personal Greetings (16:1-19)**
- **Benediction (16:21-24)**

Reading Paul

“When we read Paul, we are reading somebody else’s mail—and unless we know the situation being addressed, his letters can be quite opaque...It is wise to remember that when we are reading letters never intended for us, any problems of understanding are ours and not theirs.”

– Marcus Borg, *The First Paul*

Reading First Corinthians

Context

- When: **ca. 53 CE**
- Where: **Corinth***
- Who: **The “Church” in Corinth**
- Why: **What prompted Paul to write?**

Content

- Who is writing?
Paul, yes. But is he an “Inspired author” or “Pioneer Pastor” or “Flawed Figure”?
- What genre are we reading? **Letter**
- What does the text say? **Let’s see....**

The Corinthian Correspondence



Occasion: What prompts this Writing?

- **Discord & Divisions** among the Corinthians, including abuse of the Agape meal
- **Behavioral Issues** such as immorality, marriage, food offered to idols, etc.
- **Theological questions**, including **spiritual gifts & resurrection of the Body**
- **His Relationship** to this church

A Scholarly Note on The Corinthian Letters: The Four Letter Hypothesis

- Question regarding the structure of 1-2 Corinthians
- A Previous Letter? (1 Cor 5:9)
- Hypothesis of 4 Letters:
 - **Fragment** (2 Cor 6:14-7:1)
 - **Second Letter** (1 Cor)
 - **Harsh Letter** (2 Cor 10-13)
 - **Thankful Letter** (2 Cor 1-9)



Themes in the Corinthian Letters

- Social **Divisions** among the congregational members (1:10-17)
- “***Jesus Christ and him crucified***” (2:2)
- **Immorality** (5)
- **Lawsuits** among Believers (6)
- **Marriage** (7)
- **Food offered to Idols** (8)
- **Apostleship & Christian Freedom** (9-10)
- **Head Coverings & The Lord’s Supper** (11)
- **Spiritual Gifts** (12-14)
 - Love (***Agape***) (13)
- **Resurrection of the Body** (15)



Opening the Mail

SESSION 2
ADDRESSING
DIVISIONS THEN (AND
NOW)

Form Letter: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

- **Signature (1:1) – Paul**, called as “**Apostle**”
 - Sosthenes (cf. Acts 18:17)
- **Addressee (1:2) – “Church” in Corinth***
- **Salutation (1:3) – “Grace & Peace...”**
- **Thanksgiving (1:4-9) – Thanks for you for the grace given you...lacking nothing as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

“To the Church of God in Corinth...”

- ***Ecclesia*** – “those called-out”
 - Corporate, not individual (Plural Pronouns)
- Q: Called out of what? By whom? To what?
- Located where? **Church *in loci***.
- **Sanctified** in Christ, Called to be **Saints**
- Think of an **Iceberg**:
 - *History-long, world-wide people of God*
- This church/every church is called out *in loci*, time and place, part of the Great Iceberg.

**UNITED (IN CHRIST)
WE STAND,
DIVIDED WE FALL**

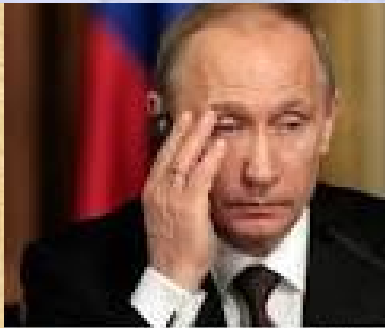
A Question of Relevance

**WHAT ARE
SOME THINGS THAT
DIVIDE US TODAY?**

If ever there were a time to let the message of First Corinthians speak to us, it seems now is such a time.



RUSSIA vs. UKRAINE



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ABORTION

Pro Life vs. Pro Choice
Bombing Clinics
Supreme Court
Roe v. Wade



"He who is without ovaries shall not make laws for those who do."

Fallopian 5:12



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVISIONS



Tax Breaks



Unfair Labor Practices



Livable Wage!

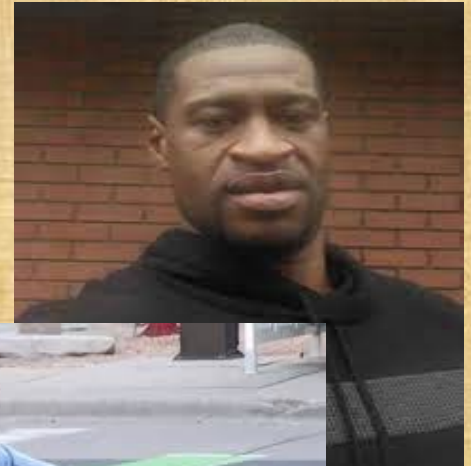


GUN VIOLENCE

VS.

GUN RIGHTS

END GUN VIOLENCE



Police Violence vs. Police Protection



Alt-Right, K.K.K., Neo-Nazis, etc.

Still a need for "The Talk"

White Guilt
White Fragility

Disproportionate Incarcerations and Sentencing

SYSTEMIC RACISM

ETC.

Social Injustice, including inferior public schools

Black Lives Matter

Critical Race Theory

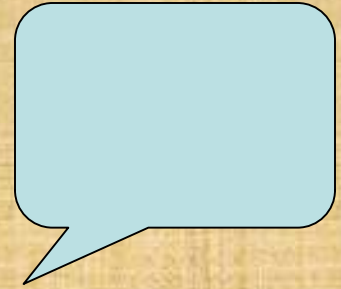
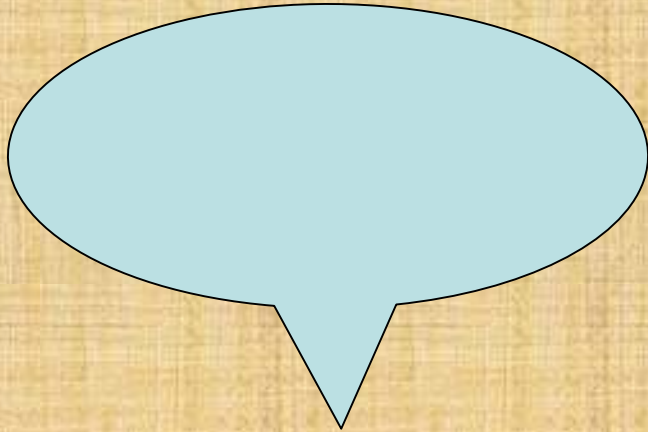
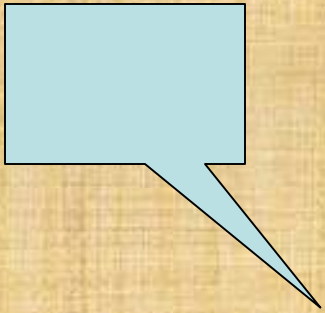
Economic Injustice



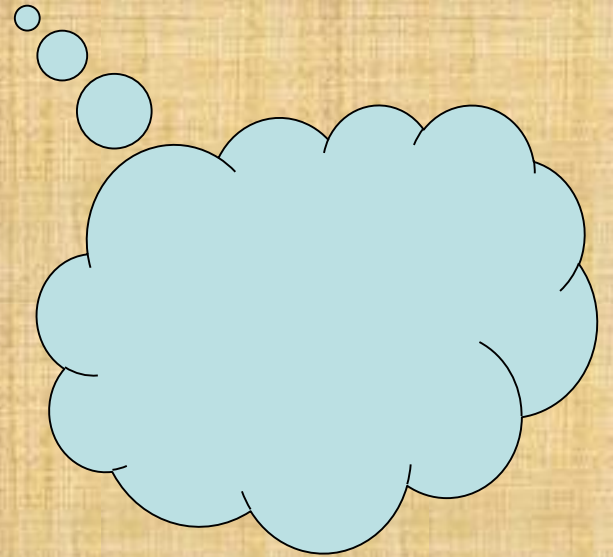
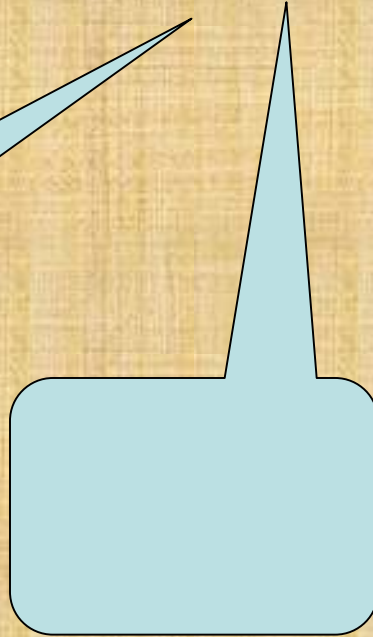
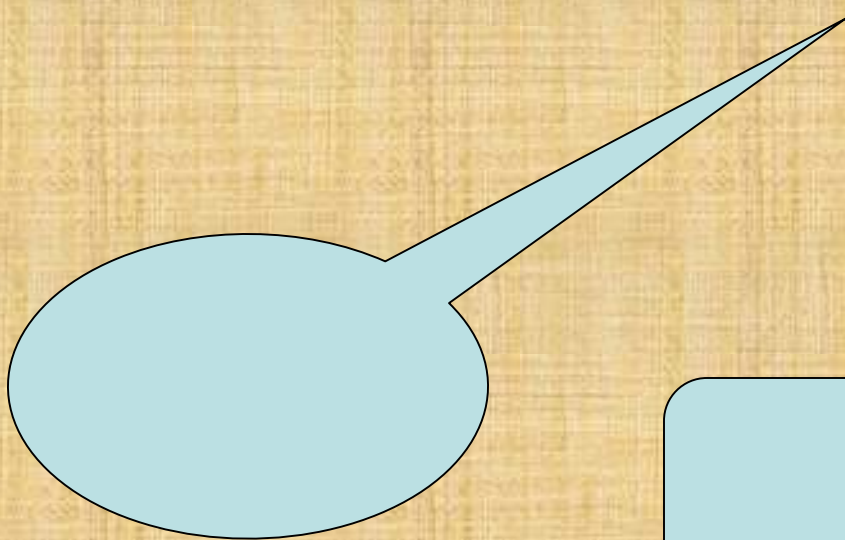
Emmett Till

CAROLINA VS. CLEMSON





ETC., ETC., ETC.



Paul's opening Gambit: Read 1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I appeal to you , brothers (and sisters),
by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that all of you be in agreement
and that there be no divisions among you,
but that you be united
in the same mind
and the same purpose.

Appeal for Consensus (1:10)

Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ᾗ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἧτε δὲ **κατηρτισμένοι** ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ **νοῖ** καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ **γνώμῃ**.

I appeal to you, “brothers” (and sisters), by/through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that you might agree (lit., *say all things the same, i.e., reach consensus on things difficult to express*) and not (lest there) be among you schisms (*tears, divisions*), but that you be **(re)united*** (*mended, sewn back together, darned, perfected**) in the same **mind** (*capacity to comprehend or discern, understanding, medium for processing information*) and in the same **purpose** (*judgment, viewpoint, opinion, decision about a matter*).

* Paul was a tentmaker. Note the Sewing language.

QUESTION

What might that look like
today?

How do we sew or be sewn
back together?

Be (Re)United, not Divided (1:10-17)

- **Have no divisions** among yourselves...
- **(Re)Unite** in the same mind & purpose
 - i.e., **Sewn together in Mission** (e.g., **Sail** or **Quilt**)
- **Chloe's people** tell me.... [Report]
- **Quarrels/Factions/Schisms** among you...
 - “I belong to...” [cf. **Caitlyn's sermon** from two weeks ago]
 - Paul would have them/**us** redefine their/our relationship to the church. All belong to Christ!
 - **Worship + 2** (as I have heard & read about it) is about being “united/sewn together in mission.”

Contrasting Power & Wisdom (1:18-2:16)

- Foolishness vs. Wisdom (Greeks)
- Stumbling Block vs. Signs (Jews)
- Proclaiming “*Christ Crucified*” vs. Arguing with Rhetorical Eloquence or Evidence
- Human Comprehension vs. Spiritual Understanding (2:9-13)
- Human Mind vs. the Mind of Christ (2:14-16)
- **Punch Line:** *Christ turns everything upside down* (cf. Beatitudes, “Thy will be done,” “Not as the World gives do I give...”)

Paul's Response to Divisions (3:1-23)

- **Analogy to Parenting**
 - Brother becomes Parent (cf. Philemon)
 - Infants or Mature? Factions prove immaturity.
- **Analogy to Cultivation**
 - We are just field hands; God is the grower.
- **Analogy to Construction**
 - Strong Foundation
 - Trial by Fire
 - You (plural) are God's Temple (Indwelling Spirit)

BONUS Material

Question:

**Who was the
“Founder”
of Christianity?**

Some Scholars argue that Paul was in fact the “founder” of Christianity.

- Jesus lived as a Jew, participated in Jewish rituals, & died as a Jew
- Jesus preached the coming kingdom of God
- Jesus said that not a jot of the law would be changed
- Paul converted from Judaism to being a follower of Jesus
- Paul preached Jesus crucified and risen
- Paul insisted that one was saved by faith in Jesus and not by works of law

Reading from the Margins