**Sermon Title: The Founding of the Church in a Christ-less Culture, Part 1**

**Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; Acts 18:1-17**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to understand the Christian’s responsibility to exalt Christ in a Christ-less culture.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 6 realities of a Christ-less culture.**

**Introduction:** “Corinth and Ephesus were two of the most important cities visited by Paul in the course of his missionary service and he stayed in each city for a considerable amount of time, in order to establish churches that would evangelize (added for emphasis) ‘the lost and disciple the new converts. There were always new obstacles, threats, problems, and questions.’” [**I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, William B. Eerdman’s Publishing Comanpay, 1980, p.291**]

**I. The context. Vv.1-4**

**II. The culture. Vv.5-6**

**III. The conversions. Vv.7-8**

**IV. The charge. Vv.9-11**

**V. The chaos. Vv.12-17**

**VI. The church. 1 Corinthians 1:1-3**

**I. The context. Vv.1-4**

A. The arrival.v.1

B. The attachment. Vv.2-3

The Jewish-Christian couple is noteworthy in their hospitality, partnership, bi-vocational assistance. They opened their home and business to church meetings.

C. The assignment. Vv.4, 6

Paul lets them know because of their rejection, their sins are on their own heads.

**Ezekiel 3:16-21** Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **17** "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: **18** "When I say to the wicked,`You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. **19** "Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. **20** "Again, when a righteous *man* turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. **21** "Nevertheless if you warn the righteous *man* that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."

**Acts 20:26** "Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.

**II. The culture. Vv.5-6**

A. The **city**

Corinth was another leading city of Greece (Achaia). Its two harbors made it a center of trade for the Mediterranean area. In Paul’s day it was a metropolis, since it was strategically located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea.

Because of the two seaports it became a commercial center, and many small ships were rolled or dragged across the Corinthian isthmus.

The city was filled with shrines and temples, but most prominent was the Temple of Aphrodite. Worshippers of the “goddess of love” made free use of the 1000 Hierodule (consecrated prostitutes).

This cosmopolitan center thrived on commerce, entertainment, vice and corruption; pleasure seekers came there to spend money on holiday. Corinth became so notorious for its evils that the term (korinthiazomai) “to act like a Corinthian” became a popular term.

B. The **character**

In Paul’s day the population of Corinth was approximately 200,000 to 700,000, about two-thirds of whom were slaves, also Greeks, slaves from Italy, army veterans, businessmen, and Asians.

Greek philosophy influenced any speculative thought that was there.

In spite of these obstacles to the gospel, Paul was able to establish a church in Corinth on his second missionary journey.

(**3:6, 10; 4:15; Acts 18:1-7**)

Through Paul’s missionary efforts the church at Corinth is established, but it was very difficult to keep the influence of Corinth out of the church.

C. The **call**

The pagan lifestyle of Corinth attempts to maintain a stronghold upon the Christians in that corrupt city, as it does in every city, town, suburb, and household of the world.

In this disciplinary letter, Paul is forced to exercise his God-given apostolic authority as he deals firmly with problems of divisiveness, immorality, lawsuits, selfishness, abuses, spiritual gifts, and denials of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul also deals with a series of questions about living as a Christian in a Christ-less culture (Chapter 7-16).

**III. The conversions. Vv.7-8**

Paul’s vow in verse 6 does not mean no one from the synagogue had accepted the message of the Gospel, as the conversion of Crispus and his whole household indicates.

Also, Titicus Justus (a Gentile) was said to be a worshipper of God, he was probably a member of the synagogue that was next to his house.

Justus was a Gentile who showed interest in the God of Israel.

The conversion of Crispus a respected leader probably sent shockwaves throughout the Jewish community, along with his household becoming followers of Christ.

**IV. The charge. Vv.9-11**

Paul had experienced persecution, rejection, trouble, in pervious cities including Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Berea. The Head of the church, Jesus Christ, assures him that he would be unharmed and successful.

6 Confidence Builders for all Witnesses

1. Don’t be afraid. V.9a

2. Keep on speaking. V.9b

3. Don’t be silent. V.9c

4. I will be with you. V.10a (Joshua)

5. Stay long term. V.11a

6. Keep on teaching. V.11b

God had appointed a number of people in Corinth for salvation, who had not yet heard the gospel (**Romans 10:13-15**). The effect of Paul’s preaching would be to bring the elect to faith.

**V. The chaos. Vv.12-17**

Gallio served as proconsul from July, A.D. 51 to June A.D. 52. The judgment seat was a place located in the city’s market place, in front of the house of the proconsul, where he would try public cases.

The key to this situation is realizing that Judaism was not really an official religion, it was tolerated in the Roman Empire, but Christianity was viewed as a sect of Judaism.

The Jews in the city of Corinth proclaimed that the teachings of Paul was not a sect or part of Judaism, therefore should be prohibited by the government officials. If Gallio ruled in the Jews favor, Christianity could have been banned or outlawed throughout the whole Empire. Civil unrest was frowned upon in the Roman Empire.

But the Jews were really trying to use the governor to do dirty work for them. Gallio was no fool and saw right through their plans. Therefore, he refused to address the issue, in what was viewed as an internal conflict. He ruled that there was no crime, that the dispute was over words, and threw the case out.

This of course made the hostile crowd of Greeks angry, and someone needed to pay, so as usual, the people found a scapegoat. Since Sosthenes was the ruler of the synagogue, he would have made the case for the Jews. Keeping order in a multi-ethnic city or town heavily involved in trade and travel, is no easy matter. Gallio took the hands off approach.

[**Notes from John MacArthur Study Bible, book of Acts, p.1666-1667.**

**HCSB Study Bible, book of Acts p.1897-1898**]