

## 2. 1 Corinthians

### a. An overview

The statements of 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 16:21 that indicate Paul was the author of this epistle have never been seriously or successfully challenged. Clement called it "the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle", c. 95 AD, which is the first extrabiblical quotation of any New Testament document. Ignatius, another of the Apostolic Fathers, quoted it so often that he may have memorized the entire letter (by. c AD 115). There are more references to 1 Corinthians in early Christian writings than to any other Pauline epistle. This evidence unanimously supports Pauline authorship of 1 Corinthians.

The book was written from Ephesus (16:8), probably during Paul's second visit there (Acts 19). This allows time for the various factions (1:10-4:21) and other problems addressed to have arisen. This lengthy stay (three years, cf. Acts 20:31) provided ample time for the exchange of messages and letters implied in 1 Corinthians. Both Corinthian epistles are generally considered to be among the earliest of Paul's writings, perhaps as early as within 25 years of the resurrection (cf. 15:6). If, as seems to be implied by 16:8, Paul was near the end of his stay in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians it must be dated to winter or early spring of a year in the mid-50's (Pentecost is a spring feast). Three years must be allowed for Paul's stay in Ephesus and, when considered in conjunction with Acts 18:12, which can be dated to AD 51, a date c. AD 55 is the approximate time of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians for two primary reasons. He had heard first-hand reports from "Chloe's people" (1:11), who had told him about some of the problems in Corinth, and from Stephanus (16:17-18, cf. 1:16). They may have told Paul that his previous letter to Corinth was being misinterpreted or ignored (cf. 5:9). In addition to receiving personal reports, Paul had received a letter from the church (7:1) asking questions about various practical concerns.

#### Outline:

- I. Introduction 1:1-9
- II. Responses to Reports 1:10--6:20
  - A. Divisions in the church 1:10-4:21
  - B. Specific immorality 5:1-13
  - C. Lawsuits 6:1-8
  - D. Immorality in General 6:9-20