

SUPPLEMENTARY WEB RESOURCE 4



REPRESENTATIVE SPEECHES FROM CHLOE'S HOUSE CHURCH

The following four speeches represent the theological and political orientation of each faction. They were written for use in an adult Sunday school class or study group, and are especially helpful for a one- or two-session study in 1 Corinthians.

ERASTUS (FOR THOSE OF APOLLOS)

Ave, honorable friends! I am Erastus. I am proud to be a trusted assistant in the Corinth provincial treasurer's office. I am not relishing this letter from Paul. I first learned of Christ from the eloquent preaching of Apollos of Alexandria, and frankly, I'd rather hear from him. In his preaching of God's kingdom, he emphasized the blessings God has in store for us, blessings that we are already receiving. In Christ we live the resurrection now, not a second-class bodily resurrection in the future. As the learned Alexandrian he is, Apollos teaches that the wisdom of Jesus' teachings is consistent with that of the great philosopher Philo.

Now about the divisions Chloe's complaining about. What would you expect when you have such a diverse collection: there's myself, mingling day to day with Corinth's movers and shakers, and with a chance to join the ranks of the honorable—if I don't do anything rash. And there's a woman like Dionysia, the former champion sprinter, who now organizes Corinth's Olympian contests for women. Some of us in the house church bear important civic responsibilities, while on the other hand some of us are at the low end: slaves, debtors, and onetime prostitutes.

I'm afraid Paul may just make matters worse in our house church by attacking those of us who provide most of the food and funds to help everybody survive this famine. For heavens' sake, we're the ones they depend on when they get in trouble. Paul often comes across as though he knows it all and only his opinion counts. I can't imagine Jesus being like that.

CHLOE (FOR THOSE OF PAUL)

Hello, friends! I'm Chloe. Together with my partially disabled husband, we host the gathering of the saints in our own house. After all that's happened, we feel so blessed by God to have this place to house our modest cloth making business, where we can employ believers who once had nowhere to turn. I'm hoping Paul's letter will begin to move us in a better direction as a house church.

I sent some of my people to see Paul in Ephesus while they were delivering a shipment of goods and to tell him of our divisions. Some in our house church are acting as though their so-called "honorable" status entitles them to have more influence and more leeway than those of us with modest or downtrodden origins. They think they're so important they can do whatever they want. They boast about their connections, they dine in the temples with the rich and famous, they eat meat offered to the gods, they act the super-patriot bowing before Caesar's image, they flaunt sexual standards, they make the Supper of the Lord into a private drinking party, they even take other believers to court!

How can we show the world God's righteous way when they mock God's ways with their self-importance and arrogance? All the while they claim to follow the teachings of Apollos! He had his own style, but he would never stand for such behavior. Paul is so right, that the ways of empire and the rulers of this age are doomed. I sure hope he can get that across to these self-described Apollonians.

MATTHIAS (FOR THOSE OF CEPHAS)

Hello! I'm Matthias. I came to Corinth when Emperor Claudius expelled us Jews from Rome six years ago. I escaped from my master, disguised myself as a woman, and fled with other Jewish refugees leaving Rome.

That was a terrifying experience, but it did let me escape sex slavery to my master in Rome. I had such a guilty conscience about breaking God's law, but I was not permitted to resist. Then when I met Cephas in his travels, I was so overwhelmed to know that baptism into Christ could wash away all the evil I was forced into.

My work with Chloe's collective is to go door-to-door selling cloth. Sometimes customers insist I come in for a bite to eat—probably food offered to idols—and urge me to join them in an offering to their household gods. I feel guilty doing that but I'm afraid to offend or make enemies.

My worst fear is that my old owner will find me and torture me for running away. As a Jew like himself, I hope Paul's letter can help me. But I wonder sometimes whether he doesn't care more about Gentiles than Jews and takes the laws of Moses too lightly. But he does stand up for us little guys and preaches that God will bring us into God's kingdom. Actually I wish Cephas would write us a letter some time.

DAPHNE (FOR THOSE OF CHRIST)

Greetings! I'm Daphne. As a newborn I was left "exposed" to die on the city dump, likely because my parents wanted a boy. A wealthy woman picked me up and made me her slave. She always lectured me about how grateful I should be. They sold me into a soldier's household, where I was raised as a slave mistress, then sold again into prostitution. I was miserable and prayed to Demeter and Kore for solace, but to no avail. After some years when I was no longer considered sexually desirable, I was put on the auction block, where Chloe's people found me.

Chloe bought my freedom and treated me as one of God's children. Alexandra trained me as a nurse and midwife. She says I'm a natural. Unlike the others in Chloe's house church, we don't claim Paul or Apollos or Cephas: we belong only to Christ because it's with our baptism in Christ that there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male or female. We know in our very being the new creation, the dying and rising with Christ that Paul preaches.

With my sisters I love to pray and prophecy and speak in tongues. We're afraid Paul will side with those who complain about our enthusiasm in worship and how we wear our hair. We're not quite sure what Paul thinks of us sister prophets. He doesn't seem to understand the full implications of being "in Christ." Don't get me wrong. Paul is way ahead of his time. It's from him that we've learned about our freedom in Christ. We owe him everything. So we have not by any means given up on him. He just needs another blinding flash from heaven to get the full message.