

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

1 Corinthians 4:6-21

The pilot of a small plane came back to the cabin to tell his passengers the plane was going down, but there were only three parachutes for the four people. His passengers included a Boy Scout, a computer expert, and a minister.

The pilot added, "I have to use one of the parachutes because I have a wife and three small children So he took one and jumped.

The computer whiz said, "I need one; I'm the smartest man in the world and everyone needs me So he took one and jumped.

The minister turned to the Boy Scout: "You're young and I've lived a rich life, you take the parachute; I'll go down with the plane."

The Boy Scout said, "Relax, pastor, the smartest man in the world just grabbed my knapsack and jumped out!"

He thought more highly of himself than he should have!

That was Corinthians' problem!

CONCERNING DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH 1:10-4:21

They have their eye on the messenger, instead of God who gave them the message.

BASIS OF DIVISIONS 1:18-4:7

MISTAKEN CONCEPT OF THE MESSAGE 1:18-3:4

MISTAKEN CONCEPT OF THE MINISTRY 3:5-4:7

At heart their problem is a self-centered problem with pride.

Passage seems complex, but main idea is simple:

They've been focusing on people – on personal preferences, instead of on serving God!

Detailed discussion helps us see that they're clinging to an exaggerated view of their own importance.

They are exalting themselves, as if they're the ones who make ministry significant or successful.

AN IMPORTANT WARNING 4:6 *Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.*

Don't get puffed up!

Don't get carried away with your own importance!

An old fable tells about a little **frog** who was startled when he saw an ox drinking out of the pond. He had never seen such a huge creature. Immediately he hopped away to tell his grandfather. Determined that no one should seem larger in the eyes of his grandson than he, the old bullfrog began to puff himself up, "Was he bigger than this?" "Oh, yes, Grandfather," answered the little **frog**, "much larger." He inflated himself more. "Bigger than this?" "Lots bigger!" The old **frog** continued to puff until he exploded.

Paul warns us not to get "*puffed up*;" nor carried away with our importance!

TWO CRITICAL QUESTIONS 4:7 *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

1. Who made you superior?

Who makes you better than anyone else?

(Warren Wiersbe) "A young preacher asked a friend of mine, 'Please pray that I will stay humble.' My friend replied, 'Tell me, what do *you* have to be *proud* about?'

John the Baptist testified: '*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. . . . He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease*' (Jn. 3:27, 30). ➤

2. What do you have that you didn't receive (from God)

A woodpecker was pecking on a dead tree. Suddenly lightning struck the tree and splintered it. The woodpecker escaped unharmed. Looking back at the dead tree, he exclaimed, "Man, Look what I did!"

What do you have that you were not given?

If it was given to you, as a gift of God's grace, why are you bragging about it?

HE gets the glory; not us!

There's no basis for personal pride.

GOD has given us *EVERYTHING* worthwhile that we have.

That's what grace is all about.

The Corinthians had forgotten that they owed their very *souls* to God!

Christian Conciliation Services: "recognition of God's grace is the key to forgiveness and reconciliation."

(David Prior) "At the heart of their boasting was the conviction that they were a successful, lively, mature and effective church. People were *satisfied* with their spirituality, their leadership, and their life together.

WATCH OUT WHEN THAT HAPPENS! => FBC EFC?

AN ILLOGICAL CONTRAST:

Their pride contrasted to the apostles' suffering

Already you have all you want!

4:8-13

“Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! ⁹For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹²We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.”

The Corinthians' exalted position 4:8 *“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so we might be kings with you!”*

Paul uses irony to get their attention. "You're too busy feeling too good about yourselves!"

[He compares their pride and feeling of superiority, with the apostles.]

The apostles' abased (lowly) position 4:9-13 *“For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.”*

Roman generals paraded their victorious army through streets of the city with all the trophies won; the procession was called a “Triumph.” At end came a little group of captives, who were taken to the arena to fight with the beasts and die. The Corinthians were acting like conquering generals displaying their trophies; the apostles were like the little group of captives, dragged along at the end of the parade, doomed to die.

[Notice the rest of the contrast:] *[Is this contrast right? Is this the way it ought to be?]*

<u>Corinthians:</u>	<u>Apostles:</u>	
Strong	Weak	Persecuted
Honored	Dishonored	Slandered
	Last in procession (9)	Scum
Filled (all you want)	Hungry and thirsty (11)	Public spectacle
Rich	Poorly clothed (in rags)	Homeless (11)
Kings	Roughly treated	Work hard with our hands
Wise	Fools (10)	Reviled
	Condemned to death	Dregs (refuse)

Conclusion: *Something is wrong!*

Why is the world honoring you?

They’ve identified the wrong enemy!

They’re flirting with the world and rejecting God’s servants!

They're trying to look good in the eyes of the world.

They're looking for honor in the wrong places.

They are seeking the world's respect

But *godly* people are *persecuted* by the world.

Paul warned believers that people who seek to live *godly* lives will suffer *persecution*.

"Paul describes what the price tag had been for him:

He faced: Danger—like men condemned to death

Ridicule—a spectacle to the world

Contempt—fools for Christ's sake

Privation—hunger, thirst, poorly clothed, beaten, homeless

All the while, he was supporting himself by his own hands

Are we too used to the soft life for our own good?

Paul compares his treatment to being "*treated brutally*," description refers to beating a slave. Paul was treated as a slave for the sake of Christ.

(Barclay) "'When we are *insulted*, we bless.' ... Aristotle says that the highest virtue is "*great-heartedness*," the virtue of a person who won't *endure* being insulted. To the Greek world Christian humility was foolish.

Heb. 11:35b-38 35 . . . {[some] Women received back their dead, raised to life again.} Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were

sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them....

Jim Elliot— **"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."**

Paul's personal example, demonstrates how we should respond to persecution:

- (1) Work hard (even in the midst of affliction)
- (2) Bless those who bless you (Luke 6:28)
- (3) Endure persecution
- (4) Answer kindly (when others slander, or speak evil of you.)

HIS ADVICE AS A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN 4:14-17

I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. 15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

[Modern psychology tells us not to tell a person what's wrong. "Let them come to their own conclusions."

That was never Paul's philosophy! He could have used either of . . .]

TWO KINDS OF COUNSEL 14-17

1. He could make them feel ashamed => send them on a guilt trip.

Gk word conveys idea of *turning inward* (<= => “entropy), turning against oneself [introspection, feeling guilty].

2. He could admonish (*warn, advise, counsel*) them.

Admonish, noutheteo, means “to place in the mind.”

Paul did not wish to turn the Corinthians against themselves but to encourage a change of heart.”

Often used to describe father's counsel to his children.

Paul refuses to use shame and introspection

He uses admonishment, counseling advice.

Basis for his instruction: 15-16 *Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.*

He was their spiritual father—gives fatherly counsel because he *is* their father. Reason for his concern: his affection. He comes as a loving father.

They might have many pedagogues (*guides, teachers, leaders, counselors*), but only one father.

Guides from 6 to manhood—usually older men, mature, trusted servants.

They might change several times during life of a child.

Paul was the father—a special bonding had taken place between them.

Therefore, he exhorts them to imitate him

(*Imitators* = "mimics")

Timothy's mission: **17** ... *I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*

He will remind them of Paul's ways so they can imitate him.

WARNING: THE DANGER OF IMPENDING DISCIPLINE

4:18-21 *"Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. ²⁰For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?"*

He plans to come visit them soon. They don't have long to work this out.

He, the father, is going to look for his attitude in them.

When a father comes home suddenly, he may find 1 of 2 situations: if he finds his child doing what he wants, his arrival is joyous. If the child is caught disobeying his father's desires, the encounter will not be a happy one!

"Which do you want? Shall I come with a rod, or with a loving, gentle spirit?"

If the problem is not corrected, he will bring a rod.

(Wiersbe) "He's not like modern mother who shouted, 'This is the last time I'm going to tell you for the last time!'"

PRACTICAL COUNSEL FOR US:

1. Lack of love for one another and a great self-image often go together.

Watch out when the church begins to feel pretty good about itself!

2. Whatever the church has that is worthwhile hasn't come because we've earned it.

God gave it GOD gets the glory

3. God's fatherly concern for correction doesn't produce *guilt*; it produces *change*

4. If we don't correct our own attitudes and actions, God will do whatever it takes to change us (to turn us around).

That's the scary thing about God's fatherly correction!

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR GOD TO GET OUR ATTENTION?