

## THE PARENTHETIC EPISTLES – FAITH

### 1 CORINTHIANS

Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthian Ecclesia is a divine commentary on the conduct enforced by frequent admonitions in the Epistle to the Romans. The secret of a life well pleasing to God lies in the crucifixion of the flesh and the resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 6: 6-11. Amplified.

*"Even so consider yourselves dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but (that you are) alive to God – living in unbroken fellowship with Him in Christ Jesus"*

The Corinthians failed in both of these requisites, as will be seen by the framework. The first part of the Epistle shows that though the Apostle had emphasised the preaching of the cross, which puts an end to all physical pretensions, they persisted in making much of men, and thus created divisions among themselves.

The close of the epistle shows also that some also denied the resurrection, though the resurrection of Christ was fundamental to the evangel (good news) and an absolute necessity to accepted conduct.

As in the case of so many of the epistles, each subject is taken up twice, as shown in the framework, dividing the epistle into two distinct parts, each having the same general subjects, but discussing them from different standpoints.

In the first half all is **personal**.

In the second all is **ecclesiastical**.

The gifts in the former portion are men, Paul and Apollos.

In the latter they are spiritual endowments, which were exercised in the Ecclesia.

Thus, also, the abuse of the physical body is balanced by the abuse of the Lord's body. The private conduct of the marriage relation is replaced by their conduct to the public meetings of the saints. Idle sacrifices are discussed in their relation to the individual, and as they affect the Ecclesia, especially the Lord's Table.

The central subject is the question of Paul's apostolic authority. First he discusses his personal rights, but then waves them all in his desire for the welfare of others. So, we see a marvellous symmetry and balance of thought in an epistle that is usually supposed to be without structure.

This epistle is a severe rebuke to the present ecclesiastical systems. If division was a proof of carnality in Corinth, what does the multiplication of sects with which we are afflicted prove? There is far more need today of the salutary correctives in this epistle than there was in Corinth. There is need to proclaim, not only the death of Christ, but the MANNER of His death. A crucified Christ is the answer to the worldly wisdom and religious carnality of those who profess the name of God.

This epistle shows why so few are able to apprehend the marvellous mysteries of Paul's later epistles. If the Corinthian believers were so carnal that the apostle could not reveal these to them, it is no marvel that they are hid from the immature believer of today. Yet the apostle did disclose to them the secret of the resurrection. In the midst of all the spiritual endowments, (gifts), the apostle points them to the transcendent grace.

**There remains faith, expectation and love.**

Let us hope that soon faith will be lost in sight and expectation in realisation.

Then love alone will abide, and may we give it a preeminent place.

This is not the first time that the apostle had written a letter to the Corinthian Ecclesia. He had previously written to them 1 Corinthians 5:9, and they had written a letter in return. 1 Corinthians 7:1. This epistle is partly a reply to their letters.

It is worthy of note that this epistle, like the Thessalonian and Galation epistles, were written to a corporate Ecclesia. Indeed, the whole of the latter half deals with ecclesiastical relations.