

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four Paul addresses the Corinthians' divisive issues in terms of personal humility as faithful stewards (vv.1-8). Paul demonstrates how the Apostles were the greatest example of enforced humility, as a pattern for all believers in the Church to emulate (vv.9-13). Paul then urged the Corinthians to remember the teaching they received when they first came to Christ and to follow the example he was setting for them day by day (vv.14-16). Timothy is dispatched to review Paul's previous doctrinal teaching (v.17), and the Corinthians are warned that Paul's next visit to their city may not be a pleasant one for them (1st Cor. 4:18-21).

Servants and Stewards

1. "Let a man" (1st Cor. 4:1) forms a natural contrast to "Let no man" (1st Cor. 3:18). The negative imperative (prohibition) addressed to "nobody" is now followed by a general imperative addressed to "anybody" and therefore "everybody."
 2. λογίζεσθω v.3s.pres.mid.imper. λογίζομαι #3049: *reckon, count, compute*. A mathematical and accounting term, then of cognitive processes. In Bib. lit. esp. used by Paul.
 - a. Love does not take a wrong suffered into account (1st Cor. 13:5).
 - b. Through reconciliation, God no longer counts our trespasses against us (2nd Cor. 5:19; Rom. 4:8).
 - c. Justification is the crediting of Righteousness to our account (Rom. 4:6,11 cp. vv.3,9,22,23; Gal. 3:6; Jms. 2:23).
 - d. When facts or information is taken "into account" then the thought process is rendered *consider* or *regard* (Lk. 22:37; Acts 19:27; Rom. 6:11; 9:8).
 - e. When this thought process works itself through thoroughly then this term is rendered *consider, ponder, let one's mind dwell on* something (Phil. 4:8; Heb. 11:19; 1st Cor. 13:11; 2nd Cor. 3:5; 10:7).
- Wuest: "In this manner let a man measure and classify us."
3. Paul continues to teach against the Corinthians' divisive thinking by directing them to consider any teacher they have as Christ's helper, and God the Father's steward (1st Cor. 4:1,2).
 - a. ὑπηρέτης #5257: *servant, minister, helper* (Acts 13:5). The ὑπηρέτης was the servant who attended each man-at-arms (ὀπλίτης) to carry his baggage, rations, and shield (Thuc. 3.17).
 - b. οἰκονόμος #3623: *steward, manager of household affairs* (Lk. 16:1ff.; Tit. 1:7; 1st Pet. 4:10).

"Labour together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God (θεοῦ οἰκονόμοι καὶ πάρεδροι καὶ ὑπηρέται). Please ye Him under whom ye fight, and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply."
Ignatius to Polycarp, chapter 6.

4. The Corinthians are out of line in their ranking of Paul & Apollos, and in their arrogant and boasting rankings of one another (1st Cor. 4:5-7).
5. Such activity is a rejection of the principle of faithful stewardship (1st Cor. 4:2-4).

Apostolic Spectacles (1st Cor. 4:9-13)

1. This passage begins with Paul's opinion. "I think" δοκῶ fr. δοκέω ^{#1380}. These are the thoughts of a believer in the Spirit and forming viewpoints (γνώμη ^{#1106}) (cf. 1st Cor. 7:25,26,40).
 - a. Paul included his viewpoints and opinions as a believer in Whom God was working.
 - b. The Holy Spirit included these viewpoints and opinions within the Body of Scripture, thus validating the Absolute Truth being communicated (2nd Tim. 3:16; 2nd Pet. 1:20,21; 2nd Sam. 23:2).
2. For the believers of the early Church, the prime exhibits to display the grace of Christ were the Apostles (1st Cor. 4:9).
 - a. God had previously utilized the Old Testament prophets for His communication to man (Heb. 1:1).
 - b. God had ultimately spoken through His Son (Heb. 1:2).
 - 1) The greatest of all Old Testament prophets (Matt. 13:57; 21:11; Acts 3:22 cp. Deut. 18:15,18).
 - 2) The Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Heb. 3:1).
 - c. ἀποδείκνυμι ^{#584}: *to point away from one's self, to point out, exhibit. to prove by arguments, demonstrate* (Used 4x in NT: Acts 2:22; 25:7; 1st Cor. 4:9; 2nd Thess. 2:4). δείκνυμι ^{#1166} used 31x. ἀπόδειξις ^{#585}: *demonstration* used once (1st Cor. 2:4).
 - d. The Apostles were exhibited as condemned to death, and as spectacles.
 - 1) ἐπιθανάτιος ^{#1935} used only here in the NT. Refers to one who has been sentenced, but not yet executed. Contrasted with ἐπιθανάτος used of one terminally ill.
 - 2) θέατρον ^{#2302}: *a theatre, public show, spectacle*. Used 3x in NT (Acts 19:29,31; 1st Cor. 4:9).
 - e. God the Father's theatrical portrayal of grace has two target audiences: angels and man (cf. Eph. 3:10).
3. The unreality of the Corinthians' perceived greatness is contrasted vividly with the reality of the Apostle's enforced humility (1st Cor. 4:8,10-13).
 - a. Like Laodicea (Rev. 3:17), Corinth was convinced of their own greatness (1st Cor. 4:8a).
 - b. Paul comments how he wished such were already the case (1st Cor. 4:8b), even as Christ wished that He could already commence 2nd Advent activity (Lk. 12:49,50).
 - c. Because of their pride, the Corinthians had failed to pursue God's wisdom, power, and honor. Instead they had substituted this world's wisdom, power, and honor (v.10).
 - d. Financial contentment is defined as food and covering (1st Tim. 6:8), but the Apostles were often denied even that (v.11).
 - e. As living representatives of Christ, the Apostles became the greatest pictures of Christ.
 - 1) Roughly treated (Matt. 26:67; 27:26,27-31).
 - 2) Homeless (Matt. 8:20).
 - 3) Toil (Isa. 53:3; Mark 6:3; Jn. 4:6).
 - 4) Reviled (1st Pet. 2:23; 3:9ff.; Matt. 27:39-44; Ps. 22:6-8).
 - 5) Persecuted (Matt. 5:44-46; Rom. 12:14; Jn. 15:20).
 - 6) Slandered (Matt. 5:11,12; 12:24; 27:12,13; Jn. 9:24-34; 18:30; 19:12,15).
 - f. The summary definition of Apostles: scum of the world, the dregs of all things.

Paul's Purpose in Writing, Sending, and Coming (1st Cor. 4:14-21)

1. Paul's purpose in writing the Apostolic Spectacles paragraph was to admonish the Corinthians as a father would admonish a son (1st Cor. 4:14-16).
 - a. The purpose was not to shame them. ἐντρέπω^{#1788}. Shame can actually be an effective spiritual device towards believers (2nd Thess. 3:14) or unbelievers (Tit. 2:8), but that is not Paul's intent here.
 - b. The purpose was to admonish them.
 - 1) νουθετέω^{#3560}: *to admonish, warn, exhort; to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct* (BDAG). νοῦς + τίθημι. Used 8x (Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14; 1st Cor. 4:14; Col. 1:28; 3:16; 1st Thess. 5:12,14; 2nd Thess. 3:15).
 - 2) νουθεσία^{#3559}: *admonition, exhortation*. Used 3x (1st Cor. 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Tit. 3:10).
 - 3) νουθέτημα: *admonition, discipline* (LXX Job 5:17)
"Putting sense into the heads of people. A thankless, but necessary, task." A.T. Robertson
 - c. Paul's admonishment was motivated by a fatherly love (1st Cor. 4:14,15).
 - 1) ὡς τέκνα μου ἀγαπητά. ἀγαπητός^{#27}: *beloved, object of ἀγάπη love*.
 - 2) Corinth has had many (μύριοι, myriads) "tutors" but only one "father." παιδαγωγός^{#3807}: *schoolmaster*. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.
 - 3) Paul describes the spiritual love he has for those he has spiritually "fathered" in a similar way to how he addressed the Thessalonians (1st Thess. 2:7,8).
 - d. Paul's admonition is accompanied by an exhibition (1st Cor. 4:16). παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε.
 - 1) Paul came along side (παρακαλέω) and urged them to become something they weren't already (γίνομαι).
 - 2) μιμητής^{#3402}: *imitator* (1st Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1st Thess. 1:6; 2:14; Heb. 6:12; 1st Pet. 3:13^{*}).
2. Paul's purpose in sending Timothy was to review the Christian Way of Life and the content of God's Word, which Paul exemplified and taught consistently (1st Cor. 4:17).
 - a. "He will remind you of my ways." Paul's "ways" reflect the Christian Way of Life that he lived at all times.
 - b. Paul's teaching was consistent in every place (πανταχοῦ) in every local church (ἐν πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ).
3. Paul's purpose in coming back to Corinth was to evaluate their power (1st Cor. 4:18-21).

Wuest: Not as shaming you am I writing these things, but as my children, beloved ones, I am warning and admonishing you, for if you may be having ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet not many fathers do you have, for in Christ Jesus through the gospel, as for myself, I begot you. I beg of you, please, therefore, be becoming imitators of me. For this very reason I sent to you Timothy, who is my child, a beloved one, and one in the Lord, who is trustworthy and can be depended upon, who will bring to your remembrance my ways which are in Christ Jesus, even as in every assembly everywhere I am teaching. Now, on the supposition that I am not coming to you, certain ones have an inflated ego. But I will come to you shortly if the Lord wills, and I will take cognizance, not of the speech of those with an inflated ego but of their power, for the kingdom of God is not in the sphere of speech but in that of power. What are you desiring? With a stick shall I come to you or in a love that has as its impelling motive the benefit of the one loved, the exercise of which love demands self-sacrifice, and in the spirit of meekness?

* μ μ K L P 69 I vg^{ms}; NA27