

# 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 1000 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.

**And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.**

**I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able *to bear it*: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).**

1. Paul entered the city alone (Acts 18:1ff), but in search of work he meets Aquila and Priscilla who become fast friends. He begins his work in the synagogue and is soon joined by Timothy and Silas. Upon rejection by the Jews, he turns to the Gentiles, many of whom were converted. He worked in the city for 18 months.
2. Fruits of undisciplined lives are discussed in 1 Corinthians. 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. Two causes of carnality are described. They did not root out the old life when they became Christians (1 Cor. 6:10-11). They were following false teachers (several indications in 2 Corinthians, especially). These are still likely the most troublesome problems in the church.
4. They were dealt with 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 2 Corinthians. 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 is 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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