

# Homily on First Corinthians (Argument)

by St. John Chrysostom

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*Paul addresses the root of the evil in Corinth, which is arrogance and a sense of superiority, and emphasizes the importance of humility and recognition of one's limitations.*

**Scripture:** Acts 18:10, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 5:1, 1 Corinthians 6:1, 1 Corinthians 11:17

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "False Teachings"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the city of Corinth, known for its wealth, wisdom, and division among its people. He highlights the challenges faced by Paul and Christ in this city, including the presence of false leaders, immoral behaviors, and conflicts within the church. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of addressing pride, divisions, and false teachings that were causing chaos and distractions in the Corinthian church. He points out various sins and issues such as arrogance, immorality, disputes over money, and lack of unity in the church, urging the congregation to repent and return to true faith and unity in Christ.

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## Transcript

As Corinth is now the first city of Greece, so of old it prided itself on many temporal advantages, and more than all the rest, on excess of wealth. And on this account one of the heathen writers entitled the place "the rich." For it lies on the isthmus of the Peloponnesus, and had great facilities for traffic. The city was also full of numerous orators, and philosophers, and one." I think, of the seven called wise men, was of this city. Now these things we have mentioned, not for ostentation's sake, nor to make, a display of great learning: (for indeed what is there in knowing these things?) but they are of use to us in the argument of the Epistle.

Paul also himself suffered many things in this city; and Christ, too, in this city appears to him and says, (Act. xviii. 10), "Be not silent, but speak; for I have much people in this city:" and he remained there two years. In this city [Acts xix. 16. Corinth put here, by lapse of memory, for Ephesus]. also the devil went out, whom the Jews endeavoring to exorcise, suffered so grievously. In this city did those of the magicians, who repented, collect together their books and burn them, and there appeared to be fifty thousand. (Acts xix. 18. arguriou omitted.) In this city also, in the time of Gallio the Proconsul, Paul was beaten before the judgment seat.

The devil, therefore, seeing that a great and populous city had laid hold of the truth, a city admired for wealth and wisdom, and the head of Greece; (for Athens and Lacedaemon were then and since in a miserable state, the dominion having long ago fallen away from them;) and seeing that with great

readiness they had received the word of God; what does he do? He divides the men. For he knew that even the strongest kingdom of all, divided against itself, shall not stand. He had a vantage ground too, for this device in the wealth, the wisdom of the inhabitants. Hence certain men, having made parties of their own, and having become self-elected made themselves leaders of the people, and some sided with these, and some with those; with one sort, as being rich; with another, as wise and able to teach something out of the common. Who on their part, receiving them, set themselves up forsooth to teach more than the Apostle did: at which he was hinting, when he said, "I was not able to speak unto you as unto spiritual" (ch. iii. 1.); evidently not his inability, but their infirmity, was the cause of their not having been abundantly instructed. And this, (ch. iv. 8.) "You have become rich without us," is the remark of one pointing that way. And this was no small matter, but of all things most pernicious; that the Church should be torn asunder.

And another sin, too, besides these, was openly committed there: namely, a person who had had intercourse with his step-mother not only escaped rebuke, but was even a leader of the multitude, and gave occasion to his followers to be conceited. Wherefore he says, (ch. 5. 2.) "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." And after this again, certain of those who as they pretended were of the more perfect sort, and who for gluttony's sake used to eat of things offered unto idols, and sit at meat in the temples, Were bringing all to ruin. Others again, having contentions and strifes about money, committed unto the heathen courts (tois exwqen sicadthriois) all matters of that kind. Many persons also wearing long hair used to go about among them; whom he orders to be shorn. There was another fault besides, no trifling one; their eating in the churches apart by themselves, and giving no share to the needy.

And again, they were erring in another point, being puffed up with the gifts; and hence jealous of one another; which was also the chief cause of the distraction of the Church. The doctrine of the Resurrection, too, was lame (ekwleue) among them: for some of them had no strong belief that there is any resurrection of bodies, having still on them the disease of Grecian foolishness. For indeed all these things were the progeny of the madness which belongs to Heathen Philosophy, and she was the mother of all mischief. Hence, likewise, they had become divided; in this respect also having learned of the philosophers. For these latter were no less at mutual variance, always, through love of rule and vain glory contradicting one another's opinions, and bent upon making some new discovery in addition to all that was before. And the cause of this was, their having begun to trust themselves to reasonings.

They had written accordingly to him by the hand of Fortunatus and Stephanas and Achaicus, by whom also he himself writes; and this he has indicated in the end of the Epistle: not however upon all these subjects, but about marriage and virginity; wherefore also he said, (ch. vii. 1.) "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote" etc. And he proceeds to give injunctions, both on the points about which they had written, and those about which they had not written; having learnt with accuracy all their failings. Timothy, too, he sends with the letters, knowing that letters indeed have great force, yet that not a little would be added to them by the presence of the disciple also.

Now whereas those who had divided the Church among themselves, from a feeling of shame lest they should seem to have done so for ambition's sake, contrived cloaks for what had happened, their teaching (forsooth) more perfect doctrines, and being wiser than all others; Paul sets himself first against the disease itself, plucking up the root of the evils, and its offshoot, the spirit of separation. And he uses great boldness of speech: for these were his own disciples, more than all others. Wherefore he saith (ch. ix. 2.) "If to others I be not an Apostle, yet at least I am unto you; for the seal of my apostleship are ye." Moreover they were in a weaker condition (to say the least of it) than the others. Wherefore he says, (ch. iii. 1, 2. oude for oute). "For I have not spoken unto you as unto spiritual; for hitherto you were not able,

neither yet even now are ye able." (This he says, that they might not suppose that he speaks thus in regard of the time past alone.)

However, it was utterly improbable that all should have been corrupted; rather there were some among them who were very holy. And this he signified in the middle of the Epistle, where he says, (ch. iv. 3, 6.) "To me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you:" and adds, "these things I have in a figure transferred unto myself and Apollos."

Since then from arrogance all these evils were springing, and from men's thinking that they knew something out of the common, this he purges away first of all, and in beginning says,

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