

To fully understand the background to the book of First Corinthians, Session 1 will study Paul's 18 months in Corinth, found in Acts 18.

Paul works among the Jewish community in Corinth | Acts 18:1-5

- Verse 1 – Paul had been in Athens, where he preached the famous Mars Hill sermon. From Athens he went to Corinth, traveling alone.
- Verse 2 –
 - Aquila and Priscilla – This husband and wife team met Paul first at Corinth. They were originally from Rome, would move with Paul to Ephesus (where the church would meet in their home), and then later go back to Rome, spending further time in Ephesus as well.
 - **Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart** –
 - **Claudius** was emperor of Rome from AD 41-54.
 - This expulsion is mentioned in several extra-Biblical accounts, and took place in AD 49 or 50. This is a reminder that Anti-Semitism is not new.
- Verse 4 – **And he reasoned...and persuaded** –
 - This is the consistent missionary strategy of Paul.
 - In today's missiology, the strategy is often "friendship" and "building relationships" rather than "through words...persuading" (the literal translation).
 - **persuaded** is an imperfect verb, meaning it was a continuing action, not a one-time victory.
- Verse 5 – **Paul was pressed in the spirit**
 - Because of a textual variant, many commentators take these words to mean that Paul quit working as a tent-maker and began working full-time in ministry (see NASB).
 - The variant is between "word" and "spirit."
 - Either he was "pressed in the Word" (which, since it doesn't make sense, is interpreted, "devoting himself completely to the Word," even though the word is never elsewhere translated as a word of devotion).
 - The other option is that he was "pressed in spirit" (as in KJV, and similar to Acts 17:16). Translation makes more sense to go with the majority text of *spirit* rather than *word*.
 - When Silas and Timothy arrived, they brought a financial gift from the Philippians-see 2 Cor 11:9.
 - Since 1 Thessalonians is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and since that was his first letter, it is supposed that he wrote it in connection with the arrival of Silas and Timothy in Corinth.

Victory and Defeat | Acts 16:6-11

- Verse 6 – **your blood...** Paul's statement here is condemnatory toward his generation of Jews. It places full burden on them for rejecting their Messiah. While Paul will continue to persuade them and preach to them about the Kingdom, his focus turns to gentiles almost completely from this point.

- Verse 7 – **Justus, one that worshiped God** - This is a phrase that, in the book of Acts, refers to gentiles who worshiped the God of the Jews but had not converted to Judaism.
- Verse 8 – **many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized** –
 - Paul has declared he is going to the gentiles, and surely **many of the Corinthians** then refers to gentiles (like Justus).
 - To suppose that this baptism was the Jewish rite of Baptism, and that Baptism is not applicable to gentiles in the church age, is unrealistic.
 - Even if it is assumed that Paul only baptized Jews, he is baptizing them *outside of the synagogue* and *unrelated to the Kingdom*.
 - Paul himself baptized Crispus, according to 1 Corinthians 1:14.
- Verse 9 – **be not afraid, but speak** –
 - Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:3 that he was with them in weakness, fear, and trembling.
 - Note also Paul's prayer for courage in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2.
- Verse 11 – **I have much people...** - Like Elijah, Paul seems to feel an "alone-ness" that is frightening. Whenever anyone is on the front lines of "Christian combat," they are continually in need of your encouragement.

What is the book about?

- The first letter of Paul to the Corinthians is about “problems plaguing a local church.”¹
- The book covers topics such as divisions, moral issues, marriage and divorce, worship, church leadership, spiritual gifts, the resurrection, and more.

To Whom is the book written?

- To the believers at Corinth, obviously!
- Is the congregation *Jewish* or *Gentile*?
 - Through the book we will consider a number of passages that give indication that the primary recipients were the Jewish believers.
 - From Acts 18 we see that Jewish believers were primary and prominent in Corinth.

¹ Hanna, Kenneth G. [From Gospels to Glory](#). Westbow Press, 2015. pg. 183