

1Corinthians – Week 18

I. Review: 1Cor. 4:6-8

A. How do we keep from boasting in the wrong things?

- i. Do not go beyond what is written, especially regarding man's wisdom
 1. Allowing the Scriptures to mold our thinking will keep us from being puffed up by exalting one teacher over another.
- ii. You are who you are because of God
- iii. Everything you have is from God
- iv. Stay humble and teachable: Avoid becoming great in your own eyes!

II. Continuation

A. Paul outlines what his life is really like in contrast to the proud Corinthians...

- i. 1Cor. 4:9 (ESV), *“For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.”*
 1. Paul seems to have the Roman amphitheater in mind, where condemned criminals meet hungry beasts, while the audience looks on.
 2. How inappropriate for the Corinthians to be living like “rich men” and “kings” as opposed to joining with the sufferings of their teachers!
 - a. The Corinthians were acting as if they were conquering generals, displaying their awards!
 - b. Meanwhile, Paul saw himself like a captive in an arena, doomed to die!
- ii. 1Cor. 4:10-13 (ESV), *“We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.”*
 1. To the world, the apostles are fools, weak and without honor!
 - a. But the Corinthians, unlike their gospel father, saw themselves wise in their own eyes!
 - b. They saw themselves strong in their own strength and boasted in themselves!
 2. But Paul describes himself, along with the other apostles, as lacking food and water; being poorly dressed; being buffeted (that is, roughly treated), homeless and hard-working!
 3. Then he explains how he responds to such treatment:
 - a. We bless (that is, did good to) when insulted
 - b. We endure when persecuted
 - c. We speak kindly when slandered
 - d. Yet, despite our kind and graceful responses, we are treated as scum!
 - i. Scum means filth; it’s the dirt that comes up as a result of sweeping or wiping a surface.
 - e. They were treated like refuse, that is, off-scrapings, like old, caked-on food on a plate.
 4. Paul calls the Corinthian disciples to imitate Paul...
- iii. 1Cor. 4:14 (ESV), *“I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”*
 1. By his use of the term “*beloved*,” Paul is expressing respect as well as affection.
 2. He warns (or admonishes) them like a father warns his children in hope that they would see their wrongs and change their ways.
 3. His desire was not to criticize and punish but to warn and encourage!

- iv. 1Cor. 4:15 (ESV), *“For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”*
 - 1. The term “guide” means “tutor” or “instructor”
 - 2. A tutor was a personal attendant who would look after a child – he’d take him to school, looked after him after school hours, etc.
 - 3. And, although the tutor would be respected by the child, he did not have the same personal, parental relationship like a father has.
 - 4. Paul is making his appeal to the Corinthians, not as their tutor or mentor, but as their gospel father!
- v. 1Cor. 4:16 (ESV), *“I urge you, then, be imitators of me.”*
 - 1. The term “urge” denotes a calling near.
 - 2. Paul is not raising his voice and wagging his finger at their faces, saying, “you better shape up or else!”
 - 3. Figuratively speaking, Paul was putting his arms around them, encouraging them to be like their gospel father: servants, under-rowers and stewards of God!
 - 4. The term “imitator” comes from the Greek word which means to “mimic.”
 - a. The Corinthians were being urged to mimic Paul’s life!
 - b. If they’d watch him, they’d see that he does not seek after human wisdom nor does he live by the praises of men nor was he impressed by lofty speech.
 - c. Rather, they’d see a man seeking to please his master, Jesus Christ!
 - d. By imitating him:
 - i. They will live in the lowliness that Paul models.
 - ii. They will live as those who are considered fools, weak and without honor by the world!
 - iii. They will return good for evil and kindness for slander (4:10-13).
 - iv. They will acknowledge that everything they have comes from God and that they are not extraordinary people, except that God, through Christ, had saved them and sanctified them, making them “something” who were once were “nothing.” (1:1-9, 26-31; 3:10).
 - v. They will think of themselves no more than lowly field workers and servants, stewards, and even under-rowers, waiting for the judgment of God to see if they were faithful (4:5).
 - vi. They are to rid themselves of all boasting of coworkers so that they can work together in God’s field (3:5-9).
 - vii. The goal was not to be Paul-like, but Christ-like (1Cor. 11:1).
 - 5. One of Paul’s disciples, Timothy, exemplifies what the Corinthians are called to be. Therefore, Paul writes...
- vi. 1Cor. 4:17 (ESV), *“That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.”*
 - 1. The Christian life is a manner of life or pattern of life, and is characterized as “the ways that are in Christ.”
 - 2. The Christian life is not a mere list of doctrines that we say “yes” to.
 - 3. It is a way of life that is intended to transform us.
 - 4. Mentors help us have this kind of life!
 - 5. Mentors are not optional, they are critical!
 - a. Matthew 28:20 – teach them to obey, Jesus said.
 - 6. A mentor is there to help a disciple become more like Jesus.
 - 7. He is to be someone who imitates Christ, not just speaks of Christ.
 - 8. Paul was such a mentor and Timothy was a great mentee.
 - a. Timothy did not go beyond his teacher, but because like him (cf. Matthew 10:24-25a).