

3. Pastoral Authority in Edification:

2 Corinthians 10:8 For if I boast somewhat more about our authority that the Lord gave us for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of doing so. (NET)

1. Members of the church at Corinth formed a cosmopolitan gathering with no established culture and low moral standards. The people of the city were associated with “religions,” but Christianity was new to a population weak in moral structure. Here’s a synopsis:

We are curious to know what sort of place Corinth was when Paul arrived and what sort of ministry he had in it. As to the city’s physical situation ... Corinth controlled the trade routes between the Peloponnesus and central Greece and across the Isthmus of Corinth. She administered the Isthmian Games, thereby serving as a religious, athletic, and a cohesive center in Greece.

As a new city—less than 100 years old when Paul visited it—it had not had time to develop a social structure with an aristocracy possessing illustrious genealogies. Probably the social and economic structure was more fluid than at most other centers in Greece. Many of those possessing wealth were the *nouveaux riches*, with all of the attendant inadequacies of that class. Since Corinth had not had time to develop a native culture, the culture it had was imitative and, as a result of the overwhelming economic interests of the community, was only a shallow veneer.

Since much of the population was mobile (sailors, businessmen, government officials, *et al.*), it was cut off from the inhibitions of a settled society. To make matters worse, the Corinthians commonly practiced religious prostitution in connection with the temples of the city. The social mobility and the evils of religious practices produced a general corruption of society. “Corinthian morals” became a byword even in the pagan Roman world.



It is no wonder that Paul had so much to say about the sacredness of the body in his first Corinthian letter. And if he wrote the epistle to the Romans from Corinth (as is commonly believed), he had plenty of reason for condemning the unmentionable practices alluded to in Romans 1. The message and power of the gospel are the same in the twentieth century as they were in the first.⁵

2. Consequently, the Zeitgeist at Corinth meant that Paul had to impose his pastoral authority in his sermons and especially in his two Corinthian epistles.
3. Cosmic mentalities do not want to orient and adjust to the order of truth. Facilitated wheel-tracks of wickedness had permeated Corinthian society and was detrimental to the spiritual life of believers.
4. Paul's efforts to restore order in Corinth, let him to write his second letter to the church. He indicates in chapter 13 that he wrote the epistle from Macedonia; some think from Philippi, others from Thessalonica.
5. His absence from Corinth had resulted in the congregation returning to the behavior patterns of the Corinthian culture. He indicates in 2 Corinthians that he intends to return to Corinth.
6. In Chapter 13, verses 2 and 10, Paul mentions his authority as apostle and pastor will be reluctantly imposed on his return:

2 Corinthians 13:2 I said before when I was present the second time and now, though absent, I say again to those who sinned previously and to all the rest, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone,

v. 3 since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through Me. He is not weak toward you but is powerful among you. (NET)

2 Corinthians 13:10 Because of this I am writing these things while absent, so that when I arrive I may not have to deal harshly with you by using my authority—the Lord gave it to me for building up, not for tearing down! (NET)

⁵ Howard F. Vos, "Paul in Corinth," in *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: How the People of the Bible really Lived* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 563, 564.

7. Note that Paul is approaching the Corinthian believers in a letter. His desire is to challenge them to refocus their attention on the fact that he is authorized by the Lord to be His spokesman and with that comes associated authority over those to whom he communicates.
8. Paul writes in verse 2 that he will use his authority, if necessary, “I will not spare anyone.” However, in verse 10, it is Paul’s desire that, “when I arrive I may not have to deal harshly with you by using my authority.”
9. In the twenty-first century, the Word of God is available not only face-to-face but also from a multiplicity of electronic contrivances. There is no excuse for anyone to be without consistent inculcation of the unadulterated truth of the Word of God.
10. However, these same contrivances overwhelm the biblically oriented sites so that Lucifer’s propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and boldface lies overwhelm them.
11. Assuming an average of 180 Bible studies per year, which would be a low estimate, I have taught over six-thousand Bible classes.
12. Those who have stuck it out for 34 years have had orientation to authority that has enabled them to use doctrine to fight the good fight of faith. They have been supportive and encouraging, joined by numerous others who have join up along the way.
13. Here’s the verse that has enabled those who have entered the doors of Chesterfield Day School on White Road and Grace Doctrine Church on South River Road to stay the course:

Hebrews 13:17 Keep obeying those pastors who themselves have authority over you, and submit to their authority by learning doctrine, for these same pastors keep watching for the benefit of your souls as those having to render an account. Keep on obeying them, for the purpose that they may do this accounting with inner happiness, and not with groaning, for this is unprofitable for you. (EXT)

4. The Purpose of the Pastor in Edification

1. Paul points out the threefold purpose of the pastor in:

Ephesians 4:12 ... for the purpose of equipping the saints, for the production of Christian service, for the edification of the body of Christ. (EXT)