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1 & 2 Corinthians

God's Prescription for the Local Church

by Harold L. Willmington

In 1 Corinthians the church at Corinth had been infected by a number of satanic and fleshly viruses. For example, they had a wrong concept about human leaders, baptism, Christian maturity, future judgment, church discipline, Christian justice, marriage, Christian liberty, personal appearance, Communion, tongues, resurrection, and giving.

Through Paul's efforts, the church was now in Corinth—but somehow Corinth had gotten into the church. This is probably the second most carnal New Testament church. The church at Laodicea was undoubtedly the worst. (See Rev. 3:14-22.)

Here Paul gives a description of their problems and offers the proper prescription for them.

Paul reminds the church of its relationship to God. "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (6:19).

He offers solutions to the church. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye

be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10).

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (10:31).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).

Of all Paul's church letters, Romans is no doubt the most important, but 1 Corinthians is probably second in importance because of its great section on the Resurrection of Christ and of believers (ch. 15); and, if for no other reason, because of its sheer bulk, for this book is by far the longest epistle written by Paul.

The most exciting single word in the Bible is found in 1 Corinthians—Maranatha! (See 1 Cor. 16:22.) The book also includes perhaps the greatest verse on temptation in an apostolic church (10:13), as well as the most beautiful treatise on Christian love in God's Word (ch. 13).

In essence, 1 Corinthians provides the most information in Scripture on the following subjects: characteristics on the natural, carnal, and spiritual man (2:14-3:4); the judgment seat of Christ (3:9-15); rules concerning the married and single life (ch. 7); Christian liberty (chs. 8-10); Communion (11:17-34); rules for personal conduct in God's house (11:1-16); spiritual gifts in general (ch. 12); the gift of tongues in particular (ch. 14); and the doctrine of the Resurrection (ch. 15).

There are quotations or allusions in 1 Corinthians from 18 Old Testament books.

The Book of 1 Corinthians is the 7th longest in the New Testament, and the 28th longest biblical book, with 16 chapters, 437 verses, and 9,489 words.

In 1 Corinthians we see the congregation in the pews, but in 2 Corinthians we can view the preacher in his pulpit!

One reason Paul had written 1 Corinthians was to instruct the church to remove an unrepentant member (1 Cor. 5:1-8). He then wrote 2 Corinthians, instructing the church to receive back that one who had since become repentant (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

Paul lists no less than 15 characteristics of the gospel ministry. One of the most important reasons God allows a Christian to suffer is explained in this book (1:1-6). In no other epistle does Paul refer to his own sufferings as he does in this letter (4:8-10; 6:4-10; 11:24-33).

He also provides the most concise reason why God uses men to do His work (4:7).

The most extended discussion of the grace of giving is found in 2 Corinthians. (See chs. 8-9.)

Paul was the first of two human beings allowed to visit paradise and return again. John the apostle was the other. In fact the phrase, "the third heaven," is found but once in the Bible (2 Cor. 12:2).

And 2 Corinthians also serves as an expose on the person and work of Satan. (See 2:10-11; 4:4; 11:3,13-15; 12:7.) At least four names for Christians are found here and nowhere else in the Bible. These are: living epistles (3:2-3), a sweet savor of Christ (2:15), treasure-carrying earthen vessels (4:7), and ambassadors of Christ (5:20).

Only in 2 Corinthians does Paul take the time to defend his apostleship against the lies of his enemies. (See chs. 10-11.)

There are quotations or allusions in 2 Corinthians from 14 Old Testament books. The Book of 2 Corinthians is the 10th longest New Testament book, and 33rd biblical book, with 13 chapters, 257 verses, and 6,092 words.

■ Adapted from *Willmington's Visualized Study Bible*, © 1984 Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

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