

# Illustrated Bible Life

## Corinth

Our studies this quarter take us into ancient Corinth, where the apostle Paul established a church. Two of his longest letters were sent to this church, and Paul probably sent at least two more letters. The articles in sessions 9 and 13 describe the Corinthians and Paul's relationship with them. It is clear from his letters that he had a special bond with these believers. They caused him both great joy and deep concern.

One of the letters that was likely lost to us is often referred to as his "tearful" or "severe" letter. In it, Paul apparently scolded the Corinthian believers for their tolerance of a sinful member of their congregation. Paul was so distraught that he cancelled a planned trip to see them for fear of what his anger might make him say or do—he felt he might make the situation worse. Instead, he wrote this letter that caused grief not only to them, but also to himself.

He chronicles some of this in 2 Corinthians, along with his expressions of grateful joy that they seemed to have taken his rebukes to heart and taken care of the problem—perhaps too zealously, as Paul urged them to let their punishment be enough, in order that the one who had sinned might be redeemed and brought back into fellowship with them.

The ancient city of Corinth has been extensively excavated, which means we know quite a lot about that city. In order to capture the city that Paul knew, I have chosen to liberally populate these pages with images of ancient Corinth. We've uncovered a fair amount of artifacts testifying to biblical references: The Erastus inscription; the starting line for the Isthmian games; the bema, where Paul stood before Gallio and where he most likely preached to the Corinthians. These are all pictured in the pages of this issue.

I hope you enjoy getting to know the ancient city of Corinth that Paul knew, and, by extension, the people he loved as well. While the Corinthians often get a bad rap as a troublesome church, Paul dearly loved these people, and invested many years and, yes, even tears in them. That is good news for us, who may be more like the Corinthians than we care to admit! God does not give up on those who seek Him.

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A poster-sized map of the ancient Mediterranean world during Paul's day can be found in WordAction's Bible Teaching Maps (Map 10). In addition, Photo 1 on FoundryLeader.com shows the NASA photo on page 19 with the addition of the names of several Greek cities, including Corinth.