

The Half Hour That Changes the World

1 Corinthians

Book 46

Basic Questions behind the book:

"How can I live in this corrupt and fallen world, fully engaging with it for the sake of the Gospel, but not become less than Christ-centred and polluted by its norms and values?"

Summary of book:

Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth seems to be a response to a prior correspondence from them to him. In it he addresses a number of issues including:

- Unity among Christians from different social and educational backgrounds (chs 1 - 4)
- Ethics in our behaviour toward one another (chs 5 - 6:8)
- Sexual Sin (ch 6:9 - 20)
- Marriage & Celibacy (ch 7)
- Eating food that has been sacrificed to idols (chs 8 - 11)
- Orderly worship and different expressions of spirituality (chs 11 - 14)
- False doctrine in regard to the resurrection of Christ (ch 15)
- Final thoughts and greetings (ch 16)

Vital Statistics:

<u>Purpose:</u>	To identify and address both pastoral and practical issues in the Church at Corinth. Also, to teach the believers in Corinth to live for Christ in a corrupt world.
<u>Author:</u>	The Apostle Paul.
<u>Recipients:</u>	To the young Christian community in Corinth which Paul had planted on his second missionary trip.
<u>Dating:</u>	Approximately AD 55 during Paul's time in Ephesus before the end of his third missionary journey.
<u>Setting:</u>	Paul is responding to a letter that had been sent to him about the state of affairs in the young immature Church at Corinth. He had planted the Church there himself and had a strong pastoral concern for their wellbeing. Faced by all kinds of temptations and a very depraved culture around them, the Corinthian Church was both being influenced by what was normal in that city and being led away from the true Gospel.

Other Notes:

Billy Graham was once accused in a Press Conference of taking the church back 200 years. He responded by saying that if that was the case then he had failed, as his hope was to take it back 2000 years! Whether it was true of Dr. Graham or not, certainly we've often heard it said *"if only we could get back to how it was for the early church then we'd be much better off."* Such a romanticizing of the early church is inaccurate and unhelpful. You only need to look at Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to see that the early church there was far from pristine and perfect. They were real people with real struggles in the real world. They didn't always get it right, neither in their grasp of God's truth, nor its application in their lives and behaviour. The issues they wrestled over and the clashes they faced will be different in content but not in nature. Seeking to fit into this world and make connections for the Gospel today is as challenging as it was then. The culture around us has profound effects on us without us noticing most of the time. How can we make sure that we remain true? Withdrawing ourselves from the world has been tried but isn't the pattern of Christ. He calls us to be in the world and not of it.

"And now, these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (13:13)