

# Corinth, the Carnal Church

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In the 1st century, Corinth was a cosmopolitan city of Greeks, Romans, and Jews, numbering about 500,000 – a large percentage of which were slaves. On the lower appendage of Greece and with three good harbors, it was a great trade center. Immorality invaded every sphere of life, including religion, as the temple of Aphrodite maintained over 1,000 prostitutes. *Corinth* was synonymous with *corrupt* even in that wicked era. The problems in the church revolved around one corrupting principal: carnality, failure to control the flesh (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

1. Paul entered the city alone (Acts 18:1ff), but in search of work he met Aquila and Priscilla, who became his fast friends. He began his work in the synagogue and was soon joined by Timothy and Silas. Upon rejection by the Jews, he turned to the Gentiles, many of whom were converted. He worked in the city for 18 months.
2. In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul discussed the fruits of undisciplined lives. The catalog of carnality includes divisions, fornication, misunderstandings about marriage, foolish lawsuits, idolatry, corruption of the Lord's Supper, abuse of spiritual gifts, and denial of the resurrection.
3. Paul described two causes of carnality. First, they did not root out the old life when they became Christians (1 Cor. 6:10-11). Second, they were following false teachers (several indications in 2 Corinthians, especially). These factors are still likely the most troublesome problems in the church.
4. Paul dealt with these problems in two ways. Most of the problems were approached by means of strong, plain teaching. The problem of fornication (actually, incest) required immediate spiritual “surgery.” The brother involved was to be disfellowshipped lest the problem corrupt the church further (1 Cor. 5:1-12).
5. They made noble efforts at repentance, as indicated in Paul’s second letter. The incestuous man had repented and was to be received again (2:6-8). They expressed a longing and zeal for Paul, they exhibited godly sorrow, they received Titus and so, Paul was encouraged about them (7: 7-16). Some still needed to repent (12:21). Sin always demands repentance. It is the remedy for sin in God's children.

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