

1 Corinthians 04 - Paul's Servanthood; Paul's Humility; Paul's Authority

II. Conditions reported to Paul (1 Cor 1:10—6:20)

(1) By Chloe's household: divisions (1:10—4:21)

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(a) Paul's servant-hood (4:1-5)

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1 Corinthians 4

(G) Paul's relationship with the Corinthians (4:1-21)

(a) Paul's servant-hood (4:1-5)

(i) Paul's stewardship (4:1)

1 This is the way *any* person is to regard us: as servants of Christ and **stewards** of the **mysteries of God**.

1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

1 Think of us as servants of the Messiah and as servant managers entrusted with God's secrets.

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

- After Paul's preliminary conclusion in 3:21-23, he reverts back to Apollos and himself as servants (3:5-8) to explain to the Corinthians that they are responsible to God and will be evaluated/judged by Him

- The Corinthians needed to understand that "servants" and "stewards" were responsible to the One who put them in service

- "...servants" - *hypēretēs*, refers to servants under their master; one who functions as an assistant in a subordinate capacity. Originally referred to slaves who rowed below a ship's deck; later, it had a broader meaning.

— Christ is in heaven carrying out His work on earth by means of "assistants" like Paul and Apollos. The church should view these teachers as "servants of Christ" rather than party

leaders to be followed.

- "...stewards" - *oikonomos*, a special servant whom his master trusted with the administration of his business or property; a manager put in charge of his master's possessions.

— A steward devoted his time, energy, and talents to furthering his master's interests, not his own. They were accountable to the master for their work: 1 Cor 4:2; Cf. Matt 25:14; Luke 16:2; 19:11-27.

— Paul devoted his time, energy and talents toward planting a church in Corinth; Apollos assisted by watering the church. Both Paul and Apollos were put in charge of dispensing "the mysteries of God."

- "...mysteries of God" - a "mystery" (*mysterion*) is a previously hidden truth that is now revealed

— As stewards of this "mystery" (new revelation), Paul and Apollos were responsible to God to dispense it by proclaiming it to others.

There are 15 mysteries listed in the NT, most of them are concerned with God's plan for the church (Cf. Eph 3:1-7):

1. Mysteries of the kingdom concern new truths about the kingdom's postponement in light of Israel's rejection of their Messiah (Matt 13:11ff)
2. The mystery of Israel's partial hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (Rom 11:25)
3. The mystery of the gospel (Rom 16:25; Eph 6:19)
4. The mystery of the rapture of one living generation (1 Cor 15:51)
5. The mystery of the summing up of all things in Christ (Eph 1:10)
6. The mystery of believing Gentiles being fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers of the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants with believing Jews (Eph 3:6)
7. The mystery of one man and one woman in marriage picturing Christ and the church (Eph 5:32)
8. The mystery of Christ in you (Col 1:26-27)
9. The mystery of Christ (Col 2:2; 4:3)
10. The mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7)
11. The mystery of the faith (1 Tim 1:9)
12. The mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16)
13. The mystery of the seven stars as seven churches (Rev 1:20; 2:1--3:22)
14. The mystery of God's judgments (Rev 10:7)
15. The mystery of the woman and the beast (Rev 17:5,7)

(ii) The requirement of faithfulness (4:2-3)

2 **In this case**, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found **trustworthy**.

2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

2 Now it is required of servant managers that each one should prove to be trustworthy.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

- "In this case" - refers to the case where one is a steward of God
- "...trustworthy" - *pistos*, these stewards would be trustworthy by accurately dispensing the mysteries of God to others. Every minister is responsible to God for dispensing God's truth to others accurately and completely, whether or not others like the message or not.
- The most important quality in a steward is that he manage his Master's affairs so the desires of his Master materialize (Cf. Matt 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-13; 19:11-27; 1 Peter 4:10)
- There are small ministries and there are large ministries; God didn't say, Well done My *successful* servant, He said, Well done My *faithful* servant. It's not the size or impact of the ministry that will be rewarded, it's the faithfulness of the minister.
- For Paul, this meant remaining faithful to the gospel as he received it and preached it (Cf. 15:1-11)

3 But to me it is an insignificant matter that I would be **examined** by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, **I do not even examine myself**.

3 But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.

3 It is a very small thing to me that I should be examined by you or by any human court. In fact, I don't even evaluate myself.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

- Paul couldn't care less how well the Corinthians or anyone else thought he was carrying out his stewardship; his personal evaluations of his own performance were irrelevant too. What mattered to Paul was God's estimation of his service.

- "...examined" - judged, interrogated. Paul and Apollos were servants of the Corinthians, but the Corinthians were not their masters. God is their only master.

- Paul frequently endured harsh judgment: laboring in Corinth; imprisoned in Caesarea; when in Rome (1 Cor 9:3; Acts 24:8; 28:18)

- "...I do not even examine myself" - Paul did not give much effort to introspection. He leaves this to God, the only impartial Judge.

- He is speaking of his apostleship, not human deeds

- Instead of introspection, he concentrated on doing the job God had put before him, to the best of his ability, since he was accountable (Cf. 3:13)

(iii) Paul's accountability to God (4:4-5)

4 For I am not aware of anything against myself; however I am not vindicated by this, but the one who examines me is the Lord.

4 For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

4 For my conscience is clear, but that does not vindicate me. It is the Lord who examines me.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

- As far as Paul could tell, he was serving God faithfully; however, if something had come to his conscience, he would have dealt with it.

— However, he realized that his conscience may not be as sensitive as it should be, but only the Lord had the insight and authority to judge (examine) him

— Paul's point is that the Corinthians' evaluation of Paul's ministry was of little consequence to him because he was not responsible to them, but to the Lord

5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before *the* time, *but wait* until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light **the things hidden in the darkness and **disclose the motives of *human* hearts**; and then **praise will come to each person from God**.**

5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

5 Therefore, stop judging prematurely, before the Lord comes, for he will bring to light what is now hidden in darkness and reveal the motives of our hearts. Then each person will receive his praise from God.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

- "Therefore" - since Paul was only accountable to the Lord...

- "...do not go on passing judgment before *the* time" - only one Person has enough insight and authority to pass final judgment; this verse refers to events that will take place in the future, during the kingdom

— Those who were saying, "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas" were judging God's stewards (3:8), but the Lord is the one who will judge them (the stewards) at the proper time

— The Corinthians are acting like Kingdom Now theologians, thinking they were already reigning as kings (Cf. v8)

— The "time" refers to the future judgment seat of Christ, where all believers will stand. There is no pre-judgment seat that any human being will ever sit on (Cf. Rom 14:10-12).

- "...the things hidden in the darkness" - the unconscious motives of God's servants; there are things hidden deep within us that we don't understand and motives that we have not considered. However, the Lord knows them.

— "darkness" often has a sinister meaning (Acts 13:11; Eph 5:11) but here it is neutral: simply referring to matters of the heart that are unknown (Ps 139:12). All secrets will ultimately be exposed (Rom 2:16; Rev 20:11-13).

- "...disclose the motives of *human* hearts" - I don't need to be in a position to evaluate other people's motives...you can evaluate their doctrine or their works, but not their motives

— Therefore, we should be careful when we judge the motives of others because we're assuming things that only God knows. If we do judge the motives of others, we must realize that we have an imperfect picture.

- "...praise will come to each person from God" - on that day, God will find something in every Christian's life that is praiseworthy. Of course, the more faithful will receive more praise than the less faithful (3:8).

— As believers, we should always strive to serve for the future approval of the Lord rather than the present praise of people

Each person should look to himself to see how he is fulfilling his stewardship, though he should not over-scrutinize. If the Lord brings something to mind he should deal with it. Further, he should not be concerned with evaluating others before the time. Not only is his evaluation of others imperfect, but others are not responsible to him, but to the Lord alone. The Lord is the ultimate judge who will disclose our hearts and motives on the day of the judgment seat. Rewards will be issued accordingly.

(b) Paul's humility (4:6-13)

6 Now these things, **brothers and sisters**, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos on your account, so that in us you may learn not to **exceed what is written**, so that no one of you will become **arrogant** in behalf of one against the other.

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

6 Brothers, I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what the Scriptures say. Then you will stop boasting about one person at the expense of another.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

- Paul explained his and Apollos' place in ministry in order to shed light on how the Corinthians should view them. Through this, Paul hoped that they would learn to not exceed what was written (in Scripture).
- "...brothers *and sisters*" - another clue that Paul is writing to believers
- "...exceed what is written" - to go beyond the teaching of Scripture (Cf. 15:3-4); to venture beyond Scripture is to adopt human wisdom, which is what has referred to in every OT quote so far (Cf. 1:19, quoting Is 29:14; 1:31, quoting Jer 9:34; 2:9, quoting Is 64:4; 65:17; 2:16, quoting from Is 40:13; 3:19-20, quoting from Job 5:13; Ps 94:11)
- The entire point of what Paul has written was that the world's wisdom is futile and will eventually be destroyed, so a believer should *only* boast in Christ and Him crucified
- If the readers avoided this, they would not "become arrogant" in one of their teachers over another, by exalting Paul, Apollos, or Cephas over another (3:5-7)
- "...will become arrogant" - *phusioō*, describes attitudes and activities that smacked of human pride instead of godly wisdom and love (Cf. v18-19; 5:12; 8:1; 13:4)
- Paul used this word frequently to address one of the Corinthians' main problems (Cf. v18-19)
- Some Corinthians were in danger of becoming arrogant and some already were. Sticking exclusively to Scripture was the key to a proper attitude and outlook on life.

7 For **who considers you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive?** And if you did receive it, **why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

7 For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

7 For who makes you superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

- Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were not intrinsically superior to anyone else, which is what the attitude of judgment that they had presupposes. He attempted to unveil their arrogance by asking them three questions:

- "...who considers you as superior?" - "you" is singular; an attitude of superiority is behind judging others, yet Paul tells the Corinthians that they were not superior to anyone. The answer, of course, is no one.

- "...What do you have that you did not receive?" - an attitude of merit lies behind boasting, yet the Corinthians had no merit because everything they received came from God (Cf. John 3:27; James 1:17)

— This is true in a far deeper sense than is usually understood. No one consulted you about your birth, geography, culture, parents, skills, aptitudes, etc. Why do you boast? It is

the height of ingratitude not to acknowledge the Source. Corinthians prided themselves on the gifts of the Spirit. They were puffed up. They sat in judgment of other believers because they did not possess the same manifestations.

- "...why do you boast as if you had not received it?" - boasting of one over another was inappropriate because it all came from God

— If God grants grace, then His people receive His blessings, but cannot take any credit for their acquisition. Faultfinding, gossip, and judging, comes to an end. Everything we have outside of Hell is by the grace of God. Grace is the death of pride. It is the ultimate gift (Eph 2:8-9).

— Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things present, things to come, all things belonged to them, they belonged to Christ, and Christ belonged to God. Therefore, they should boast only in God and Christ (2:2)!

Law vs. Grace

The Law is perfect: that is why imperfect men cannot keep it.

The Law is holy: that is why sinners are condemned by it.

The Law is just: therefore it cannot show mercy to the guilty.

The Law prohibits; Grace invites and gives.

The Law condemns the sinner; Grace redeems the sinner.

The Law reveals sin; Grace atones for sin.

By the Law is the knowledge of sin; by Grace is redemption from sin.

The Law was given by Moses; Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The Law demands obedience; Grace bestows and gives power to obey.

The Law says do and do not; Grace says "it is done."

The Law says "continue to be holy"; Grace says "it is finished."

The Law curses; Grace blesses.

The Law slays the sinner; Grace makes the sinner alive.

The Law shuts every mouth before God; Grace opens the mouth to praise God.

The Law condemns the best man; Grace saves the worst man.

The Law says, pay what you owe; Grace says I freely forgive you all.

The Law says "the wages of sin is death"; Grace says "the gift of God is eternal life."

The Law says "the soul that sinneth it shall die"; Grace says Believe and live.

The Law was done away in Christ; Grace abides forever.

The Law puts us under bondage; Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God (Rom 12:1).

Apart from grace, there is no salvation for anyone. As long as we feel we have something of merit or worth to bring to the table, we are not even a candidate for salvation. Bankruptcy requirements (1 Cor 11) are that the protection of the court be dependent upon admission

of no alternatives; full submission to the court. When God creates a new thing, He always begins with nothing.

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, / wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you!

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, / wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.

8 You already have all you want! You have already become rich! You have become kings without us! I wish you really were kings so that we could be kings with you!

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

- Paul sarcastically points out that he wishes that he himself, as a lowly apostle of Christ, was also reigning with them, since they were evidently already reigning in the kingdom (at least that's how they were acting)

— In a sarcastic, back-handed way, the theory that Christ and the saints are now reigning in a present kingdom of God on earth is specifically refuted (Cf. v5,9-13; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21)

— The Corinthians were behaving as though they had already received their commendation (rulership, kingship) at the judgment seat of Christ, which was in line with their over-realized eschatology. They should have been acting like under-rowing servants and stewarding God's work faithfully (v1), but instead were acting like kings and judges.

- "You are already filled" - Paul's sarcastic description of their spiritual maturity

- "...you have already become rich" - his ironic description of their highly rewarded status

- "...you have become kings" - further sarcasm that describes their triumphalist arrogance that they were already ruling in the kingdom

- "...without us" - if these things had in reality already occurred, Paul wonders why he and Apollos weren't reigning as kings with them

— The reality is that the judgment seat of Christ and the kingdom had not yet come, but it was Paul's wish that they had so that he and Apollos could reign alongside the Corinthians

— Kingdom Now theology (amillennialism and postmillennialism), which developed later in church history, would be outright rejected by the Apostle Paul (4:8, 9-13). Though we do have citizenship in the kingdom (Col 1:13), Jesus (Acts 1:6-8) and Paul clearly believed that the kingdom was still future (1 Cor 6:9-10).

9 For I think, God has exhibited us, the apostles, last of all **as men condemned to death**, because we have become **aspectacle** to the world, both to angels and to mankind.

9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display in last place, like men condemned to death. We have become a spectacle for the world, for angels, and for people to stare at.

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

- Differing opinions of what Paul may have had in mind here, but he seems to have been thinking of the apostles as the ultimately humiliated group. They were the leaders, and their sufferings for the cause of Christ was common knowledge.

- Paul's point, sarcastically, was how inappropriate it was, because of the apostles' plight, that the Corinthians would live as "kings" rather than sharing in the suffering of their teachers

- "...as men condemned to death" - may refer to the situation of a criminal who entered the Roman Colosseum to fend for his life against wild beasts. If they survived, it was only to live another day in the Colosseum.

- Paul viewed himself as condemned to death (Acts 9:16; 21:11-14,33) and it later came to pass (2 Tim 4:6-7)

- "...a spectacle" - *theatron*, theater; the use of this word may mean the Corinthians' viewed the apostles as entertainers rather than proclaimers of God's Word

- It is possible that Paul composed this epistle at about the time a riot occurred in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41). The same word occurs 2x in Luke's account of the riot where Gaius and Aristarchus were dragged into the theater (Acts 19:29,31).

10 We are fools on account of Christ, but you are prudent in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are without honor!

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

10 We are fools for the Messiah's sake, but you are wise in the Messiah. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honored, but we are dishonored.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

- The contrasts between the world's perception of the apostles and the world's perception of the Corinthians show the differences in their conditions

- The world thought the apostles were "fools" because they were willing to suffer ridicule for Christ's sake. On the other hand, the world regarded the Corinthians as "prudent" in their behavior as Christians because they were carnal and adopted the mindset of the world.

- The world viewed the apostles as "weak" but viewed the Corinthians as "strong."

- The world viewed the Corinthians as "distinguished" but viewed the apostles as "without honor"
- The Corinthians were dangerously close to the world and not even distinguished from it (3:3)

11 Up to this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed and roughly treated and homeless;

11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;

11 We are hungry, thirsty, dressed in rags, brutally treated, and homeless, right up to the present.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

- Paul now details the "dishonor" (v10) of apostles who bear the word of the cross (1:18). At the very time Paul is writing this epistle, he was hungry and thirsty physically, poorly clothed, roughly treated, and homeless

— They was homeless because they were constantly on the move with no set place to rest their head

12 and we labor, **working with our own hands**; when we are verbally abused, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure *it*;

12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

12 We wear ourselves out from working with our own hands. When insulted, we bless. When persecuted, we endure.

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

- "...working with our own hands" - leather-working (Acts 18:3) was that of a common slave so they would not be a burden on his converts (Cf. 2 Cor 11:9)

— The Corinthians despised manual labor; they viewed it as the work of slaves. Paul earned his own living (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8; Cf. 1 Thess 4:1).

- When verbally abused, they responded with a blessing; when they were persecuted, they endured it. Both responses were considered foolishness to the world, but by doing so they were taking on the character of their Savior (Matt 5:44; Luke 23:34), and Stephen (Acts 7:60), which we are to imitate (1 Peter 3:9).

13 when we are slandered, we reply as friends; we have become as the **scum of the world**, the **dregs** of all things, *even* until now.

13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, *even* until now.

13 When slandered, we answer with kind words. Even now we have become the filth of the world, the scum of the universe.

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

- "...scum of the world" - the refuse that was cleaned off in order to make something clean; figuratively refers to unsavory character

- "...dregs" - *peripsema*, scum, refuse; used especially of those condemned criminals of the lowest classes who were sacrificed as "scapegoat" offerings

— It was the custom at Athens to reserve certain worthless persons who in case of plague, famine or other visitations from heaven, might be thrown into the sea, in the belief that they would cleanse away, or wipe off, the guilt of the nation.

The apostles' outlook, attitude, and resulting Spirit-led behavior were perceived by the world as pitiful, yet the Corinthians, who claimed to venerate them, had adopted the world's attitudes, outlook, and resulting behaviors. Even though they thought they were wise, they were really fools. To become truly wise they needed to become fools in the eyes of the world by adopting the apostles' attitude, outlook, and resulting behavior that stemmed from the cross of Christ (2:2; 3:18).

(c) Paul's authority (4:14-21)

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but **to admonish you** as my beloved children.

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

14 I'm not writing this to make you feel ashamed, but to warn you as my dear children.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

- Paul's purpose for contrasting the world's perceptions of his worldview and resulting behavior was not to shame the Corinthians but to admonish them

- "...to admonish you" - *noutheteō*, to counsel about avoiding an improper course of conduct. It is a word of warning that if they continue their current course, it will end badly.

— If they did not respond to his gentle, reasoned approach, he would have to be more severe the next time. Paul is like a loving father admonishing his children because he wants the best for them.

15 For if you were to have countless **tutors** in Christ, yet *you would not have* many **fathers**, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would not have* many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

15 You may have 10,000 mentors who work for the Messiah, but not many fathers. For in the Messiah Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

- Like a loving father, Paul explains why the Corinthians should accept his series of contrasts as corrective...

- "...tutors" - *paidagogos*, a household slave or freedman who accompanied a child of well-to-do parents to/from school; tutored the child in proper conduct, guarded him from danger and evil influences, encouraged correct speech, grammar, diction, etc. But he was replaceable; the father always remained in charge.

- "...fathers" - *didaskalos*, Paul was much more than a tutor to the Corinthians...he was their spiritual father. He gave birth to the church through the preaching of the gospel.

— Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand the relational differences between a tutor and a father, then understand his admonishment in the context of a father-son relationship

16 Therefore I urge you, be imitators of me.

16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

16 So I urge you to imitate me.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

- The Corinthians were to learn from Paul as a son learns by observing the example of his father. A good father sets the example for his child to follow. A good father doesn't just say, "do what I say" but also "do what I do."

— Likewise Jesus said the Father showed Him all that He did so He would be very careful to do it (Cf. John 5:19-20). Children learn best when they have an example to follow.

— Imitators: Cf. 1 Cor 11:1; Gal 4:12; Eph 5:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7,9

17 For this reason I have sent to you **Timothy**, who is **my beloved and faithful child in the Lord**, and he will remind you of **myways** which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

17 That's why I sent Timothy to you. He is my dear and dependable son in the Lord and will help you remember how I live for the Messiah Jesus as I teach everywhere in every church.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

- "...Timothy" - he would soon serve as Paul's personal representative in Corinth (alone with Erastus, Acts 19:22)
- Timothy was probably en route to Corinth at the time Paul wrote this epistle
- He was acquainted with the faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice (2 Tim 1:5); he was apparently converted when Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra and Derbe on the 1st missionary journey (Acts 14:8-21).
- He eventually accompanied Paul and was heartily recommended by the Christians in Lystra (Acts 16:1-3)
- He frequently completed tasks when Paul himself was hindered, in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. In these places, Timothy labored in Paul's place (Acts 17:15; Phil 2:22; 1 Thess 3:1-3,6).
- "...my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" - Cf. 16:10-11; Acts 19:22)
- "...my ways" - the ethical principles that Paul taught and practiced
- It is not always readily understood how what we believe transfers to how we live. This is especially true when someone in a non-believing family believes the gospel. They may learn many doctrines; who is God, what is the gospel, what is justification, propitiation, forgiveness, and much more, but how these truths transfer to daily living is often not grasped.
- This is why it is important to surround ourselves with models of those who have learned how to live out these truths. There is a place for mentoring others. The Corinthians had forgotten how to transition right belief into right practice (right orthodoxy into right orthopraxy). Paul sent Timothy to remind them.

The Christian leader today not only must teach the gospel, but also must teach how the gospel works out in daily life and conduct. And that union must be modeled as well as explained. Can you define propitiation, but not know what it is like to feel forgiven? Can you defend the priority of grace in salvation, but still feel as if you could never be good enough? Do you define holiness, but later find yourself practicing firm self-discipline rather than pursuing holiness. Has your theological grasp intersected your day-to-day life?

18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to evaluate you.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

- Some of the Corinthians, who did not value Paul or his teachings, had become arrogant in their estimation of themselves and their ideas (Cf. v6)

— They had done so as if they wouldn't have to face Paul in person again ("as though I would not come to you"), thinking he was only threatening to visit them again

- Evidently they felt Paul would not return to Corinth, and even if he did, they could overcome his influence. Arrogance blinds a person to reality.
- They failed to appreciate Paul's commitment to their spiritual well being (1:4; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3-4; 1 Thess 1:2-3; 2 Thess 1:3)

19 But I will come to you soon, **if the Lord wills**, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.

19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

19 But I will come to you soon if it's the Lord's will. Then I'll discover not only what these arrogant people are saying but also what power they have,

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

- "...if the Lord wills" - Paul planned to return to Corinth, if the Lord allowed him to do so

— His intention was, after traveling through Macedonia, to arrive in Corinth and spend some time, perhaps the entire winter (16:5-7)

— He will leave Ephesus after *Shavout* (Pentecost) (16:8), probably in 56 AD. Paul (and us) are not free agents, but subject to the Lord's direction.

— In 2 Cor, he responded to criticism from within the church that he promised to come but did not (2 Cor 1:15-18,23), but he affirmed his intent and gave a good reason for not coming

- Assuming he would be able to return to Corinth, he was not particularly interested in the words they use, but the source of their power, which could bring about actual results

— He has insisted so far in this epistle that if their power comes from human wisdom, they can't produce real spiritual results. Only the Spirit can produce real spirituality (Cf. 2:15-16).

— The Corinthians possessed the Spirit, but they just needed to appreciate Him and make use of His word and work in their lives.

20 For the **kingdom** of God is not in words, but in **power**.

20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

20 for the kingdom of God isn't just talk, but also power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

- Paul explains his point in v19 by making a comparison with the arrival of the kingdom of God...

— It appears that Paul's point with this comparison is that the kingdom of God is not found out by words, but by power. That's because the kingdom will appear suddenly, without warning, as a manifestation of the power of God (Cf. Luke 17:20-21,23-24).

- If the Corinthians' words came from heaven where the kingdom of God is presently, it would be obvious by their power
- As we study what God has to say about eschatology in His Word, we understand His plan, goals, and priorities, therefore we can and should align our lives according to those priorities in the present (Cf. 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Peter 3:10-11).
- "...kingdom" - this term appears chiefly in the synoptic Gospels, but also in Paul's epistles (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9,10; 15:24,50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1,18)
- Wicked people do not inherit it (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5)
- There is no verb in the Greek text, so it must be supplied. Paul is anticipating a futuristic kingdom by the verbs he uses in v5,8. To interpret the kingdom reference in v20 in the present tense would be for Paul to contradict himself in what he says in v5,8.
- Other "kingdom" references (6:9-10; 15:24,50) are futuristic
- The contrast between "word" and "power" was mentioned previously (Cf. 2:1-5)
- Real, effective "power" that brings change is the power of the Holy Spirit working through humble messengers
- "...power" - *dynamis*, the messianic kingdom will be characterized by "power" rather than boastful talk
- This doesn't mean that we'll be mute in the kingdom, just that "power" will be emphasized; it's a comparison for emphasis, not exclusion (Zeph 3:9; Zech 8:23)
- The same Greek term is used in Heb 6:5 to describe the great public miracles that belong to "the age to come"
- People use this verse to argue that we're currently in the kingdom. However, that's not what the verse is saying when you harmonize v20 with v5 and v8.
- There is no verb in the Greek text, so it must be supplied. That Paul is anticipating the future is seen in v5,8 of the same chapter. When you put v20 in context by reading v5 and v8, you can figure out if it's talking about the present or the future...

1 Cor 4:5,8,20:

5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before *the* time, *but wait* until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *human* hearts; and then praise will come to each person from God.

- "...wait until...will...will come" - future tense

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, *I* wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you!

- This verse shows Paul sarcastically refuting the buying-in to Kingdom Now theology by some in the church in Corinth

- Paul is talking about a future reign, in response to Corinth's idea that they were already reigning at that time

20 For the kingdom of God is not in words, but in power.

- After understanding the context (v5,8), v20 makes sense...
 - The kingdom is a future reality in v5, a future reality in v8, thus it is a future reality in v20
 - Through the larger context of 1 Corinthians, Paul always refers to the kingdom in the future tense (6:9-10; 15:24,50)

21 What do you desire? That I come to you with a **rod**, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

21 Which do you prefer? Should I come to you with a stick, or with love and a gentle spirit?

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

- "...rod" - discipline

- The Corinthians' response to this epistle would determine Paul's theme when he returned to them. He gives them two choices: a teacher challenging his unruly pupils, or a delighted father.

— Paul put the ball in their court because believers cannot be forced into a proper response, but must deliberate within themselves and make a decision

— Paul did not want to come to them again with a "rod." He was a loving spiritual father, but he was willing to take care of business if they rejected his admonition. But if they exercised self-discipline and humbled themselves, he would come to them with love and a spirit of gentleness.

Paul wraps up his argument from 1:10—4:21 with a statement that these matters are going to come to a head when he visits. Are they going to yield to his appeal for them to make Christ and His cross the central feature of their thinking and lives so that the Spirit can transform them into Christ-likeness? This was his real concern for them and the only way forward. For believers to make gains in the Christian life their outlook must centralize the cross because it controls their attitude in every day living so that they are in a position to appreciate the magnanimous gift of the Spirit who produces spiritual behavior and growth.