

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 2021 Week 13 (March 22 – April 2)

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly” ... and bear fruit in our lives) – Colossians 3:16.

Historical Context (Paul’s second missionary trip).

A Brief History

When Paul arrived in 51 CE, Corinth was only 100 years old, but already five times larger than Athens. Founded in the 10th Century BCE, had been the richest port and the largest city in ancient Greece. Strategically located guarding the narrow isthmus that connecting southern Greece to the mainland, it was a powerful commercial center near two seaports only 4 miles apart. Rome had leveled the city in 146 BCE, killing the men and selling the women and children into slavery. Some of the wealthier families escaped to the island of Delos. For the next 100 years, only a handful of people farmed the land in the area. Julius Caesar refounded the city as a colony in 44 BCE, named it Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis and populated it with 16,000 people: conscripted Italian, Greek, Syrian, Egyptian and Judean freed slaves. Within just a few years, the profitable trade at this crossroads of the nations brought thousands more eager settlers from all over the Mediterranean and enormous personal wealth to a local ruling class of self-made women and men.

146 BC Rome sacked Corinth, killing all the men, and selling the women and children into slavery. A few wealthy families escaped to the Isle of Delos, and would eventually return. For the next 100 years, Corinth was empty; and only a few people farmed the surrounding areas.

44 BC Julius Caesar re-established the city bringing 16,000 people to Corinth: Italians, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, and Jews.

Corinth quickly grew to be five times larger than Athens. On a 4-mile-wide Isthmus between southern Greece (Peloponnese) and northern Greece, and with a road across which, from ancient times, merchants could drag ships and save a 209-mile trip (184 nautical miles = @ 14% longer): once again the economy boomed. (*Lechaeum*, the western harbor in the Corinthian Gulf was the trading port to Italy and Sicily, and *Cenchreae*, the eastern harbor in the Saronic Gulf, was the port for the eastern Mediterranean countries.) This prosperity had brought enterprising business folks from all around the Mediterranean.



56 AD Paul writes the First letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus.

Day	Reading	Clarification from the Greek (the original language)
Mon.	I Corinthians 8 (:1)	Puffs up = To fill with air. “The contrast is striking between <i>puffing up</i> and <i>building up</i> – a bubble or a building (<u>Word Studies in the New Testament</u>)

- Tues. I Corinthians 9 (:19) **Slave** = “Doulos”. To the Greek, “... personal freedom was his prized possession. To be independent of others and to manage his own life and to live as he chooses is the essence of such freedom. The [slave] belonged by nature not to himself, but to someone else. Because [slavery] involved the abrogation of one’s own autonomy and the subordination of one’s will, the Greek felt only revulsion and contempt for the position of a slave (not the person who is the slave) ... The slave owes the master exclusive and absolute obedience.” Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1.
- Wed. I Corinthians 10 (:16) **Participation** = “Koinonia”. When applied to things, it means common mutual, public, belonging to the community. When applied to people, it means fellowship with / association / brotherhood, to relate to impartially. “It was taken up by the [Greek] philosophers to denote the ideal to be sought. ... To the people groaning under the oppression of the aristocracy, [the Greek poet Hesiod, Works and Day (c. 700 BC)] proclaimed the myth of a golden age, in which dreams of happiness, equality, justice and brotherliness were transposed into a shining primeval period.” Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1.
- It is interesting that the Greek gender of this word is feminine. Kohlberg, in The Stages of Moral Development (1958), wrote that the height of ethical development was when a person chose an action that they perceived as fair no matter what position they held in the situation. Gilliam, in In A Different Voice (1982), added to Kohlberg’s work by noting that women tend to also consider the collective community in making ethical decisions; and not simply the perspective of each individual. Gilliam also suggested that ethical development included that idea that – when possible – no one was hurt in the decision.
- Thurs. I Corinthians 11 (:18) **Divisions** = “Schismata” from which we get the word “schisms”. The Greek root means split / tear / divide / separate. It is used in Jesus’ parable of the torn garment (Matthew 9). “It is generally used literally of dividing into parts or breaking into pieces and only rarely in the figurative sense of the division of opinion.” Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3.
- Fri. I Corinthians 12 (6:) **Work** = “That which is accomplished through energy.” In Physics, the amount of work done = force x distance. In other words: it is not simply effort, but productivity. It is to create, produce, perform. It is an action.

Sources: www.thebiblejourney.org; www.padfield.com/acrobat/history/corinth.pdf; www.ascsa.edu.gr/excavations/ancient-corinth/about-the-excavations-1/history-timeline; insightsgreece.com/cruising-the-historical-corinth-canal; www.amusingplanet.com/2018/09/diolkos-ancient-trackway-that-carried.html; Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vols. 1-3; The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament; Analytical Greek New Testament; The Interlinear NIV. © DFN (May be printed, but not used for profit).

