

1 CORINTHIANS

Lesson One: Introductory Matters

First Baptist Church Chappell Hill, June 5, 2021

Learning the Bible Effectively

- Key Question: What was the author's intended message for his original audience? (secondary question, how do I apply it to my life?)
- A few comments about Bibles
 - 1. Prefer a fairly literal translation.
 - 2. Get a quality Bible (good binding, paper) [the best Bible is the one you read routinely].
 - 3. Get a Bible you can write in (wide margins are a plus).
 - 4. Get a Bible with good maps.
 - 5. Remember the notes in a study Bibles are opinions.
- There are a lot of “helps” available to us for Bible study (software, commentaries, Bible atlas).

Context

- 1 Corinthians is **not** the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 5:9)
- The Corinthians wrote to Paul (1 Cor. 7:1)
- Paul established the church in Corinth on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18)
- Paul went to Phrygia and Galatia intended to press further into Asia, then the Holy Spirit prevented them, and then in Troas Paul saw a vision to come to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10)
- Paul preached in Athens in Acts 17:16-34, note that the Athenians loved to hear new teachings but many stumbled at the concept of the resurrection
- Paul addresses the resurrection at length in 1 Cor. 15
- Nearby Corinth (50 miles away) was a microcosm of Athens

Mars Hill in Athens as seen from the Acropolis



Context

- Paul writes to Corinth likely in AD 56
- The church at Corinth was started likely in AD 51
- Note that in terms of spiritual maturity, they had not progressed in those 5 years but Paul expected they should have.
- See Second Missionary Journey map.



Gulf of Corinth

CORINTH

MEGA-
CORINTH
RIS

Isthmus of Corinth

Sikyon

Corinth
from 1858

Diolkos
Hexamilion

Acrocorinth
Corinth
until 1858

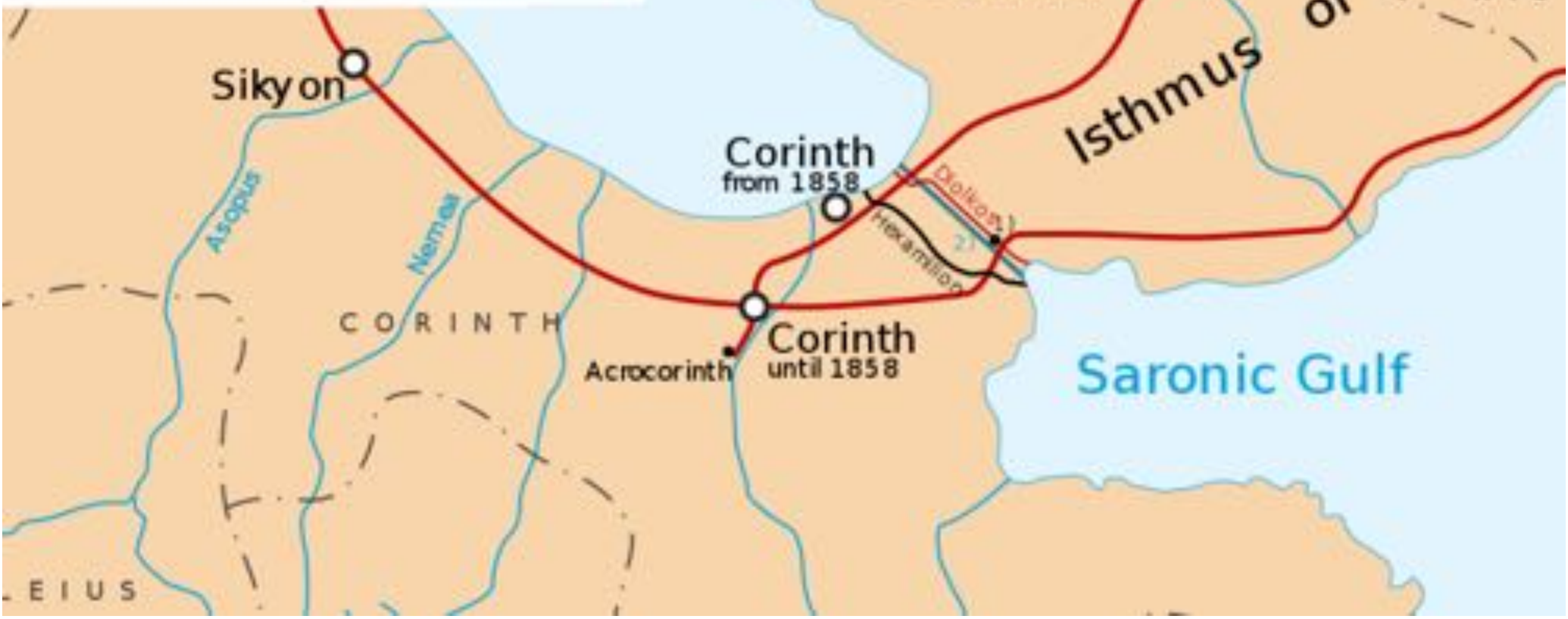
Saronic Gulf

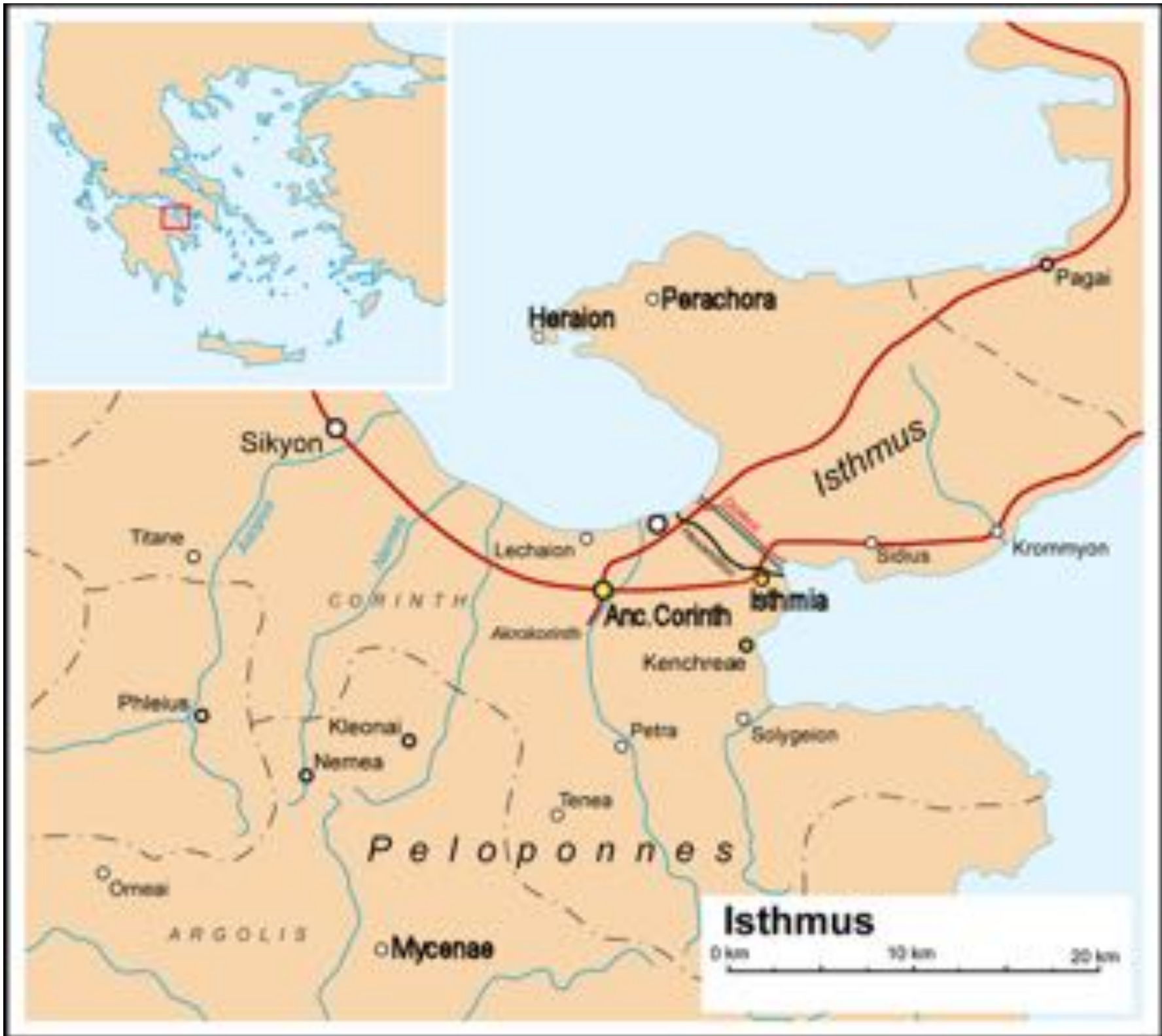
Asopus

Nemea

CORINTH

E I U S







Isthmus

Anc. Corinth

Ithmia

Kenchreao

Petra

Solygeion

Bichalon

Sikyon

Korakorinth

Photo of the ancient Diolkos



transporting ship on the ancient Diolkos





Temple of Apollo (god of medicine, music, reason, light and truth) in Corinth



Acrocorinth in the background once had temple of Aphrodite

"Do not keep silent; for I am with you,
and no one will attack you to hurt you; for
I have many people in this city."—Acts 18:9–10



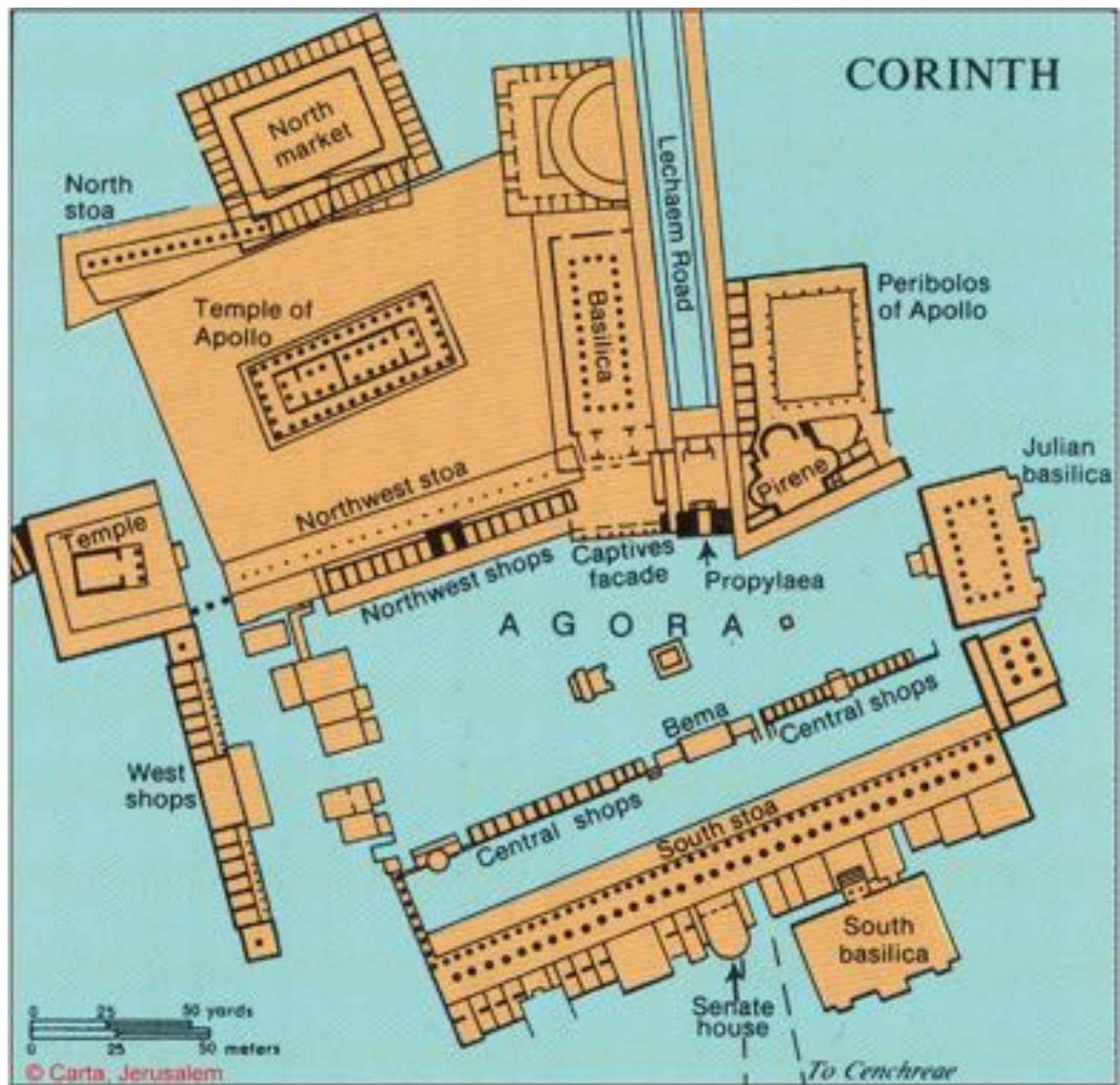
Corinthian Christians
may have brought
their disputes before
secular authorities at
the Agora (1 Cor. 6).

THE AGORA OF CORINTH



* Paul brought to
the judgment seat
(Acts 18:12–17)

CORINTH



0 25 50 yards
0 25 50 meters

© Carta, Jerusalem

To Cenchreae

Bema



Rom. 16:23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.



“Erastus bore the expense of this road”

Context

- Biblical Corinth included the city itself, the acrocorinth, and a number of components between its walls
- Corinth was the capitol of the Roman province of Achaia
- A major commercial center for land trade and sea trade because of its location and two sea ports (port of Cenchreae on the east and port of Lechaion on the west)
- The Diolkos was a road crossing the Isthmus of Corinth used to transport ships
- About 3 miles across the Isthmus
- Corinth was the major hub in northern Peloponnesus with roads radiating to other cities, and all the roads came from the agora
- Corinth was inside a 6 mile wall and covered about 2 square miles

Context

- Two additional walls were extended from the north side of the city to the Gulf of Corinth, and the two walls were about 6/10 of a mile apart, providing protection for the Lechaion road from the harbor to the city
- The acrocorinth at the south edge of the city was prominent and provided a defensible position and was known as a sacred mountain
- The top of acrocorinth had a temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, and housed a thousand cultic prostitutes
- The agora was an open air market and a prominent feature was the *bema* — a large platform in the midst of a row of shops at the agora from which a magistrate or Roman proconsul could render decisions (Acts 18:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- To purchase from the market is the Greek *agarazō* (1 Cor. 6:20)

Context

- Several small temples at the west end of the agora for Apollo, Tyche, Venus, and Hera
- Corinth controlled Isthmia, and in particular the popular Isthmian games (like the olympics)
- Corinthian officials administered the games
- Paul refers to the games in 1 Cor. 9:24-27
- The book of Acts records Paul's visits to Corinth in Acts 18:1-17 and 20:2-3
- Paul stayed 18 months when he founded the church on his Second Missionary Journey

Structure of 1 Corinthians

- Three major divisions
- Chapters 1-4: divisions within the church
- Chapters 4-6: areas of sin in the church
- Chapters 7-16: addressing questions raised in the letter they wrote to Paul (see 7:1) including about marriage (ch. 7), liberty and responsibility (ch. 8), spiritual gifts and church order (ch. 12), the resurrection (ch. 15), a collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (ch. 16)

1:1-17

- The salutation (1:1-3)
- Affirmations **but not commendations** (1:4-9)
 - Paul affirms they are Christians
 - We should take Paul's word for it
- Introduces the problem of divisions (1:10-17)
- What is the unity a church should have?
- VERSE 17: Paul was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel.
- What is the gospel? (1 Cor. 15; John 20:31; Romans 1:16)
- How good do you have to be? (1 Cor. 3)