

Corinth and St Paul

An Introduction to Paul's Letters to the Corinthians

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Corinth

Examine the Map

I. Corinth's Location

- A. On the Isthmus - Two harbors with Corinth in between (Four Miles)
- B. Lechaem - harbor for western trade Italy and Sicily
- C. Cenchreae - harbor for eastern trade - Asia
- D. Triangle- Sparta - Athens - Corinth (All roads may have led to Rome - but early on Trade ran through Corinth)

II. Improvements to the natural geography

- A. Road - (Diolkos) Constructed under Periander - forty feet wide - Wheeled wooden carts transported goods
- B. Double Wall 400 B.C. to protect the Road 2 miles each to the ports

III. Ancient History - Interesting as we consider the importance of this City-State and the Divine Intervention

- A. Origin is lost in legends - Geography is important
- B. Epic poetry of the Greeks mentions Corinth
 1. Euripides Tragedy - Medea is about a foreign woman Jason bring to Corinth
 2. Homer also mentions Nemea and ancient name for Corinth

C. Early Religious Experience -

1. Temple of Aphrodite on the Acrorinith - a hill outside the city
2. 1000 temple prostitutes are said to be in the city
3. One Greek verb to fornicate KORINTHIAZOAI a derivation of the name of the city

D. Early Rule was by Tyrant - Kypselos - Father of Periander (Builder of the Road)

1. Periander was a visionary - wanted a canal (Later build by Romans)
2. Under him the culture and commerce grew
3. The Isthmus Games

D. Periander was the last Tyrant - in 582 democratic rule of sorts began

E. 582 B.C. - To Paul's first Visit

1. The Aristocrats and their council; 80 members (Power to the Business leaders and those with Money)
2. Peloponnesian League Formed
3. Corinth was headquarters of the Hellenistic League during the Persian Invasion
4. Peloponnesian War - 429 B.C. Corinth was defeated by Athens
5. Sparta and Athens - 421 B.C. signed peace treaty - Corinth refused
6. At the end of this war the democrats took over power (Power to the People)
7. Corinth withdraws from the power plays and the wars. Corinth did not take part in the war against Phillip of Macedonia - appeasement and negotiation become the attitude - **War is bad for business**

8. 146 B.C. after a long and bitter disagreement with the Romans - Lucius Mummius Roman Pro Council ends negotiations and sacks Corinth and destroys the city - The men are killed - the women and children are sold as slaves no one is allowed to occupy the area

9. 44 B.C. Julius Caesar rebuilds Corinth as a Roman City and repopulates with Romans and conscripts from Syria, Egypt and Judean freed slaves

10. In 51 A.D. Paul arrives

F. The Corinth of Paul Time

1. Young dynamic city not bound by tradition or heritage
2. Mixture of dislocated individual all striving to succeed
3. Heart of the city is the forum - temples and shrines to many gods and goddesses

The Apostle Paul

His story is the story of Divine Intervention in the life of one man and its effect upon all God's People.

Acts 7:54-8:2

⁵⁴Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. ⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. ^{8:1a}And Saul was consenting to his death. ^{8:1b}And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the

apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. ³But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

I. The Life of Saul b. 67 B.C.?

A. Born onto a wealthy Jewish family in Tarsus, the son of a Roman Citizen

1. Tarsus Southern Turkey today along the coastline
2. Hellenized town - Stoic Philosophy - (Later Influence?)

B. Sent to Jerusalem to rabbinical school - Gamaliel

1. Gamaliel is student of Hillel - liberal (tolerant) conciliatory
(Was this a later influence that allowed Paul to preach to the gentiles?)

2. There is a radical shift in the world of the young Saul

C. Trained as a Pharisees and in a trade - tent maker

D. Saul is formed by three influences - Judaism, Rome and Hellenistic Philosophy

II. The Young Man 35 B.C.

A. Saul is self-righteous Pharisee

NOTE:

Pharisee - not so much a political party as a philosophical division of Judaism - allowed for the oral tradition and the situation to influence the application of the written law - Believed in judgment and an afterlife with resurrection of the body - Had a large following among the common people vs. Sadducees - In the Gospels they are shown as in opposition to Jesus and he continuously notes that external adherence to the law without conversion. At the time of the crucifixion they are replaced by the Sadducees as the persecutors of Jesus in a political way. After the

Resurrection they co-existed with the new sect of "Christians" because of their shared belief in the afterlife

Sadducee - A Jewish politico-religious sect - opposed to the Pharisee - Party of the rich and the powerful - stood for tradition and the unchanging nature of Judaism - accepted only the written tradition, no oral interpretations or later development - they did not believe in an after life, judgment after death or any bodily resurrection

Zealots - Jewish party of revolt - agreed with all things as the Pharisee except that God alone was their Ruler and Lord - After their defeat by the Romans in Galilee they withdrew to Jerusalem and wrestled control of the city from the Sadducees - This led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

B. The Paradox - Coast Guard vs. the Marines

1. Saul may be a self-righteous young Pharisee, but why is he so committed to the destruction of those who follow The Way?

The Facts -

1. Most practicing Jews took no offence at the followers of the Way and saw them only as another sect of Judaism.

2. The Pharisees did not persecute other sects - their understanding was to tolerate and allow others to interpret the Law in their own way.

2. Possible influences upon Saul

a. Stephen

1. Saul may have felt guilty that he only consented but did not participate in the stoning

2. The speech of Stephen may have led Saul to believe that the followers of the Way were out to destroy the Temple

b. Paul's Early Life and Training

1. The Hellenistic culture in Tarsus vs. the Jerusalem of his day may have led Saul to conclude that Jerusalem would go the way of Tarsus.

2. During his training he must have felt the oppression of the Sadducees - is this an acting out against the party of power by imitating them to increase his later influence? (Nashotah Years) - Fight or switch - is Saul switching?

C. God's Response to Saul's Murderous Intention Acts 9:1-19

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. ⁴And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; ⁶but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, ¹⁹and took food and was strengthened.

D. With the name Paul he begin to preach boldly Christ and Him Crucified