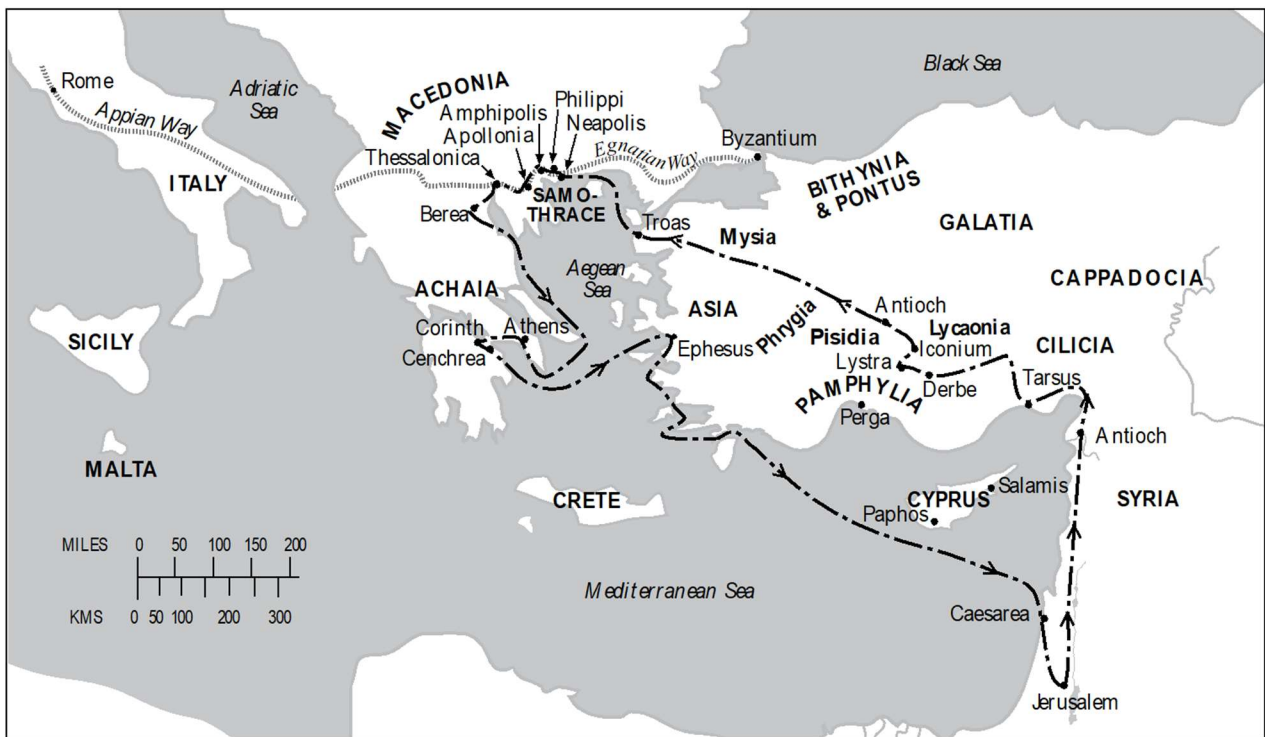


1 Corinthians – Lesson 1

Introductory Material:

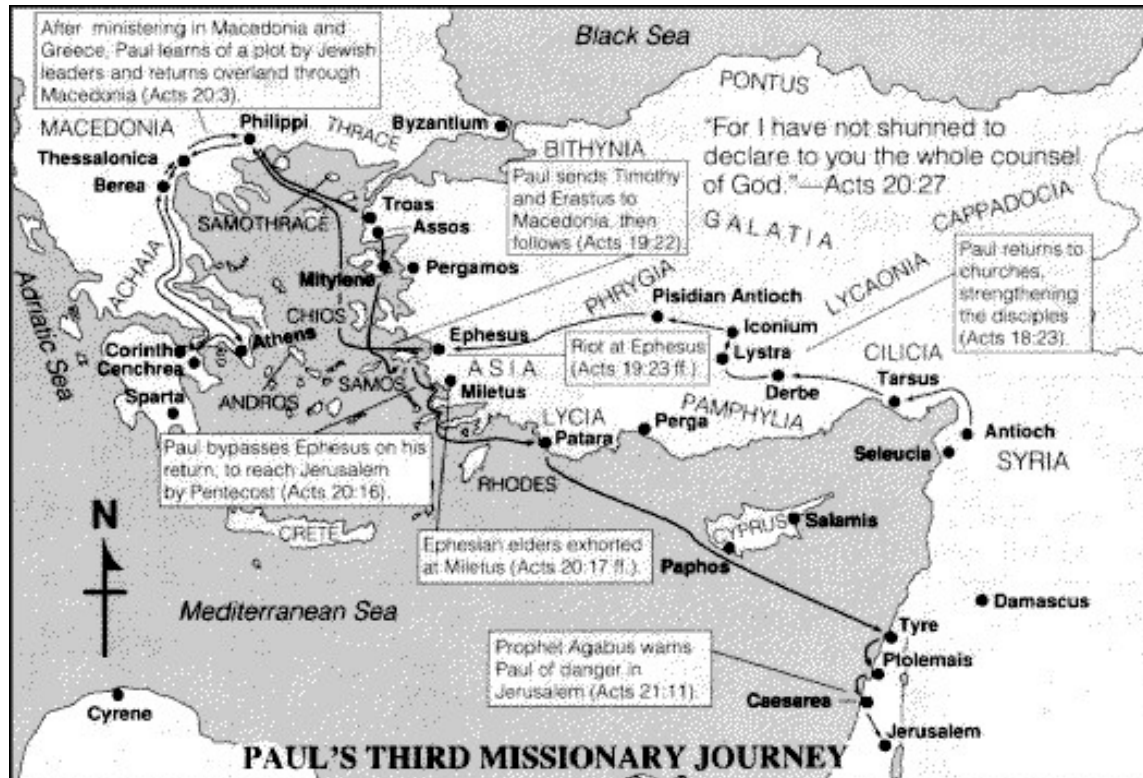
Corinth: Ancient Greek city – one of the oldest in Greece. It was overrun by invaders in 2000 B.C. and remained uninhabited until 1350 B.C. It reached its peak around 600 B.C. but was destroyed by the Roman General Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C. due to an uprising. He exterminated all the males and sold the women and children into slavery. Rebuilt about 100 years later by Julius Caesar (44 B.C.) and repopulated with Roman citizens and freed slaves. Set up as a Roman province governed by a Roman senator for a one-year term. This prevented the governor from building up a power base and turning against Rome. Julius Caesar wanted to build a canal across the isthmus that had been planned in the 6th century B.C. According to Josephus, Vespasian sent 6,000 Jews to work on the canal in 67 A.D. For over 2,000 years, 5.5-mile road connected the ports of Lechaem and Cenchraea. Canal finally completed in 1893 by the French. Corinth was the home of the biennial Isthmian Games (2nd only to the Olympics) begun in approximately 582 B.C. Original winner's wreath was made of celery.



Date of 1 Corinthians: First, we can date *Acts 18* very closely because of the edict of Claudius in 49 A.D. which forced Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome and come to Corinth (*Acts 18:2*). Secondly, there is an inscription at Delphi in central Greece naming Gallio as proconsul of Achaia in 51 A.D. Gallio was the brother of the Stoic philosopher Seneca. When Seneca fell out of favor with Nero in A.D. 65, he and his brother Gallio were forced to commit suicide.¹ As Paul writes this letter, he is completing a visit to Ephesus. Although Paul briefly visited Ephesus as he

¹ Duane Warden, *1 Corinthians*, Truth for Today Commentary (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2016), 5.

departed Corinth on his 2nd missionary journey, time must elapse for the problems at Corinth to develop. Therefore, *1 Cor. 16:8* must refer to the end of Paul's three-year stay (*Acts 20:31*) in Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey – about A.D. 55-57.



Acrocorinth: Massive, precipitous hilltop 1,886 feet (575 meters) above sea level to the south of the ancient city of Corinth. It overlooked the Isthmus of Corinth and controlled land traffic between central Greece and the Peloponnesus, as well as sea traffic from Italy passing to the east through the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf.²

The Greek geographer and historian Strabo (who visited Corinth in 29 B.C.) wrote around 20 A.D. about 1,000 prostitutes serving at the Temple of Aphrodite (goddess of love and beauty) located on the Acrocorinth. However, Strabo's reference was to ancient Corinth – long before its destruction by Lucius Mummius. Many older commentaries erroneously used Strabo's description of Corinth for the city Paul encountered in 49 A.D.

Idolatry in Corinth: In addition to the Temple of Aphrodite already mentioned on the Acrocorinth, there was a Temple of Apollo (Greek god of light, healing, music, etc.) in Corinth. The ruins of a Temple of Octavia are also visible in Corinth. Octavia was the sister of Augustus Caesar (first Roman emperor from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D.) who died in 11 B.C. This temple indicates there was an Imperial Cult or another Roman cult in Corinth. There were probably many more temples in Corinth during the 1st century – including temples to Aphrodite. There was also an *Asklepion* where people went for healing. This is named after Asclepios – a deified Greek physician who was the son of Apollo.

² Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). Tyndale Bible dictionary. Tyndale reference library (10). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Around 400 B.C., the Greek playwright Aristophanes coined the verb *korinthiazomai* – literally meaning “to act like a Corinthian”. It was used to refer to practicing sexual immorality or fornication. Again, this was a term more applicable to ancient Corinth instead of the city of Paul’s day.

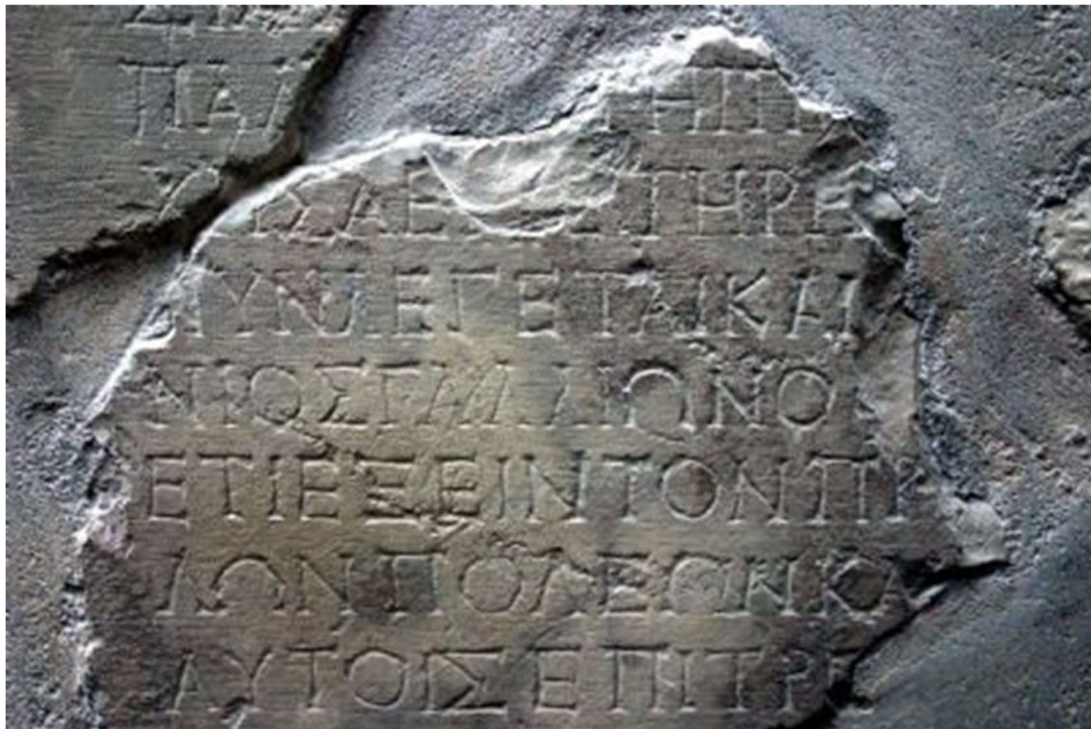
Diolkos: The Diolkos [Greek meaning “haul across”] was a paved “road” that connected the Corinthian and Saronic gulfs before the Corinthian Canal was dug. It was built because sailing around the southern tip of the Peloponnese was very treacherous. Strabo, for example, writes ‘But when you sail around Cape Malea, forget your home’ (= “you’ll never return!”; viii 6, 20)

The Diolkos was constructed during the sixth century B.C. It was made of large paving stones and was about 11 to 20 ft. [3.4 to 6 m.] wide. It ran from the southeast to the northwest across a narrow point of the isthmus.

The ancients offloaded their cargo, and then dragged it on carts to the other side of the isthmus and loaded it on to another ship. By doing this, they avoided the long and dangerous trip around the southern tip of the Peloponnese.

Some commentators believe that small boats were transported over the Diolkos. This is possible for small boats but is not probable for normal size Roman cargo ships.³

Gallio Inscription: Found at Delphi in Central Greece – dates to between April and July, A.D. 52 – and places Gallio as proconsul of Achaia in A.D. 51.



³ www.holylandphotos.org

Erastus Inscription: Part of a pavement found near the theater which mentions “Erastus” who was the aedile of the city of Corinth. An “aedile” oversaw the financial matters of the city – and was very wealthy. The pavement was laid about A.D. 50.

The New Testament book of *Romans* was written by Paul from Corinth to the church in Rome. In *Romans 16:23* Paul says that “Erastus, the city treasurer greets you...” It is very probable that the “Erastus” mentioned in *Romans* is the very same person who is mentioned in this inscription.



Author: The apostle Paul (*1 Corinthians 1:1; 16:21*)

Traveled to Corinth on his 2nd Missionary Journey – *Acts 18:1*; lived there for at least 18 months – *Acts 18:11*; wrote previous letter to church at Corinth – *1 Cor. 5:9*; heard disturbing news from house of Chloe – *1 Cor. 1:11*; received letter from the Corinthians – *1 Cor. 7:1*; and was visited by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus – possibly delivering this letter to Paul – *1 Cor. 16:17*.

Apostle Paul:

- Young man in *Acts 7:58*
- Aged Paul (*Philemon 9*)
- Martyrdom in A.D. 67 per Eusebius
- Born in Tarsus (*Acts 21:39; 22:3*)
- Studied at feet of Gamaliel (*Acts 22:3*)
- Pharisee (*Acts 23:6*)
- Tribe of Benjamin (*Romans 11:1*)
- Born a Roman citizen (*Acts 22:25-28*)
- Sister in Jerusalem? (*Acts 23:16*)
- “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (*Philippians 3:4-6*)

Chronological Table

| | <i>Christian history</i> | <i>Roman history</i> |
|--------------|--|--|
| | | 14–37 Tiberius emperor |
| c. 28–30 | Public ministry of Jesus | |
| c. 33 | Conversion of Paul | |
| c. 35 | Paul's first post-conversion Jerusalem visit | |
| 35–46 | Paul in Cilicia and Syria | |
| | | 37–41 Gaius emperor |
| 46 | Paul's second Jerusalem visit | 41–54 Claudius emperor |
| 47–48 | Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia | |
| ? 48 | <i>Letter to the Galatians</i> | |
| 49 | Council of Jerusalem | 49 Jews expelled from Rome |
| 49–50 | Paul and Silas travel from Syrian Antioch through Asia Minor to Macedonia and Achaia | |
| 50 | <i>Letters to the Thessalonians</i> | |
| 50–52 | Paul in Corinth | 51–52 Gallio pro-consul of Achaia |
| Summer 52 | Paul's third Jerusalem visit | 52–59 Felix procurator of Judaea |
| 52–55 | Paul in Ephesus | 54–68 Nero emperor |
| 55–56 | <i>Letters to the Corinthians</i> | |
| 55–57 | Paul in Macedonia, Illyricum and Achaia | |
| early 57 | <i>Letter to the Romans</i> | |
| May 57 | Paul's fourth (and last) Jerusalem visit | |
| 57–59 | Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea | 59 Festus succeeds Felix as procurator of Judaea |
| September 59 | Paul's voyage to Rome begins | |
| February 60 | Paul's arrival in Rome | |
| 60–62 | Paul under house-arrest in Rome | 62 Death of Festus; Albinus procurator of Judaea |
| ? 60–62 | <i>Captivity Letters</i> | |
| | | July 64 Fire of Rome |
| ? 65 | Paul visits Spain | |
| ? | <i>Pastoral Letters</i> | |
| ? 65 | Death of Paul | |