The book of 1st Corinthians! This 16 chapter was letter written by Paul. Look at the first word of the first verse. *“Paul,”* and so there he self identifies and then all the way in the end, Chapter 16 verse 21 he again identifies himself as the author. There is virtually ***no controversy*** concerning the authorship of this letter as all agree that Paul is the writer.

It was written around the year 55 AD when he was in the midst of his **3 year residency** in Ephesus (during his third missionary journey). Paul places himself in Ephesus in chapter 16 verse 8 and we know from Acts 20:31 that he was there in Ephesus for three years and so we can place the time and date of the letter quite specifically. Now, just to give you bearings, before his three year stay in Ephesus, he had visited Corinth. You can read about that in Acts 18.

Actually, it’s a very ***interesting*** visit. He first meets Aquila and Priscilla who are tentmakers and believers (or they become believers) and they become ***BFFs.*** *(By the way, what do you call best friends that love math? Algebros!!)* Then, Paul goes into the synagogue every Sabbath and reasoned with the Jews from the scriptures but they reject him and Jesus. So what does he do? ***He goes next door!*** To a gentile named Justus…begins to draw a HUGE crowd of gentiles and the ruler of the synagogue gets saved…and his name was *Crispus!!* Things were up and down there in Corinth for about two years and finally Paul moved on and that’s when he came to Ephesus.

This letter is really a letter of ***concern and correction.*** Paul had received word that shortly after his departure the church had gone a bit off the rails. Factions were developing, cliques within the body of Christ. You know, the ***only acceptable clique in the body of Christ is if you want to be the slave team (aka, the leadership team).*** A group that just sets out to serve everyone else…every other little team is dangerous and sinful. James 2:8-9 says that you are showing favoritism and that is not from the Lord. Factions had developed, *moral irregularities* were being observed and it appears that Paul had perhaps received questions as to how to deal with these things.

The church had started well but it was not maturing adequately or correctly and so Paul gives the ***outstanding, practical, clear and spiritual*** instruction we find in this letter and let me tell you, it is ***jam jam jam*** packed! So much ***jam*** that originally it wasn’t called 1st Corinthians but Paul had titled it, *“Pump up the jam!”* HA, not really and that is really nerdy but I liked it and I have the microphone so there… Ultimately this is a letter to get them back on track and there is no doubt that it will serve the same purpose for us corporately and for you and I individually.

Now let me talk just for a minute on Corinth as a whole. Corinth was one of the centers of world commerce at this time. No city in Greece was more favorably situated for land and sea trade. The southern area of Greece is almost an island yet it remains connected by an *extremely narrow* isthmus…only 4 miles from sea to sea and that is part of the city of Corinth. If you wanted to sail from east to west or west to east and you didn’t want to spend the months and money it would take to go entirely around Greece (which absolutely no one did), then you would go through Corinth.

With that being said, it was the ***duty-free world trade center*** of the ancient world. Connecting two seas for ships carrying all kinds of goods from every part of the ancient world. It was a **rich** city. Affluent. Progressive. Always receiving new goods and new ideas from all parts of the world. And it was deeply entrenched in idolatry and debauchery as it really was a transit town. A lot of people *just passing through.* The temple of Aphrodite was always open and always busy. The place was morally wide open. So much so that in the Greek vernacular, to be called a *Corinthian* was like a *yo momma* joke…it was a high insult…insinuating that you were a person of ***unbridled immortality***. In a setting like this it is no wonder the church faced so many problems…and thus we enter the letter, now understanding who wrote it, when it was written, why it was written and the place in which to whom it was written.

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verse 1

* This *“to be”* was added by the Greek to English translators for contextual understanding but this time, *and my opinion – often is the case* –the addition just **doesn’t help at all.** Paul is not called ***to be*** an apostle, **he is an apostle** and its not by obligation or rank or worthiness or something he has attained to or earned in some sort of school…***it is a calling.*** Therefore, and I love this because he is about to lay down some correction for this church, **if you don’t like it…tough**. You didn’t and don’t qualify me or set my qualifications in any way…the apostleship I have is a calling and therefore a directive from God and therefore Paul sets out right out of the gates that he serves a higher power than man. ***He is a servant and respondent to God.***
* And then he throws in Sosthenes! **Savage!** HA! Why? Who was Sosthenes? He was the ruler of the synagogue when Paul left…and now Sosthenes has switched camps and become a Christian. Why is that so savage? Because Sosthenes wasn’t the first. The first ruler of the synagogue there in Corinth was Crispus and Paul had already won him for the Gospel! Now Sosthenes was won for the gospel. Every time the synagogue appointed a new leader, Paul would win them for Jesus. Savage! All he does is ***win win win*** no matter what…HA!!

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verse 2

* Even with all of the problems…all of the *off-trackness*…all of the debauchery and even sin in the body of believers…even though they were **SUCH** a mess…this letter is not written to the church *of Corinth.* That church doesn’t exist. ***It’s written to the church of God.*** I like that…no matter how big a mess I am or we are or the church becomes, I’m **His** mess and this church is not first and only C4, it’s God’s church.
* Truly, there is only one church. Man has so allowed the devil to ***devolutionize*** us and divide us…the church. But really, sinners saved by grace through faith by and because of the blood of Jesus as proven and evidenced and finalized in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave…no matter what ***denominational badge*** or ***peripheral doctrines*** you hang around that…***there are only two types of people period…folks that are saved and folks that are not saved.***  The folks that are saved, born again by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God…no matter where they go or what else they ascribe to…that’s the church of God…and they’re His problem, HA!!
* But my oh my how Satan has divided the church! When it was published in 2001, the World Christian Encyclopedia counted ***33,830 Christian denominations worldwide!*** What is the unifying factor that has been most attacked to cause such a split? The Word of God! How many preferential translations exist today? Over 50 just in English! It’s an interesting thought…all of these denominations and movements whom call themselves Christians and claim the name of Christ…but Psalm 138:2 says, *“You have magnified Your word above all Your name.”* What if we just all called ourselves ***WordofGod-ians***…the devil would hate that. That would erase his power to divide.
* Oh you may say, well the Word of God, the interpretations and perspectives would divide…**not so much**…these three abide, faith, hope and love and the greatest is love…***if we would return to the simplicity of the priority of doctrine then doctrinal differences would be forced to erase as the Bible clearly speaks unity and love and service and humility are the chief matters***…and so this is not the church of Corinth…no matter how big a mess it is…it is the church of God as is all other churches that hold to what we would call, *“The Essentials”* of the faith.
* Oh, an another unfortunate, *“to be.”* We aren’t called *to be* saints. If you are born again unto eternal life…**you are a saint now.** *Hagios* in the Greek…you’re holy now, made holy by the blood of Jesus and entirely acceptable in God’s presence! And we land here for the day…

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verse 3

* ***Grace and peace***…that is the correct order. Before we address the problem...the ***problems***…before we put a plan of correction together…before anything at all can move forward…these two things must be. **Receive the grace of God.** Grace pulls you out of the mud of *selfcondemnation*…out of the mud of *intense regret*…out of the mud of *hopelessness*…grace pulls you out of the *flood of confusion and confliction* that you’ve been drowning in for so long and **places you on solid ground.** Grace hinges upon no merit of your own, no performance, no progress, grace is simply grace. God showing His great love for you…and then peace. Peace with God and peace within yourself…coming to the place where you’re ok with just how messed up you are…not ok to stay there…but finally ok to admit it and no longer hide or run…***then you can move on.***