

protected the roads to its eastern and western ports (see a map of Corinth). The temple of Poseidon, site of the biennial Isthmian Games, has been uncovered some six miles outside the center of the city. The great temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, capped the Acro-corinth (literally, "high Corinth"), a mountain just south of the city proper. With as many as 1,000 sacred prostitutes, it gave Corinth a reputation for immorality and licence throughout the Roman world (in fact, "Corinthian girl" meant "prostitute").

A piece of marble inscribed "Synagogue of the Hebrews" has been discovered in Corinth. It was later than Paul, but may mark the same spot as the synagogue in which he first preached. Erastus, commissioner of public works, donated, a pavement to the city, according to an inscription. He is perhaps the same Erastus mentioned in Acts 19:22 and Romans 16:23.

#### Keys to this book:

Paul describes his own understanding of his role in 2:1-5, setting the tone for much of 1 Corinthians. He was obviously a concerned pastor who did not want to be overbearing on his flock. The core of 1 Corinthians seems to be chapters 12 and 13, wherein many of the problems of the church at Corinth are addressed, however obliquely. Paul says that a proper perspective on the roles in the church and a proper attitude toward others will overcome the problems that they faced.

#### Study tips:

Read through 1 Corinthians at one sitting, noting the changes of material as Paul discusses various topics of concern to the Corinthian church. Read the articles on "Corinth" and "Corinthians" in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia for background information about the culture of Corinth.

What issues does Paul address? Is the order of discussion important? Why or why not? Do any of these issues apply to the church today? What verses may show the influence of the Isthmian games? What would these verses have meant to a hellenistic and athletically-minded culture? What doctrines does Paul use as bases for his practical commands? What is the common denominator between each practical discussion and its related doctrine? What are Paul's arguments for the resurrection? What kind of arguments are they? What is Paul's reason for the presence of spiritual gifts in the church? What practical effect(s) should this have today?