

1 Corinthians 4 Commentary-Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS **1 Corinthians 4**
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NEXT

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 The Marks of a God Called Preacher

Paul says, do you want to regard a preacher? Do you want to esteem a preacher? Then there are some guidelines for you that you are going to have to follow. If you are going to regard Paul, or Apollos, this is the format you are going to have to use. These are the marks of a God called preacher. He says it so clearly in 1 Corinthian 4:15. Let's get into it and just see: The responsibility of a God-called preacher; the requirement of a God-called preacher; and the reward of the God-called preacher.

In 1 Corinthians 4:15 we want to talk about "The Marks of a God Called Preacher." Preachers and how people think about them has very much been on Paul's mind for the last three chapters that we have been studying together. The Corinthian believers were babes in Christ in the sense that they were intentionally immature. They refused to grow up. They would not walk by faith. They would not attach themselves to Christ and be vessels through which God could use. No, instead of doing that, there was jealousy and strife marked by the fact that they attached themselves to the preachers of that day; Paul, Apollos, Cephas, as we learned in 1:12.

Paul follows that line of thinking all the way through to where we are in 4:1-5. Instead of attaching themselves to Jesus, they attach themselves to preachers at the exclusion of others. "I am of Paul," some would say. "I am of Apollos." "I am of Cephas." Well, Paul wanted them to know that they were robbing themselves. They were robbing themselves first of all of that which God wanted to do through them and they were robbing themselves of the reward that they could have one day when they stood before Him.

It has been very clear what he says. Why would you want the cow when you can have the farm? I mean, attach yourself to Christ. Don't attach yourself to the vessel. Attach yourself to the One to whom the vessel is attached. He affirms to them that they themselves are temples of God, as you and I both studied in chapter 3. He lets them know, just like Paul was a vessel and a temple, Apollos was, where God lived, God the Holy Spirit. For some reason or another, they thought Christ was divided, that Paul got more than Apollos got and more than they got. Therefore, they had to attach themselves to a human being.

Paul was trying to say the same thing Peter says in one of his epistles. He says, "To those who have received a like faith such as ours." I mean, I got the same thing Paul got and you did, too. All of us did. I mean, the ground is level. All of us got Jesus when we received Him. His Spirit came to live in our life. That is what Paul wants them to see. Stand on your own two feet. Come out of the nursery, walk by faith and attach yourself to Christ.

Well, he admonishes them, in the last few verses we looked at in chapter 3, to become foolish so that they might become wise. In other words, become like a little child. Stop thinking you know anything and let God teach you. Let His Word enrich your life. He sums up two and a half chapters in one verse there in 1Cor 3:21. If you have any doubt that his context has been "don't you attach yourself to men and don't you boast in men," then look at 1Cor 3:21. It is exactly what he says as he comes down now to his main thought. He says, "So then, let no one boast in men." That is their problem. They were men centered and not God centered. So he continues in 1Cor 3:21, "For all things belong to you."

Oh, if our eyes could just be opened, we could see what is ours in Jesus Christ. He says in chapter 1, "You have been enriched in all things in Him." Now he says, "All things belong to you." Now what in the world does he mean by that? Well, to understand that, you have got to look at 1Cor 3:23. This is just a little bit of review. You have got to realize this. In 1Cor 3:23, the last phrase is the key to the whole thing. The last phrase says, "and Christ belongs to God." Now the word "belongs to" is implied. It is not in the text. The literal would be "and Christ God's." Now he doesn't mean Gods plural but God's possessive. In other words, He belongs to God. He is God's.

There is no definite article used there. You say, "Thanks, but what does that mean?" Well, a definite article identifies something, but when it is not there it qualifies something. So he is talking not just about God, he is talking about the Godhead; no one person of the Godhead but the whole Godhead. And it says, "and Christ belongs to the Godhead." He is God is what he is saying.

I tell you, that is a beautiful thought. Had it not been for the fact that Christ is God who came to this earth, born of a virgin, then He could not have brought God to man nor could He have brought man to God. That is the whole thing. Rest right on that one truth that Christ belongs to God. He is a part of the Godhead. He is not mere man. He is the Godman as He came to this earth. We now can belong to Him. He says, "and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

Now think about it for a second and the deductions begin to fall in place. If Christ is God, we know that He sustains all things and He created all things, so all things are His, right? If I belong to Christ, then in Christ all things belong to me. We haven't gone back to Genesis much, but do you remember in Genesis 1:26 the dominion that God gave to man that man lost when he sinned? We forget sometimes that was reclaimed by the second Adam. It wasn't given back to man. It was given back to Christ, the God-man. And in Him all things belong and consist. So therefore, if we belong to Him and all things belong to Him, then in Him we become heir to all that is His.

Now the first thing you usually want to do is sit down and make up a list. Alright! If everything belongs to me, where do I start? I want to see what is on this list. Well, now, relax. Paul has a list for you. As a matter of fact, you don't want to go anywhere else until you look at the list that he has. The first thing that he mentions in 1Cor 3:22, he says, "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas." What is he saying here? He is saying, "Listen, all of the teachers and preachers are gifts to the body." He doesn't mean everybody who stands behind a pulpit is a gift, because there are many teachers and preachers who do not honor the Word of God. Oh, no, no, no. He is not talking about them. He is talking about those who are truly Godcalled. They are given to the body.

If you attach yourself to a preacher, if you attach yourself to a teacher as they had done, you get off track somewhere. No one man has it all together. But all of them have been given, and they are equal. You draw from whoever that you might be equipped and encouraged. But remember, you are a temple of God and the true teacher, the Holy Spirit, lives in you. All the teachers have been given to the body, so why attach yourself to one, or why attach yourself to another?

Well, he goes on to say, "or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you." Now that is an interesting thought. The world belongs to us. Some people have jumped on that doctrine and said that means the materialistic world. We can have the physical and tangible things of this world. Is that what he is talking about? No way. In fact, it wasn't the Lord who brought the kingdoms of the world to the devil. It was the devil who brought the kingdoms of the world to Jesus and tempted Him with them. You see, He has temporary domain over this world. We are just strangers down here passing through, looking for a city not made with human hands.

So what is he saying then? How does the world belong to us? I believe it is in the sense that is in him first of all, but it is in the sense that we comprehend something about this world that the world does not comprehend. Most of the people of this world see themselves as victims, but we do not. We know who is in control of it. We know that life does not work against us, that life works for us. And having this understanding of it and appreciation for it, in that sense, the world belongs to us.

You know, we can cast our vote when the Presidents are nominated, and if our candidate wins, that is wonderful. If he doesn't win, that is wonderful, because God is still in control. The book of Daniel clearly teaches us that He raises up kings and establishes kingdoms and is the one who takes kingdoms down. So we know God is in control.

I shared with you earlier about the cows in the pasture behind my house. I own those cows. I don't feed them. I didn't even pay for them. They are on somebody else's land, but I appreciate them, and they are mine. I come out in the back yard and talk to those cows. You have to get their attention. You say, "MMMMoooooOOOO!" Now you have got to know how to do that. You have got to know their language. They may have their backs to me, but every time I do that every one of them, with the funniest looking faces, will turn around and look at me. I have got their attention. I stand out there in the back yard. Well, I own those cows. I own those cows. Do you know why? Because I appreciate those cows. There is something about them.

You see, the world belongs to those who understand who created it, who is in charge of it and who sustains it. All things belong to us. He is not talking about materialistic anything. He is just simply saying that because we are in Christ and all things belong to Him, all things belong to us.

He says life and death belongs to us in 1Cor 3:22. How so? Somebody might say, "Well, hold it, hold it, hold it. I know a friend of mine who loved Jesus as much as anybody has ever loved Jesus and they died an untimely death. How can you say that life belongs to them?" The word "life" is zoe, which in scripture is never the length of life or the busyness of life. It is the essence of life. You see, the essence of life is the quality of life.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus only lived on this earth 33 years as the Godman before He was crucified? Yet, the verse is written of Him in John 21:25 and it says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did which, if they are written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written." Wow, what a life in 33 years. That is what he is talking about. It is the quality of life. And to have that kind of quality of life, you have to have the One who is that life. Paul says in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

And death. You say, how do I possess death? Oh, friend, you possess death because death is nothing more to a believer than a doorway into the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself. That is all it is. Jesus shed a single tear when Lazarus died. You say, "Why did He do that?" Because death was a piece of cake to Him, just from here to there. Bat your eye. But He wept when He looked over at

Jerusalem who had rejected Him as being their Messiah. That is when He wept. We weep over the wrong things.

Believers, all things belong to us. Life and death belong to us. We understand who gives it and sustains it. We understand death because His scripture enlightens our minds.

1Cor 3:22 goes on to say, "things present or things to come." They belong to us. You say, how do they belong to us? I think Ephesians 1:14 really qualifies that. He is talking about the Holy Spirit. He says, "The Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of our inheritance." Do you know what a pledge is? It is the earnest money, not money in the sense, but the earnest of something. You know, when you go to buy a house, you put earnest money down. What does that mean? That means that is guaranteed full payment is coming later on. The Holy Spirit living in me right now is the guarantee that full payment is going to come later on.

So all things present, I can live in the victory that Jesus already has given me in Himself. But then also, live in the promise of what is to come. That is God's Word. That is His mind. That is His understanding.

In 1 Corinthians 13:12 it says, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known." So truly what he says is, all things belong to Christ but in Him, all things belong to us.

What is the key of this whole thing, though? What has Paul been saying for three chapters? Stop listening to the wisdom of men. Look back in 1Cor 3:2:16. I think this is the key to understanding why we can realize all things belong to us. Verse 16 reads, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." Oh, man! You say, "I don't have the mind of Christ." You do if the Holy Spirit of God lives in you. "Well, how come it is not functioning?" Because you are not living according to the Word of God. You are living like the church of Corinth. You are living according to the word of men and the world's ways. You are not living up under the Word of God. You are not attached to Christ by being attached to His Word, by living by faith? If you will do that, He renews your mind and you begin to see as He sees and think as He thinks. Then you can understand why all things belong to us because we are in Him and He belongs to God.

That is the bottom line of everything he has been saying. Stop attaching yourselves to men. Stop parading men's wisdom and all these things around. Attach yourself to Christ. Live faithfully to His Word. Then let Him renew your mind and live in light of that which He offers to you. Do you want the cow or would you rather have the farm? That is the bottom line. Good night, why would you attach yourself to the vessel when you can attach yourself to Christ and live in the fullness of what He offers?

Well, in chapter 4, it comes right back to the same argument. The basic line is, get up under Christ, get in His Word. Then Paul says something. People are still evaluating preachers. You know, they still do it today. They were doing it back then. They are doing it today. I tell you how they do it today. They evaluate preachers based on the kind of preacher of the church they came from or the preacher who used to be there. That is one of the ways they evaluate preachers. They evaluate preachers on how well he visits, of whether or not they really think he cares about them because he is always there when they need him in a physical way. They evaluate preachers sometimes because of personality. They evaluate preachers sometimes because of administrative abilities. It was going on in Paul's day and it is going on in our day.

Paul is saying, "Now listen to me. Do you want to regard a preacher? Do you want to esteem a preacher? Then there are some guidelines for you that you are going to have to follow. If you are going to regard me, or if you are going to regard Apollos, this is the format you are going to have to use. These are the marks of a God called preacher." He says it so clearly in verses 15 of chapter 4. Let's get into it and just see what we can find.

The responsibility of a God-called preacher

There is a magazine you may be familiar with, and every year or so, they will put out the top ten preachers in America. I know I will never make that list, but you pray that I never will make that list. I won't because of ability, but I also don't want to because of any other reason. What in the world would any preacher who loves God want to be on a secular magazine's acclamation of the top ten preachers in a year? What in the world does the world know about preaching? That was the problem in Corinth. They were using the world's standards to judge preachers and Paul says, "Whoa now, whoa. Are you going to regard a preacher? Are you going to esteem a preacher? This is the only way under God you can do it."

Number one is the responsibility of a God called preacher. Paul says, "Test me and Apollos and make sure we meet the standard. 1Cor 4:1 says, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Now, that word "let a man regard" is the word *logizomai*. I remember standing at the board in math class, and trying to remember all the different things that help me solve a problem. I remember one day standing there at the board, and the teacher was saying, "Come on, Wayne, come on." They wanted me to pass the course. It finally began to come to me. The observations that they had told me to make began to make sense. I started making the observations and lo and behold, I came out with the right conclusion. That is *logizomai*. It means come to this conclusion by making these observations.

What observations? There are two of them there in that first verse. First of all he says, "regard us... as servants of Christ." Make sure that if you are going to regard this preacher and call him a God called preacher, you make sure he is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the word for "servant" will surprise you. It is not the same word we have seen earlier in 1 Corinthians, the word diakonos, which means that menial servant from which we get the word "deacon." That simply means if you have a glass of water and it is empty, I go get you another glass of water. Is there anything I can do to serve you?

That is a synonym for the word here that doesn't pop up very often in Scripture. I think it is very important that we look at it. It is the word huperetes. Hupo means under, and then the word eresso, which means the rower of a boat. Now what Paul just described here as a servant is a galley slave. It was one of the slaves who would get in the lower tier of a boat and row the boat, the most menial, unenvied and despised of all slaves. Now that is in its root form, in its secular form. The word came to mean one who is absolutely submissive to authority. That is the word for "servant."

Now the next thing you have to decide is, whose authority is a Godcalled preacher submitted to? He has to be absolutely submitted to it. Is it the church? Is it the deacons? Is it the elders? What is the priority of this surrender and submission? He says, "a servant of Christ." A preacher first of all is a servant of Christ. Is he called to serve men? Yes. But my friend, that is not what he is talking about right here. That comes later on in the book of 1 Corinthians. Don't start throwing all these things in. Stay with the context. The context says, first of all, the priority of his life is he is a servant of Christ. He must have the understanding that he cannot be a servant of Christ with one eye on Him and one eye on the needs of man.

I will tell you what I am talking about here. If you are focused more on the needs of man than you are the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God in your life, you fail in both areas. Because if a preacher focuses only on the needs of man and thinks he has to go and meet those needs, he forfeits and compromises the very truth of God. Then he becomes a failure in all of those areas. Before the needs of man ever enter the picture, the preacher first of all is a servant of Christ, a galley slave. As he says earlier in the book, we are equal. Don't you put one over another. We are just all gifted men whom God has given to the body.

Look in Acts 13:36. I want you to see how David saw himself. That word huperetes is used here. I want you to understand who David was, the great leader, the king of Israel. If you mention David or Abraham's name to a Jew, they open their eyes very wide because these are heroes to them. But look how David considered himself. This is so important. It says in verse 36, "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep." The word "served" is huperetes. He served as a man no more worthy than any others who are serving.

That is the bottom line of what Paul is talking about. When you are a servant of Christ, you don't look at yourself as somebody bigger or littler than somebody else. You just look at Him and walk and follow Him.

Look back in 1 Corinthians 3:5 and 7, just to make sure we have got the thought now that he has. This is exactly what he is bringing out. I think that is why he uses the word. In 1 Corinthians 3:5 he says, "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed." Now there is the word diakonos. It says, "even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one."

Then in 1 Corinthians 3:7 we read, "So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." Now the question has got to come in your mind and in my mind. If he serves Christ, how does he serve Christ? A true Godcalled preacher is a man when he serves Christ and serves His Word. That is the bottom line. He serves His Word.

The word huperetes is used in that form in Luke 1:2. The apostle Luke is talking. Boy, it is so crystal clear when it comes out. It says, "Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, have handed them down to us." In other words, the picture here is of one who is a servant of Christ who takes the Word of God and hands it to others. That is how a Godcalled preacher serves Christ. He serves His Word.

The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion [I love that phrase there. Something is burning in my heart. This is what motivates me]; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." Be very careful! Some people think the gospel is just the message of [[salvation]]. The gospel is the good news of the Word of God, the good news of Jesus from Genesis 1 to the last chapter of Revelation. That is why in Romans 1 Paul says, "I can't wait to get among you believers, to preach to you the gospel." I thought they only needed it if they were lost? No, no. You need it all the way through. It is the Word of God. And the true Godcalled preacher is one who is a servant of Christ and the way he serves Him is by serving His Word.

You know what a shepherd does? A shepherd does three things: he guides the sheep, he guards the sheep and he grazes the sheep. How does he do that? He guides them with the word, he guards them with the word and he grazes them with the word. The word, the word, the word, the word. That is what a Godcalled preacher is compelled to do. He serves Christ by serving His Word.

You say, "Wayne, you are just reading that into it." No, finish 1 Corinthians 4:1. He said, "and stewards of the mysteries of God." I started to say the manifold mysteries of God. It is called that in Ephesians 3:10, but here it is the mysteries of God.

Now, what is he talking about here? The word for "steward" is the word *oikonomos*. It means a household manager of somebody else's property. You can be a manager of a business if it is not yours. It can be an administrator of a domestic affair. It is somebody who administers and properly protects and distributes that which is the property of somebody else. He said, "I am a steward of the mysteries of God." "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." That word "mystery," as we have already seen in 1 Corinthians, means that which can be known only by revelation. He speaks here of the Word of God.

So what is a Godcalled preacher? A Godcalled preacher is under the authority of Jesus Christ. He must be absolutely submissive to Him, never look at himself as if he is above anybody else, but he serves the Word of God. That is what he is, a steward of the mysteries of God. He holds nothing back. It is the whole counsel of God that he is committed to preach to people. That is what he is here for, that is what he does. You want to regard a preacher? Look first of all at his responsibility before God and that is to be a steward of the mysteries of God.

In Acts 20:20 Paul is speaking to the church elders. He is on the island of Miletus. They have come down to him. Look at what he says to them. It is so important that we hear this. He says, "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable [Now that is so important. I left nothing out, he says] and teaching you publicly and from house to house." They had house churches until way after the 8th century. And so, therefore, he would go from one house church to another house church to another house church.

Acts 20:21 says, "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Then if you drop down to Acts 20:27 he says, "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." The apostle Paul was accountable, obedient to Christ, and accountable to Him to be a steward of the mysteries of God.

Have you ever noticed how wrong doctrine gets its start? Because people are not preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. Wrong doctrine will come from people who major in the Old Testament. They will teach the Old Testament, and the gospels and the book of Acts, but they will not get into the epistles at all. They never talk about the epistles. That is where wrong doctrine festers – when you are not teaching the whole counsel of it. The apostle Paul says, "Man, I am under compulsion to preach the whole counsel of God unto you."

Look back in 1 Corinthians 2:2. We have studied it but let's look back. Listen to his heart. He is saying to them, "Don't attach yourself to me. If you want to regard us or esteem us, remember, here are your guidelines. Number one, our responsibility." He says in verse 2, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Paul knew the responsibility God had given to him.

1Cor 2:4 continues, "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Then in verse 5 here is the compelling thing of a true God called preacher, "that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." So the responsibility and the major concern of a true God called preacher is he is never there, now listen, to please his hearers. He is there to preach thus saith the Lord. That is his responsibility before God and that is what he will answer to God one day for. Paul begins by showing them this.

It took me a long time to understand this. The average pastor in America today, they tell me, is dismissed after about eight months. It used to be two years and then it came down to one and half years. It is somewhere getting down below one now, somewhere around the area of eight months, the last thing I heard. Why is that? You know, I don't know all the answers but I think I know some. From this passage, I think what happens is, congregations put a pressure on many preachers and do not allow them to fulfill their God given responsibility. They want him here, here, here, here, over here, do this, do that, do this, do that and then come in on Sunday and expect to be fed without any comprehension of the time that it takes to get down and dig out the revealed mysteries of God in the scriptures. As a result, preachers end up being a failure to their congregation and a failure to God and a failure to themselves because they are cutting off the very thing that is the answer everybody is looking for.

Roy Hessian taught me a lot. One day I said, "Roy, I am worried." He said, "What are you worried about, son?" I said, "I am worried about the fact that I come to church every Sunday and there are many people who never even bring their Bible. They sit there and they go half to sleep. They are looking at their watch half way through the message. They just don't seem to be hungry at all. What do I do? What do I do about all those?" He said to me, "Wayne, you are not responsible for people who will not eat, but you are responsible for setting the table for those who want to. You won't stand before God and answer for people who didn't listen, but you will stand before God and answer for how you set the table."

That set me free. It just set me free. Folks, I want to tell you, a Godcalled preacher knows that he is a servant to Christ and to serve

Him he serves the Word. Now listen to me carefully, that is the way he loves the people. That is the way he serves the people is by being a steward of the mysteries of God.

That is the very thing people don't want, especially Corinthians, who are still attached to people, in the nursery. They don't want to hear from God. They would rather man be there. They cling to man instead of clinging to God. But that is his Godgiven responsibility. Paul says, "If you want to esteem me and Apollos, then this is our responsibility."

The requirement of a God-called preacher

Secondly, there is the requirement of a preacher. The requirement of a preacher is found right here in 1Cor 4:2. It says, "In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." The present tense is used here for "required" which means at all times you have to find them this way. If you are going to esteem them, if you are going to regard them, here is the key, at all times.

The verb "required" is the word that means that which is expected, that which is required. So there is something expected out of a person who is a Godcalled preacher. Not only does he have a responsibility of being a servant and a steward, but he does have something else here that is required out of him - that he be found trustworthy.

The word "trustworthy" is pistos. It means to win over, to persuade. Now hang on, hang on. It is somebody you can put your confidence in, that is what he is saying. But in the context here, there are many things that characterize being trustworthy and faithful. I mean, you can get into character, etc. and that all applies, but that is not his context. His context is directly linked to what he just said. Since this man's heart and his responsibility is to serve the Lord by serving His Word, being a steward of the mystery of God, he must be found faithful at all times to be this if you are ever going to put your confidence in Him. That is what he is saying.

Now there other things to being trustworthy, other things to being faithful, but his main emphasis here is not the wisdom of men but the wisdom of God. This is why we don't attach ourselves to men. If you are going to esteem a preacher, these are the things that have to be there. There has to be a consistency about that fact. Whether there are 12 people or 1200 people there, they are always teaching the Word of God. They are stewards of the mystery of God.

The word "be found" is the word heurisko. It means to discover by inquiry or experience. In other words, it is really more than just asking somebody. It is something you have observed by being around that individual, whether there are just a few or a lot.

In 2 Timothy Paul said, "I say this to you, Timothy, in the presence of God and angels." Wow! There is a bigger congregation than we can see, isn't there? There are angels around us. Hey, guys. I mean, you can't see them, but they are there. And not only that, when a Godcalled preacher preaches he has to understand that he stands in the presence of God Himself.

So therefore, he is always to be found trustworthy and faithful, to be consistent in teaching the Word of God and revealing the mysteries of God. This is why Paul sent Timothy, by the way, to Corinth. You think Paul wasn't worried about Corinth? He was worried about the people who were deceiving them and beguiling them, so he sent Timothy. Now he would have to trust Timothy to be one who was faithful and trustworthy, that he would preach the Word of God to them. That is why he says what he says in 4:17 about Timothy. Look down at verse 17. He says, "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." In other words, he is going to pick right up where I left off and that is why I am sending Timothy to you. You can trust him. He has always been found to be consistent in teaching the Word of God.

I understand, folks, what Paul is trying to say here. But I also want you to understand what God says. No matter what you feel, you had better get your thoughts lined up with what God's Word says a preacher is. You had better check in with God. God says you are a servant to Me by serving My Word, by being a steward of the mysteries of God. And not only that, every time you get in that pulpit, you have to be found consistent to that task, to preach the Word of God. Folks, this is an encouraging passage to me. It might discourage you, but it sure is encouraging to my heart.

The reward of the God-called preacher

The third thing about a preacher we want to see here is not just his responsibility and not just his requirement, but his reward, the one thing he looks forward to. This is so precious. It is important to see faithfulness and all these things in a preacher's life, but the only examination that really matters to a Godcalled preacher should be, not what the people think and not even what your own estimate is, it is what God thinks of what you are doing. That is the bottom line. This really convicted me even as I was studying. 1Cor 4:3 says, "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court." Now, when he says, "a very small thing," it is an interesting word here. The word doesn't mean it means nothing. It just means it is minimal in its importance compared to something else that I am going to talk to you about. Certainly it is important to be examined by the people because there is accountability. But he says, "That is minimal to me. That is minimal to something else. It is not as important. It is important but it is not as important."

The word “examined” is *anakrino*, which means to judge, to discern. He says, “by any human court.” That is the way it is translated, but the phrase is not that. The word *hemera* is used. It means on any given day, on any specific day. Paul says, “Listen, you can examine me on any specific day you choose and that examination is important and you need to do that, but that is not what I rest my life on, not what you think of me. I rest my life on what God thinks of me.”

In fact, he didn’t even examine himself to rest upon his findings. Obviously he did examine himself, but not in light of this being the important thing that motivated his life. Look at 1Cor 4:3 again. “But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.” That is present tense. In other words, “Yes, I am always checking on things, but I am not letting that become my basis for how I think about myself.”

The real test is God’s test in 1Cor 4:4. “I am conscious of nothing against myself.” Isn’t that funny? I love the way he did that. If you ask me to examine myself right now, I am not conscious of anything about myself. Isn’t it funny how we can deceive ourselves and be deceived by what others tell us? “Oh, Brother Wayne, that was the greatest message I have ever heard.” And I want to tell you, I enjoy those kind of things. I really do. But it is like the apostle Paul is saying, “You had better be careful. Don’t you judge yourself by what they say and don’t you judge yourself by what you come up with either. You had better judge it by what I think about what you said.”

He goes on to say, “I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.” What does it mean to be “by this acquitted”? Let me see if I can teach you this. The word “acquitted” there is not the word that means declared righteous or made righteous. It is another word. It is *dikaioo*. That is an -oo verb. I call them the “Uh Oh” verbs. When the uh oh verb is used, it means not just that you are made righteous. That is not what he is saying. It means you are proven and put on display as being righteous.

Let me show you that in James 2:21 because this is important. You know, Martin Luther said, “The book of James is an epistle of straw. Throw it out.” It is one of the greatest books in the New Testament. Why did he say that? Because of this verse, but if he had understood the “Uh Ohs,” it wouldn’t have been as difficult. It is as simple as the nose on your face if you understand it. James 2:21 says, “Was not Abraham our father,” now listen to this, “justified by works...” Somebody stands up and says, “What? Heretic! Throw him out. We are saved by faith that any man should not boast. Paul said that. James is contradicting that. He says Abraham was justified by his works.” No, no, no. He was shown to be justified by his works. That is an “Uh Oh” verb. That is what he is talking about. He is proving to be justified.

So the idea that Paul is portraying by using that word here in chapter 4 is, “Listen, you can’t acquit me. I mean, you can’t make me be proven that I am righteous. God has got to approve me. That is what I want. I don’t want men to prove me. I can’t prove myself. I want to be under God’s approval, that He proves to the people that what I am doing is of Him.”

That is the bottom line. It is not how the people think about it. It is not how you think about it. It is how does God think about it. He wants God’s approval. He wants God to put him on display and then that anointing power of God sets in on him and the attention then immediately goes to God and not to the person.

I love David. David said in Psalm 139, “O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me.” Then he says in the last two verses, “Search me again, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts and see if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way.” God, you have already searched me. God, I searched myself. But God, would you search me again? Let’s make sure that you approve because I don’t want to do it if your approval is not upon me. That is what the Godcalled preacher wants more than anything else in the world, just that God’s hand is on him, that God’s approval is there, that He has put him on display as being one of His, called and assigned to do what He has told him to do.

Well, 1Cor 4:5 reads, “Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time.” In other words, stop trying to go around judging preachers’ motives, etc. Oh, yes, be discerning. Mark those who cause division. Check wrong doctrine. That is not what he is saying. He is saying, “Listen, be careful when you start getting down to this judgment of people’s hearts and motives if they are Godcalled. Leave it alone because one day there is going to be a judgment. God will take care of all that.”

Folks, if you want to regard a preacher, there is a responsibility that God has for him, a requirement and a reward. Pick those three to make those observations and come to your conclusions. That is the bottom line.

1 Corinthians 4:6-8 The Characteristics of a Conceited Church

What we are going to start seeing here in 1Cor 4:6, to me, is very, very important. We are going to see a stark contrast between a conceited church and the humility of the apostles whom God had sent to them. The people whom God was using and the people

who would not allow God to use them are going to stand out. It is as clear as a bell. We see the conceited Corinthian church and the humble apostles God had sent to them.

The apostle Paul is beginning to get a little bit more narrowed in the things that he says. He is really being direct. As a matter of fact, I want to entitle this study, "The Characteristics of a Conceited Church." The church of Corinth was a conceited church.

Based on the fact that they thought they had it altogether and they were judging Paul against Apollos, against Cephas, he says in verse 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."

Paul says, "Now listen to me, it is God who judges; it is God who rewards. That is His role." "Therefore," he says, "do not go on passing judgment before the time." Now, he is referring to the judgments again that they are passing upon Paul and Apollos.

People still do that today. They have their little standards that they judge a preacher by. Does he visit enough? Does he show compassion? What is his personality like? The Corinthians were doing that. The apostle Paul says, "You stop doing that. That is not your role. This is God's role."

As a matter of fact, the time there is defined by the next phrase. He says, "Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time [what time? keep reading], but wait until the Lord comes." You see, it is only the judgment of God that counts. It is only the judgment of God that is valid. He says, "Whatever you are coming up with to put me over here against Apollos and both of us against Cephas, you stop doing that because only God is the one worthy to judge, and He is coming to do that. So you back off."

In verse 13 we have seen this judgment, haven't we? Go back up to verse 13 of chapter 3. This is the judgment we have already looked at. He reminds them of this. He says, "Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it [now that is the time, the day when Jesus comes], because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test [not the quantity, but] the quality of each man's work."

So, with this in mind, Paul goes on, "Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes." Now look at what He will do when He comes: "Who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts." You see, God and God alone knows the motives of men's hearts. We found that out back in chapter 2. No man knows the thoughts of a man, certainly the motives of a man, except the man himself.

The word there for "motives" is the word *boule*. It has the idea of the counsel of a man's heart, something that he sat down and reflected upon that determined his purpose and his motivation and his agenda. Why does he do what he does? Only God knows that. Paul says, "You don't know that, therefore, back off. When God comes, all of these things will be revealed."

The word for "bring light to" is *photizo*. It means to turn the light on. One of these days He will come and He will turn the light on. Don't worry, God will take care of that. The word for "disclose" is the word *phaneroo*. In other words, He will manifest them at one time. How will they be manifested? Hey, you can tell by what is left, whether it is wood, hay and stubble, if it is going to burn or the precious stones that are going to be left. There won't be any question about the motivation of a man's heart one day when he stands before God. It will be at this time that the rewards will be given.

A called preacher of God's word wants God's approval and those rewards. He doesn't want just the acclamation of men. That is not what he is looking for. So he says in the verse, "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." Each man's praise will come to him from God. Now that is what we all want. That is what a preacher wants who is called of God. Therefore, back away from this judging the motives of a preacher's heart. Stop saying, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas. Stop excluding oneself. Stop thinking you have the standard and nobody else has it.

I am serious. If you will look carefully at what he is doing, the bottom line is, who in the world do you think you are to judge the motives of God's called preachers of His word? Well, the Corinthian church was rather conceited, rather arrogant. They thought they had the standard. As a matter of fact, that has been their problem all along, babies who wouldn't grow up in the nursery.

What we are going to start seeing here in 1Cor 4:6, to me, is very, very important. We are going to see a stark contrast between a conceited church and the humility of the apostles whom God had sent to them. The people whom God was using and the people who would not allow God to use them are going to stand out. It is as clear as a bell. We see the conceited Corinthian church and the humble apostles God had sent to them.

We are only going to look at the conceited church of Corinth right now, but I want to go ahead and introduce it to you. The word "humility" is never used, but it is implied in everything that you can see. The Corinthians walked away from the Word of God. They wouldn't grow in the Word of God. They came up with their own standards. The apostles, on the other hand, never even thought of themselves as worth anything. They knew they were only vessels. They knew the sin in their life. They knew everything about

themselves that was not apart from God. They lived in that humility, that proper estimate of themselves in light of who God is.

If you will think about it for a second, everybody God has ever used is characterized not by conceit but by humility. I want to remind you of some people God has used down through the Scriptures. When Abraham was interceding on behalf of Sodom, he said in Genesis 18:27, "And Abraham answered and said 'Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord although I am but dust and ashes.'" Jacob, when he was afraid that Esau was going to attack him prayed in Genesis 32:10, "I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant." When God commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites, Moses said in Exodus 3:11, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" When John the Baptist could not conceive of baptizing Christ, he said, "I have need to be baptized by You and do You come to me?" And John, in his gospel, records a record of the words of John the Baptist when he said, "I baptize in water but among you stands one whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." Peter, when seeing the miracle of the great catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee and realizing that he was in the presence of God, made this statement in Luke 5:8, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The apostle Paul was no exception. It says in Acts 20:19 of Paul that he served the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon him through the plots of the Jews. In 2 Corinthians 3:5 Paul says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, for our adequacy is from God." And in Ephesians 3:8 Paul said, "To me the very least of all saints this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."

Whenever you find a person who is being used as a vessel for God, you are going to find a marked characteristic of humility. But every time you find somebody who is unwilling to grow up, unwilling to get up under the authority of God's Word and even though they go through the motions day by day, you are going to find conceit and arrogance and they are going to stand in a stark contrast to one another. All this humility of Paul and Apollos and Cephas that was mentioned back in verse 12 of chapter 1 and then followed through the three chapters that we have studied, all of that humility now is going to stand up against the stark conceit and arrogance of the Corinthian church. They are again babies who wouldn't grow up. They wouldn't come out of the nursery. They had their own standards. They had arrived. They needed no one.

A conceited church is indifferent to the Word of God

There are three characteristics of a conceited church. When you talk about the church, you are talking about individuals. So the same characteristics that apply to the church apply to an individual. These are the characteristics of a conceited church or a conceited individual. Paul minces no words and drives his point home.

First of all, a conceited church is indifferent to the Word of God. Now isn't that interesting? Following right on the heels of 4:14, now we are going to see people who are indifferent to the Word of God. In those verses Paul talked about preachers who preach the Word of God and love the Word of God and are stewards of it. Now he is talking about people who don't want to hear it, who are indifferent to the Word of God.

In fact, those churches are many times found in America today. I pastored a church once where I had walk up to me and say, "Wayne, why do you talk about the Word all the time? It is 2,000 years old." You think they don't exist, folks? They exist everywhere. As we go through this think, about now how many Corinthian churches you have seen. In 1Cor 4:6, the indifference to God's Word comes out. "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written [there you go right there] in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other."

Now when he refers to "these things," that throws me a little bit. I think he is talking about verses 1-5, particularly 1Cor 4:1-4. However, notice back in 1:12 he says, "Each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" That is the tough group. Then he drops off the last two and picks up on Apollos and Paul and follows that the rest of the way. So it could be that you could go back to when he does that and pick up the traits that he is trying to speak of here.

But to me, to stick right in the text, he is speaking of those characteristics of the God called preachers he talked about in 1Cor 4:1-4. He says, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos." That word "I have figuratively applied" caught my attention. Now sometimes when I am studying a word will grab me and I will start explaining it and you will lose the whole track of where I am going. I don't want that to happen. However, you need to know this word. It is a good word. It is the word *metaschematizo*. It comes from the word *meta*, denoting change of place or condition, and the word *schematizo*, which is from *schema*, meaning shape or form.

Now, what is he saying here? Something that changes the outward form of something; not the inward, but the outward. The apostle Paul says, "I am just changing forms. I am not changing the meaning, nothing inward changes. I am just changing the forms. I gave you the example in 4:14. Now that applies to myself and Apollos. I have figuratively applied it to us."

There is a reason that he is doing that. There is another word that means to be changed from within. That is *metamorphoo*, from

which we get the word “metamorphosis.” Now, do you know which word is used when you die and go through that transition of death and one day get a glorified body? Which word would you think would be used? It is not the word metamorphoo. It is this word right here. There is only going to be an outward change. It is just going to be a transition from here to there because we are being changed inwardly constantly, aren’t we? From glory to glory, from faith to faith. It is really a sweet thought. Maybe I am the only one who thinks it is, but when I was studying that really hit me, that when you die it is just a transition, and the only thing that changes is the outside. He has already come to live inside of us. He has already transformed me inside. He is just simply going to transition me. So today I am being conformed more and more to the image of Christ and one day I will get the body to go along with it and we will just go right on together. It shouldn’t be that big a drastic thing. That just blessed me.

Well, Paul is saying that he and Apollos were given to the church that there might be a pattern to follow. Now remember who Paul was. He was the first pastor of the church. Remember who Apollos was. He was the second pastor of the church. He says, “I zeroed in on me and Apollos because I think there is a pattern here that you need to follow. There is something about us that you need to learn. What is that?” “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn [now watch] not to exceed what is written.” Now what in the world is he talking about? Alright, let me see if I can help you.

You see, God’s written Word tells us to appreciate God’s called preachers. In fact, it gives us the boundaries within which we can appreciate them. But you cannot go and exceed what is written. Let me just show you that. Look over in 1 Thessalonians 5:12. We are to appreciate and encourage and regard the people who preach and teach the Word of God, whoever they may be. They are servants of Christ. They serve His Word. They are stewards of His mysteries. The mystery is His Word, and we are to regard them.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12 look at what he says. He says, “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.” He says, “We request that you appreciate these people.” So there is a proper esteeming of someone who teaches the Word of God and it is within the guidelines of scripture.

Look over in 1 Timothy 5:17. I love this verse; you will see why in a minute. Again within the guidelines of scripture we are to appreciate those who teach the Word of God. First Timothy 5:17 reads, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor [I like that], especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Now that is within the bounds of scripture. Take care of them, encourage them, appreciate them. There is a regard that is biblical and scriptural for people who teach the Word of God. However, glory always goes to God. It never goes to man. You don’t exalt the man. You appreciate the man, and the scripture gives you the guideline. But when you start exalting the man, you have exceeded that which is written and this is never allowed.

So Paul says, “Hey, to help you understand, I have taken Apollos and myself. We are the example so that you might learn with us not to exceed that which is written. The sin of exceeding that which is written is being indifferent to what God has to say. You see, they could have cared less. Paul is going to zero in on them and show them how conceited they have become. They don’t care what Paul is saying to them at this point, but what he is telling them is, “Listen, guys, as a result of your exceeding what is written, you have become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.”

Do you know what the word “arrogant” is? It is the word phusioo. It has the meaning of to puff up, to inflate, to blow up. When somebody is arrogant, he is just a big old gas bag. That is all he is, just a big bag of wind. That is what he says you have become. You have become people who are arrogant. You have puffed yourself up. You have an inflated view of yourself, and you have an inflated view of the people who have ministered to you, because you have attached yourself to them instead of attaching yourselves to Christ. Therefore, you have exceeded that which has been written.

You say, “I would never do that.” Now be real careful in what you just said. If you are going to stay within the bounds of scripture, you can appreciate godly people and realize they have been given to the church. But if you step outside the guidelines of scripture, you are going to forget what they say and attach yourself to the man. When you do that you have just sinned against God and become indifferent to what God’s Word has to say.

Now be real careful, you may have already slipped into this trap of being a man follower. You see, when you are of a person and you go and exceed the scriptural guidelines of appreciation of that person, certainly treating them with a matter of respect and honor, and you move to exalting that person, you have just taken upon yourself the Corinthian mark of being a conceited, arrogant bag of wind. That is what you are. You no longer are a person who loves the Word. You have become indifferent to the Word. You would rather hear the people who preach the Word. That is what was going on in Corinth.

The apostle Paul is nailing them. He said one of the first characteristics of a conceited people, an arrogant people, is that they are indifferent to the Word. That is shown by the fact that they don’t just appreciate the man. They go beyond and exalt the man and that is sin. That has exceeded that which is written.

A conceited church is ungrateful

The second sign of a conceited church is ungratefulness. It is specifically ungrateful for the people God has used to get them to where they are. Somebody told me a long time ago that humility is when you give credit to people who God has used to get you where you are. That is the bottom line. None of us are self made; we are Godmade, and God uses people in our lives. God had used Paul. God had used Apollos. But these people at Corinth were fighting over who was going to be of whom and never stopped to think of how grateful they should have been for the people God had given them to bring them to where they are.

It says in 1Cor 4:7, "For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Now, let's walk through that for a second. He says, "For who regards you as superior?" That is a good question. Who put you in this class? Who put you as superior to other men? Why is it you have the right to judge preachers when others don't? Why is it you have the right to act the way you are acting? You see, they have put themselves into a class all by themselves. It wasn't a class that God had put them into. They had put themselves into it.

And he says, "And what do you have that you did not receive?" You know, that is an honest question, isn't it? Let me ask you a question, now what do you have that you did not receive? "Well, I am a successful business man and I have put my time into it and I deserve it." Now, wait a minute, you received the health that God gave you to show up at work every day to do what you did. You received the ability to think, which God gave to you, to make the decisions that you make. You see, everything we have that is substantial is something that we have received – our IQ, our personalities, our shape, our size, our parents.

But that is not what he is talking about here. The context is very narrow. The context has to do with spiritual things that you have received. The apostle Paul is asking them a question. "Why is it that you act so arrogant, as if you somehow don't have to walk by faith, as if you can go around judging preachers by your own standards, as if you can live this way? What is it you have spiritually that you didn't receive? You are acting as if you got it yourself and didn't receive it." Any believer with any honesty would have to say that all that he has that is meaningful in the Christian life has been received.

Look over in Ephesians 1:3. What a tremendous verse this is of what we have received from God. Why is it the Corinthians could not see this? You see, they had just chosen to be indifferent to the Word, and that reflected an ungrateful heart that they had. They didn't realize they didn't get there on their own. As a matter of fact, sometimes we forget what it was like to be lost. Who was it God used to get to you with the Word of God and the gospel? Just think back in your life.

I remember when I first came to Chattanooga, some of the doctrine I was preaching. Some of the stuff I said is completely off the wall. I did not know how to study the Word of God. In fact, I was using everybody else's notes. If Stephen Olford or Adrian Rogers would have died, I would have had to quit the ministry because I was using their outlines. Now, I would change them. I would run them through the mill of my own life. I wouldn't use their illustrations. I would put my own there, but that is all I knew. I preached topically.

Then one day I passed by a sign that said Reach Out. Now it is Precept Ministries. But I saw this sign for Reach Out Bible Study. I said, "What in the world is that?" My wife said, "Well, why don't you drive up there and check it out?" You know, I am usually uninhibited in things. My wife really is more uninhibited in that than I am. She did. I didn't. She got enrolled in a course over there and started taking the book of Judges. I remember looking over her shoulder and seeing the difference it was making in her life and thinking, "I am jealous. I want what you have." I began to realize I didn't know how to study the Word of God for myself. So I began to do the homework, and that is how I learned to study the word of God, right there doing the homework of Precept Ministry. Today I am where I am because of the people God put in my life. I can only say I received it. I didn't even know I needed it.

Then one day I was struggling with my Greek. One day Brother Spiros Zodhiates came to church. I never will forget that. As he walked out, he said to me, "Preach the Word, Son, preach the Word." I said, "Yes, sir." I didn't know who he was. Somebody walked up to me behind him and said, "Do you know who that was?" I said, "Who?" He said, "Dr. Spiros Zodhiates." I said, "You mean, like in Pulpit Helps?" They said, "Yes." I chased him down in the parking lot and apologized to him that I didn't know who he was. He started coming to my church and through the graciousness of his heart, let me start coming over to his place and start doing his radio program with him. That lasted ten years. All those years and those times and those hours of just sitting in there. I still don't think I know anything, but I have learned a few things just by being in the room.

God began to teach me more and more about how to interpret. My gift was application. So here I am 16 years later and somebody says, "Man, what did you do to get where you are?" I have to say, "I didn't do anything. All I know is, I am just grateful to be where I am, and I have got to give credit where credit is due. That is the thing." What do any of us have that we have not received? It is incredible how conceited and arrogant and bags of wind we can become when we step outside the reality that we don't have anything unless God gave it to us. That is what he is asking them. That is the question. What do you have that you did not receive? They were proud, ungrateful. They boasted as if they had gotten this themselves.

1Cor 4:7 goes on. It says, "For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" That word "boast" is *kauchaomai*. We have seen it before. It comes from the root

word aucheo, neck. Why do you walk around with your neck stuck out like you have gotten there on your own? You didn't get there on your own. It was because of the grace of God you are where you are.

You see, the sin of pride is the epitome of ungratefulness. As a matter of fact, if I remember the scriptures right, look over in 1Cor 6:9-11. This is where they came from. Isn't it funny how quickly we forget it. We don't give credit to God and glory to God for the people He used to get us where we are. They were arrogant. They were self conceited here. Look in 1 Corinthians 6:9. He says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, not revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." But look at verse 11: "And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God."

That is where they had come from. Now it looks to me like people who had come from that would have a grateful heart. They didn't have a grateful heart. They are living in that arrogance of thinking they got there on their own, and the apostle Paul is just immediately dressing them down for this. They deserved every bit of it. The sin of ungratefulness.

Look over in the book of Judges for a second. In chapter 6, remember the cycle of sin? You know why I went to Corinthians after going through Judges? Because it is the counterpart in the New Testament. Here is a nation that turned their backs against God and here is a church that is doing the same thing. They won't grow up. They won't get up under the Word. They have become conceited and arrogant. They have attached themselves to the men and not the message. They are not appreciating what God is doing in their life.

In Judges 6 this was a very difficult time. The Midianites had come in for seven straight years. When they would come in, they would come in on camels. They discovered the camel was like a weapon because it could go for days in the desert and not have to drink any water. They were coming in plundering, and the people were so afraid of them that they ran up in the mountains and hid in the caves. God is not going to tolerate this, and as they cried out to Him, He is going to raise up a deliverer. That is the pattern of the book of Judges.

But I want you to see something He does before He goes to Gideon, before He takes the matter in His own hands. Look what He does. In Judges 6:7 we read, "Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them [this is the first time and the only time He does this in the whole book of Judges], "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel [now watch], 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt.'" Now wait a minute, this is not the people He is talking to here. They were second generation after Joshua. It couldn't have been them. It had to have been the generation before them. He said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you out from the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live." But look at the last phrase: "But you have not obeyed Me." Don't you understand where you have come from?

You see, this is the second generation, and they had heard all the stories. God said, "Do you understand that if it wasn't for My grace, if it wasn't for My love and My mercy, you would still be back in Egypt in a Hebrew slave camp? But because of who I am, I have taken you out and this is how you show Me your gratitude?" He says, "You have forsaken me. You will not obey Me." You see, the root of all sin is ingratitude.

That is exactly one of the characteristics of a conceited church, a church that says we got here on our own. We didn't need anybody else. They were not grateful for the people God had used in their life. They were not willing to admit what they have, they received, and they boast as if they had not received it.

A conceited church is self-complacent

Well, we have an indifference to the Word of God and ingratitude. The third characteristic of the conceited church is self complacency or self satisfaction. Look in 1Cor 4:8. This is very sarcastic. It is an irony here of how Paul does this, but it is real sarcastic and they deserved everything he said. It got their attention. He was led of the Holy Spirit. Look at what he says. "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings [and then the indictment] without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you." I struggled with this verse for quite a while, but it is obvious to me that he is being very sarcastic and very pointed in what he is saying here.

Do the first couple of phrases remind you anything of the church of Ephesus in Revelation when he says, "Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing, and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked?" That is exactly the way they were. The church of Corinth was the same way. In 1 Corinthians 4:8 Paul is using that sarcastic way of getting their attention. Corinth, the rich city, had infected the church. They were self satisfied with what they had. They were living as if they were already in the millennium and already had received their rewards. They lived as if they had even had the right to judge and that is not any man's right. That is God's right.

So look at 1Cor 4:8 again. He says, "You are already filled." The idea of being filled is that you have an abundance. You have an overabundance. In other words, have you ever sat down to eat and you eat and eat and eat and then somebody brings some more food in front of you and they can't give you anything because you are already full?

That is what he is saying to them. He said, "Hey, guys, you are already filled. Nobody can feed you anymore. Nobody can give anything to you." Folks, I have preached to churches like this. They think they know it all. They have already arrived. They are not grateful for anything. They are not living up under the Word of God. They deify preachers instead of listening to the message. They sit there when you start preaching, fold their arms and say, "Alright, big boy, tell me something I haven't already heard." It is amazing sometimes that God hasn't led me just to shut my Bible and leave because they are already full. Nobody can feed them.

But then Paul goes on. He says, "you have already become rich." The wealth of Corinth was well known. But I think what he is saying here is since you have everything, nobody can give you anything. You have need of nothing. You are already rich. You are already full, you see. That is that conceit. That is that arrogance. You can't teach me. I am already there.

Boy, we run into it overseas. It is incredible. They have doctorate degrees hanging off their shoulders, you know, and they think, "We already know it all. We are already full. We are already rich."

Then he says, "you have become kings." You enjoy the honor and prestige of kings. They were living like kings, as if they already had their crowns. You are already ruling and reigning. Who can offer you a crown? Who can feed you? Who can give you anything? Who can offer you a crown? You have already made it on your own, he says.

The burning indictment of that verse to me is, you are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings. How? Without us. You don't need us. You never did believe that you needed us. You haven't understood yet that God has used us as a vessel to get you to where you are. The Corinthians were living in an illusion. They were complacent, self satisfied, disobedient and ungrateful. Christ, in His wisdom, could not appease their hunger or their thirst. They couldn't be filled because they lived as though they were already full. They didn't even need the apostles. They just attached themselves to men. They didn't need what they had to say. They got there on their own.

A friend of mine was having some trouble in his church. I get a lot of people calling me about that quite often, or when I am in a meeting they sit down and talk to me about it. He said, "I have got a group of people here who are fighting me." I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am teaching the Word of God, but they are throwing it right back in my face. One lady came to me and here is the statement she made." See if you have ever heard this before. It may be somebody you know. She said to him with that countenance that said she hadn't been with God in ten years, "Young man, we were here before you got here and we will be here when you leave and you better watch your step." Welcome to the church of Corinth. That is exactly what he is dealing with. You are already full. You are already rich. You are already kings. You don't need the apostles. You know it all. You are not grateful in your heart.

Well, then Paul turns to reflect, and I think this is even sarcastic, too. I can't prove it, but here is what he says: "and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you." I wish you were there. I wish you were kings. I think he is indicating that they had reached such dizzy heights, he really wished they had, without the help of the apostles. They were arrogant and conceited and it is almost like Paul sarcastically says, "Oh, that we could have a humble place by your side, those apostles that we are, not wanted and not needed."

The characteristics of a conceited people are they are indifferent to the Word. They exceed that which is written. They are ungrateful and self satisfied. This is Corinth, the New Testament equivalent to me of Judges in the Old Testament. And the only reason that they were where they were was because of God's grace and the people He had used to get them where they were.

I have said many times, "When I get to heaven, if there are any crowns, I am going to give them to Brother Spiros and others before I give them to Jesus because of the people God has used to help me get to where I am." That is overwhelming to me. I hope it is overwhelming to you where you are, because you can see the ingratitude and the indifference from God's Word. When you start exalting men instead of God, you have exceeded what is written and that ungrateful spirit begins to cut in and then it just continues to spiral from that point on. Self complacent, you are full so nobody can feed you. You are rich so nobody can give you anything. You are kings so nobody can crown you, so therefore, you have need of nothing as the church of Ephesus in Revelation 3. But in reality, you are blind, naked, impoverished and can't see it. We need to be aware of falling into that trap.

1 Corinthians 4:9-13 A Profile of the Approved

We are going to see the contrast between the conceited and the approved. Over here the arrogant, Corinthian believer is putting himself on a pedestal and exalting himself. But over here we are going to have the apostles, those men God singled out, approved

and used to give us the New Testament. We are going to see the humility of those apostles. We are going to see a profile of those who have been approved.

We are going to see the contrast between the conceited and the approved. I told you this was coming. Now we are going to see the other side of the equation. Over here the arrogant, Corinthian believer is putting himself on a pedestal and exalting himself. But over here we are going to have the apostles, those precious men who God singled out, approved and used to give us the New Testament, the ones who had to bear all kinds of things, brought the message to the Corinthians. We are going to see the humility of those apostles. We are going to see a profile of those who have been approved.

Let's read the verses together then we will come back and look at them. 1Cor 4:9-13 say, "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. 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. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 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."

Just reading those verses you can already see the different attitude, can't you? On one side, arrogance, flesh; on the other side, humility. See, the very word humble, tapeinos, has the idea of just getting flat down as far as you can to where nobody can see you, they can only see Christ. That is the whole attitude. Here are the apostles living that way. And here is the church of Corinth, rich, self-satisfied, arrogant, little babies with pacifiers in their mouth, attaching themselves to preachers instead of attaching themselves to Christ.

The apostles are last in the sight of men

Look at the difference. What are the two characteristics of those who have been approved? First of all, the apostles are last in the sight of men. The Corinthians? They want to be first. Look at 1Cor 4:9. He says, "For, I think,..." That word has the idea "as I look at it, divinely inspired by God's Spirit, here is the observation I need to make." He says, "For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death." Now, the emphasis here is not that we have exhibited ourselves, but that God has exhibited us as apostles. The whole emphasis is on what God is doing here. The word "exhibit" there has the idea of setting something forth, putting it on display. You go to a trade show and you see these different exhibits, things that are set forth, things that are put forth so people can see. The idea is you don't exhibit anything unless it has been approved. You don't put something out for people to see unless it has been approved.

Paul says, "We have been approved, therefore, we are put on exhibit." Now if you stopped right there, the Christians in Corinth would say, "Yes, I like that. Now where did you put me? How can I be on exhibit? How can I be on display for God?" In their arrogance that is what they would say. But what is coming next popped their bubble. Look what it says. He says, "For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles [in first place. Is that what he said? No, no. He says,] last of all." The apostles? Now wait a minute; who are we talking about here? We are talking about the apostles, the ones through whom we get the New Testament, the ones who were sent forth to take the Word of God to the uttermost parts of the world, the witnesses of Christ, the ones who were commissioned by Him, the ones who were witnesses of His resurrection. And they are put as last of all?

Now when you think of yourself in Christianity and you want to put yourself on levels, remember, the apostles were pretty surrendered people. They had been approved. And it says that God has put them on exhibit as last of all. Now we know that Matthew tells us the apostles, the 12, are going to one day sit on 12 thrones. It says in Matthew 19:28, "And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you that you have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'" That is then. That is one day. But right now in this world you are going to be last of all.

The word for "last" there is the word eschatos. Yes, it means last in a line perhaps, but it also means more than that. In the context, as you look it, it has the idea of the lowest. Socially, they were on the lowest rung of the list, on the lowest rank of all people who were there. They were looked upon as last. Now think. God did this. You see, that is the whole idea of John the Baptist in the New Testament. He says, "I must decrease that He must increase." You see, the height of pride is saying "I must increase." But the height of humility, or the depth of it, is to say "I must decrease," you see.

God saw to it that these approved men were put on exhibit as being last, not as being first. He says, "For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death." Now you couldn't find a worse position than that. Men condemned to death. The word is epithanatos. It has to do with people who were put on trial, found guilty and were then condemned to death. They were the lowest dregs of society.

The illustration there is when a Roman general would go out into battle, he would bring back his captives. He would bring back the

generals whom he had captured, chained to his chariot. Then they would have the prisoners behind him. These men would be condemned to death, to be put into an arena where they were slaughtered and the people would all come and rejoice and enjoy what was going on. That was the lowest of the low, to be condemned unto death.

He goes on to say “because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.” This all builds together. The thought just continues to frame itself. The word for “spectacle” is the word we get the word theater from. You go into a theater, and you have a crowd of witnesses there. He tells you who the witnesses are. It is the world, but he defines the word “world.” There are two groups. He says, “both to angels and to men.” Now the angels would be those who are intensely interested in what is going on. Why would that be so? In Hebrews 1:14 it says, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who inherit salvation?” I mean, these angels consistently watch over us, and they are amazed at being redeemed. So they are intensely interested at how we are being condemned to death. The apostles are put at the last of the social ranks.

There was another group of people there – the spectators; and they would be the men themselves. I think he would probably be talking about the lost men, the cold, mechanical, indifferent men of the world. They could care less about Christians, but they are all in this arena watching those apostles who have been put forth as an exhibition for all to see. God caused it that way. These were approved men. But they were put, not in first place, but in last place.

Can't you hear the wise of this world laughing at those apostles? They did. They did. They had a great time laughing at them, “Huh, look at him. These people call themselves believers. They haven't got the sense to get in out of the rain.” That was their whole attitude. What an enigma! Those who were last in this world's eyes, foolish as far as the world was concerned, are going to be first in the kingdom of God. That is what God said.

The apostles were least in the sight of men

Look at the contradiction – the conceit of the Corinthians and the humility of the apostles. They were last among men. Not only were they last among men, but they were least in the sight of men. Have you ever heard the expression, “I am last and I am least?” Well, they were last and they were least in the sight of all men. I wish sometimes I could speak to ministers before anybody had gone out yet and we could preach this word to them. What are you looking for in the ministry? Are you looking to be put first place and be respected by the world? Well, let me just help you to understand, the apostles were put forth by the God as last, not first.

Listen, it gets better. It continues to illustrate itself as we go on in the text. Look at 1Cor 4:10. He says, “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. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 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.”

The only way you are going to be able to see this, I think, is to remember 1Cor 4:8. Let me read it to you again. He says, “You are already filled [Ah, who could feed you? You are so spiritual?], you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.” See, that is what you have got to compare it with. The arrogance, the conceit of people who won't stoop to obey God's Word. Humility is surrender. But conceit and arrogance comes from a person who says I will do it my way. I will exalt myself. That is what the church of Corinth had done.

Let's begin to look at it. The contrast stares at you as we go through this. First of all, he says, “We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ.” Now we have looked at that word “fools for Christ's sake.” Now remember, this is in light of how the world sees them. The word is moros. We get the word “moron” from it. The word “moron,” you remember, was a person who did not have the mental capacity above 8 or 12 years old. He was never capable unless under extreme supervision. He does not have the sense to act sensibly. That is what a fool is. That is why it was such an indictment to call somebody a fool in that day.

Therefore, Paul says, “We are fools. The world looks at us and the message we preach and the lives we live as fools. Everything we do is contrary to the way the world lives. We are called fools. God put us in this position.” Why? Because God has got a message. Remember back in chapter 2 we learned that He only uses the foolish to confound the wise. He chooses the things that aren't noble. You see, God uses that as a backdrop so that He can exemplify His glory within him.

But he also says, “but you are prudent in Christ.” Now the word for “prudent” here is the word phronimos, the result of having a mind that appears to be sensible. He says, “You have the ability to think and act sensibly. You know how to relate with others in the world.” The Corinthians had learned, you see, the means of the flesh and how to relate to the world. And so the world would look at them and say, “Ah, now they are prudent. Those apostles, they are foolish.” The difference was the apostles were obeying Christ. The Corinthians were living after the flesh, but they wanted the world to look at them this way. Therefore, he says, “The world desires you and how you think, but they don't desire us. We are the scum. We are the dregs of society.”

The little phrase “prudent in Christ” may throw you. What I believe he is saying there is, “It means you are wise in your dealings with

the world because you have adopted their ways. You have left God's Word. However, at the same time you still use Christ's name as if you are connected to Him." You have come up with this so-called wisdom, and the world thinks, "Hey, that is great. I love that ole boy. He relates to me." But the ones who hold to the Word of God are going to be the ones who are looked at as the fools of this world.

Well, he goes on in 1Cor 4:10. He says, "we are weak, but you are strong." You see the irony in what he is doing here? He is just nailing their conceit and their arrogance right to the wall. "Here we are as apostles," Paul is saying, "and look how you are living, as if you don't even need us. Who do you think you are?" He says, "We are weak." The apostles in the world's eyes looked weak, and I guess that is right. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul, as I understand it from 1 Corinthians, wasn't really much of a figure of a man: little short, bowlegged, hook nose, bald-headed Jewish guy. He wasn't much to look at. He said, "When I am with you, I look weak but my boldness is from the Lord."

But in another sense, they look in appearance to the world as being weak, anemic, not able to do anything. You can hear the laughter of the world when the apostles chose only the power of Christ. Paul was one of the most intelligent men in the whole New Testament, but he says, "When I was with you, I chose not to woo and wow you with the eloquent words of the world, but I chose to be coming to you in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God." "That is the way the world sees us," he says. "And God has put us in this of exhibit. But you are strong. You have chosen to apply the world's ways and wisdom in order to make an impression."

Then he goes on in 1Cor 4:10, "you are distinguished, but we are without honor." The word "distinguished," *endoxos*, is from two words, *en*, which means in, and *doxa*, which means glory. You are in your glory. Man, you are in your glory. All recognition goes to you. That is what the word glory means. You already have your crowns. Men bow before you. You have a big bank account. You are successful in the world. What do you need? Hey, man, you are doing great! But we, the very apostles who give the New Testament of God's Word, the ones who are approved by God Himself, commissioned by God Himself, are without honor.

The word "without honor" comes from two words, *a*, without, and *time*, which means honor. Paul says the apostles are dishonored. Why are they dishonored? Because they have one attachment in their life, only one, and that is Jesus Christ. And the humility of their life is their surrender to Him and surrender to the Word. He said, "But you Corinthians, you are rich. You have got it all together. The world looks at you and says, 'Wow, that is what I want in my Christianity.'"

In Luke Jesus says, "Woe be unto you when all the world think well of you." A man who points in all directions, points in no direction. Human wisdom is exalted before the world and those who cling to it are those who are going to be exalted by the world also. Oh, they will be in great shape. Oh, you can attach Christianity to it. You can hang on to it with one hand. They will like that. But those who cling only to God and His Word are going to be looked upon by this world as foolish people.

Paul gets very graphic now and is going to start describing the lifestyle they lead compared to the lifestyle the Corinthians want to lead. You can see all the difference in the world, in conceit and humility, two big differences. It is all attitude, isn't it? It doesn't necessarily mean these things are going on. It has all to do with the attitude of a person's heart.

The apostles had to endure physical poverty

There are three groups here with three in each group. First of all, the physical poverty that the disciples themselves have had to endure. Verse 11 of chapter 4 says, "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty." The words "to this present hour" mean at this very moment. I mean, right now as I am speaking to you, this is the way it is. And what is that, Paul? He says, "We are both hungry and thirsty."

You know, in the travels that God would put upon the apostles, the mission journeys, etc., that they would do, we have no clue as to the times they were in hunger and thirst. Nobody would feed them. We have no idea of the pain and the poverty that they had to endure. In 1Cor 4:11 it says, "and are poorly clothed." The word "poorly clothed" actually means naked, but in the context seems to have more of the idea of just poorly clothed.

You know, again I want to come back to this question, "What is it you are expecting in this world?" I mean, what is it? There are so many people who have an agenda. They have everything attached to an agenda and they say, "Oh, God, we will serve you, if...." Turn on the television and just by a person's very presentation itself it tells you where people are coming from.

Listen to the apostle Paul, to me one of the greatest apostles. In 2 Timothy 4 I want you to see what happens. He was in a pit. Have you ever studied about his imprisonment? The first imprisonment was in a place where he could entertain guests and write his letters. He wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. But in the second imprisonment, the one right before he died, it wasn't that way. I have wanted to go there so badly. One of these days, prayerfully, the Lord is going to get me there. People who have been there tell me that you walk into this place and there is a hole in the floor. Now this hole in the floor is like a manhole cover. You take this lid off and that is where they would lower them down into this dungeon. If you went there today, there is about an inch of slimy wet stuff all over the walls and all over the floor. That is what it was like. It was total pitch dark inside that thing and all you

could see was out that little hole up there. That is where they would lower them into it and bring them out.

Now Paul is in that place right before they martyr him for the faith. Now remember something, this is right before he died. I can hear somebody going in the ministry saying, "Hey, man, I can't wait for my retirement program. And I have been working hard on it and I can't wait. One day I am going to get me a motor home and I am going to see America. That is what I am looking forward to in my future." Well, I want you to know something, folks, the apostle Paul never understood anything about that. He had absolutely nothing, no piece of real estate that he could put his hands on. And here he was in prison, poorly clothed, freezing to death, bored to death and he writes Timothy. This is right before he dies now. This is the end of his life. One of the greatest apostles who ever lived. He says in v9, "Make every effort to come to me soon, Timothy." In other words, "I am lonely. Man, I am lonely. Just to see your face would just bless me." He says, "For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia."

By the way, Corinth was a city that took after Demas, in that sense of the word. They probably never knew him but that is exactly what Corinth had done. They had loved this present world.

In 1Cor 4:13 look at what he says. "When you come, bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus." I am cold. I am cold. The person who had been to that prison told me that the moment they got down inside of it, they sang the song, "Amazing Grace." They said they stood there and felt the chill inside that prison and it hit them right here that this was the end of one of the greatest apostle's lives who had ever been lived, and the Corinthians acting as if they were too good for this kind of thing. He says, "Bring me my cloak, I am cold." And he said, "And the books; oh, Timothy, bring me the books. I am bored stiff. Especially the parchments." You know, even with not much light he still wanted the books, just something to have. That is the last days of his life.

Somebody said that a bunch of students one day asked Dr. W. A. Criswell, "Dr. Criswell, what can you tell us about the ministry and the pastorate?" He said, "Son, if you can do anything else, do it. But make up your mind. If you are called and you cannot do anything else, understand, you have to cut your agenda for what you think you are going to get out of it. It is only for God and what God wants to do in your life."

The apostles had to endure physical pain

The second grouping involves not the physical poverty but the physical pain. He goes on in 1Cor 4:11, "and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands." Now the word "roughly treated" there is the Greek word that means to deliver a physical blow, either to the face or to the body. He is talking about somebody actually hitting you, like slaves were beaten constantly. They were looked upon as slaves. The same terminology is given to describe the apostles. Now, look who we are talking about folks, the apostles, Peter and Paul and all the different ones, martyred for their faith, every one of them as tradition tells us. To be struck with a blow.

In 1 Corinthians 11:26 Paul sort of gives a little insight into some of the difficulties he had like that. He said, "I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren." Do you remember that time? We studied that in Acts. He goes into this little town and they beat him and throw him outside the city as if he is dead. The apostle Paul gets up, staggers around, gets both eyes back open and goes right back in the city. I want to jump inside the text and say, "No, Paul! Don't go in there. They are going to beat you up." But he would go right back in there.

If you wanted to find the apostle Paul in those days, go to the local jail and if he wasn't there, find you a ditch outside the city and look for a bruised body. That is usually where you would find the apostle Paul. One of the greatest apostles in all of the New Testament. And he is saying to these Corinthian, rich, comfortable believers, "You have so bought into the world, they even like your kind of Christianity. What in the world is this! You are so conceited. Look at the difference of the ones God has approved. He puts them last. Last, not first, but last."

Verse 11 says, "are homeless." The word comes from two Greek words, a, without, and histemi, which means a set place. We have no set place, no abode, no place to go. Have you ever thought about this? The apostles, when they would go into a land to evangelize, were not Gentiles, so they were turned away. The Jews who might be there looked at them as Christians, so they automatically turned them away. They had no place to lay their head, no place. Does that remind you of the One who sent them? "The foxes have their holes and the birds have their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." You see, those who are approved embracing Him and His Word may end up this way. They may not, but the apostles did.

In 1Cor 4:12 it says, "and we toil, working with our own hands." The word for "toil" is the word that means to work until you are fatigued at working. He is not saying there is anything wrong with that. He was a tentmaker. That is how the church of Corinth came about. He went over and met Priscilla and Aquila and made tents, getting ready for those Isthmian games. That is how the church got started over there while he was there. Timothy and Silas came over and met him, in Acts 18, and the little church began there. He is not saying there is anything wrong with that, but I think you have got to see the irony of what he is saying. "You people are

proud, conceited and act as if you got there on your own. We are over here homeless, without anything to wear, and we are working with our own hands for you.” That is kind of the irony that he is using here. He is not doing it in a mean way. He is trying to help them understand, “Who do you think you are trying to live this way when the very apostles of God were put in last place.”

The apostles had to endure physical persecution

Well, the third grouping is the physical persecution. We have the physical poverty, the physical pain (some of that is emotional) and the physical persecution. He says, “when we are reviled [that is a persecution word, by the way], we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure [there is the word]; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate.”

Now let’s look at that. First of all, “when we are reviled.” The apostle Paul is showing again the stark contrast. They love the Corinthians because they are prudent and are distinguished. “We like you Christians. We don’t like these Christians.” “We are reviled,” he said. The word “reviled” has the meaning of somebody coming against you saying things, threatening you, talking about you in an unkind manner.

I remember back in my own life back when I first came to Chattanooga, the church of Satan wrote me letters. They put blood on the bottom of the page. They were going to kill me and my family for preaching the Word. I just started posting the letters out in the foyer, in case anybody recognized the handwriting. They would send people to our church and they would sit in the church and pray to Satan while we would be having our services. Do you know what? They left. Do you know why? Because we never bothered with them. We just kept preaching Jesus and they couldn’t stand it, they had to go.

I am not putting myself in this group. Good grief, these are the apostles. But I am telling you, I can understand. You can, too. You can relate to this.

Think about the apostles, man. It was much more serious in their life. Here is the contrast. It is not so much that they are reviled. Yes, that is part of it, but I think the response is the voluntary humility of these men. That is the key. He says, “when we are reviled, we bless.” The word “bless,” eulogeo, means to speak well of them.

Now wait a minute, they don’t go around saying, “Aren’t they nice people for trying to kill me.” No, no, no. You have to go to Romans 12 and some other places to realize, when you bless, it is in the opposition to cursing. Cursing is when you wish evil upon somebody. So the opposite of wishing evil on them is wishing good for them. That is what he means by blessing them. You don’t walk around saying, “Oh, I like that person. They are so sweet. They just cussed me out on the phone.” That is not what he is saying. He just doesn’t wish evil upon them.

And then it goes on. He says, “when we are persecuted, we endure.” The word “persecuted” has the idea of that old hound dog on your trail. It is somebody on your trail all the time. It is a word that means hound you all the time, always on your trail, never gets off your trail.

Now, the word “endure” is not the word you think it is. It is not the word that means to bear up under. It is the word that means we don’t retaliate. We refrain from responding to persecution. I like that. I like what Billy Graham said one day. They asked him, “How do you handle criticism?” He said, “I don’t acknowledge it.” I had a lady tell me one time, “Wayne, if you ever recognize it, you dignify it.” Do you hear that, Wayne? You said that. Are you listening?

“When we are slandered,” he says, “we try to conciliate.” The word “slandered” is blasphemo. It is a stronger word than the normal word for slander. It means to hurt one’s reputation by what you say about them. The word “conciliate” is the word parakaleo. It normally means a comforting word, but it has the idea of entreating somebody to do something. I think that is how he means it. When you are blasphemed, usually that is to your face, but it can be behind your back when you hurt somebody’s reputation. I think what he is saying is, “When we are blasphemed we try to entreat in kindness and ask the person, ‘Don’t do that, don’t do that, but let me share with you something that is helpful to your life.’” I think that is the idea of how he brings this out. Paul continues to show the voluntary humility of these apostles. The world thinks of this kind of humility as cowardice and despicable.

Let me give you an example of that, and I want you to think on it. How do they respond when they are treated this way? Alright, we know already. How does the world think of that? Stupid, foolish, that is what they think about it. I want you to hang on to something. I have not worked it all out in my mind, so don’t accuse me too quickly.

We were counseling months ago with a person. The situation that she was dealing with was in her marriage. Her marriage had been bad. She got good counsel. I was talking with her and I said, “You know, do you understand the Christlife?” She said, “No, I don’t think I know what you mean.” “About you dying to self and letting Jesus be Jesus in your life, decreasing so He might increase?” The more I talked with her, the more I had to say things that she didn’t want to hear. The more I talked with her about the Christlife, the more she hardened on the inside.

Here was her final statement, “I can’t buy this.” I said, “Why?” She said, “For the first time in my life I have learned to stand up for

myself.” I didn’t understand what was going on inside of me until I studied this passage. I think what I heard her say is this, “The world tells me because I pay them enough money to counsel me, they tell me that I have got to stand up for myself.” But the Word tells her that she must die daily at the cross. She had a choice to make, humble herself and trust God and His Word or grasp what the world says; because after all, Christians are the ones saying it. Try to hold on to Jesus at the same time and make it look like it is all Christian.

The apostles held to the Word, and the world spit on them and said, “You are stupid and you are foolish.” The Corinthians said, “Ah, we have found a better way. We can be Christians connected to Christ and still be connected to the flesh.” Interesting thinking, isn’t it?

To sum it all up look at verse 13, “we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.” Let me tell you what “scum” and “dregs” is all about. When my wife is gone, I have to cook. Look out! I have done some interesting things with food and pots. I guess if I would go on and wash them after I use them, that would be part of the solution. But you know, about two weeks later when you go back in there and this stuff is all over the inside of the pot and it stinks and it is slimy and you have to take a knife and start cutting that stuff around. Ugh. You almost have to scrape it off. That stuff which you have scraped off, that filthy stuff, in cleansing the pot, is what Paul says scum and dregs.

In fact, in Athens every year they would give a sacrifice to the god Poseidon, the same one that is up in Corinth. They would take a criminal, the lowest of society and kill him by throwing him into the sea. That was an offering to appease the gods so that the town could have less evil in it for the next year. That is the very word they would use of this man they threw into the sea.

Isn’t it interesting that these apostles became as scum and dregs in order that God might use them, so that you and I could have what we have? Paul says to the Corinthian church, “Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are?” I think it echoes through the centuries. Who do we think we are?

1 Corinthians 4:14-17 Tough Love

You know, you say tough things to the people you love. You probably would not say the same things to people you don’t know, love or care about. But to the people you love, you will say the hard things.

You know, you say tough things to the people you love. You probably would not say the same things to people you don’t know, love or care about. But to the people you love, you will say the hard things.

We were in a restaurant some months ago. I am always in one somewhere, so it could have been any time. We were having fun with some friends and just laughing. My wife leaned over and whispered something in my ear. Only those who love you would tell you these things. She said, “Wayne, there is something green stuck between your front two teeth.” Immediately you say “What? Ummm, okay.” Then you proceed to work away and see if you can pull that awful piece of lettuce or whatever it is that you have got stuck right there between your teeth. Only the people who love you will tell you the things you might have not wanted to hear, but it is for your good.

You know, if I had understood this part of the scriptures before we started the book of 1 Corinthians, I would have started here. You have got to know the heart of the apostle Paul. He has been awfully difficult in some verses here. I mean, tough. You talk about saying some hard things to the Corinthian church. But he wants to make sure they understand the motivation of why he has done this. He loves them. He cares about them.

In 1Cor 4:6-13, he really nailed them. He puts up beside their conceit and their arrogance and their fleshly immaturity the lifestyle of the apostles. The helpful thing is to remember that he loves them. That is why he is doing it. He is not some sarcastic individual. He is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. This is God’s Word, not Paul’s word. It is God’s Word through Paul. So Paul is trying to remind them and is warning them and trying to get their attention.

As a matter of fact, if you think that was hard, go back to chapter 3. He says, “Hey, you are intentionally immature little babies, that is what you are. You won’t grow up. You attach yourself to men and the flesh, etc.” See, he has really been saying some hard things. And you can almost feel his heartbeat. Many times when you are disciplining your children you have to stop in the middle of it and say, “Now listen, I love you. I love you. Understand this. I am having to say some hard things, but I really do love you.” You can really feel the heartbeat of the apostle Paul doing exactly that.

In 1Cor 5 he turns right around, and it gets tougher. But he wants to them to know that if you love somebody, you will say the tough things. This is tough love. If you don’t care about them, you let them go. But if you love them, you can’t do that.

Paul's concern for the Corinthians

Let's look at four things about the character of the apostle Paul and how this tough love comes out of a compassionate, loving heart that he has. First of all, we see the concern Paul has for the Corinthians. They have got to know that. They can't take what he is saying unless they know his love for them. He says in 1Cor 4:14, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children."

In that first phrase he immediately gets to the point. He says, "I do not write these things to shame you." The word "shame" is the word *entrepo*. There are several words for shame, but this particular word causes a person, out of extreme embarrassment, to withdraw. Have you ever had that happen to you? Somebody just humiliated you, just embarrassed you intentionally and it caused you to withdraw from the whole crowd. Paul says, "In no way am I doing this."

As a matter of fact, he used the word for "not" there. "I do not write these things to shame you." It is the word that would have gotten their attention. I wish in our language we had the way of expression they had in their language, because you can't miss it. In their way of thinking, they would have heard Paul saying, "I would not any way, shape or form shame you." The little word *ouk* is used there. Normally that is a word that means I would not in any way, shape or form, shame you. That is not what I am doing. You may feel ashamed because of what I have said to you because you are guilty, but I am not writing this to shame you. That is not my purpose.

You see, they have stepped out of bounds and as a loving father he is trying to draw them back, just like you would correct your children. Then he says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you." Have you ever noticed how shame affects your emotions? But when you admonish somebody, it goes beyond that, to the mind and to the heart when you are warning them. If they can understand that you are trying to warn them, it is different.

As a matter of fact, the word "admonish" is the word *noutheteo*. It comes from the word *nous*, which means mind that can understand, and the word *tithemi*, which means to place. So, *noutheteo* means to place something in one's mind, in his understanding, to appeal to his mind, to warn him, to admonish him.

You see, these are spiritually immature children. They won't come out of the nursery. Normally a child doesn't understand correction. They think you are out to get them. That is why Paul is trying to say to them, "I know you don't understand my motive, but I want you to know that I really do care about you, like a father warning a child."

Look at the rest of the verse. He says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." Now I want to tell you, you cannot find a more tender word than the word "beloved" anywhere in Scripture. It is a word in their language that meant affection. Paul is saying, "I really care about you all." The word "beloved" is the word *agapetos*. To them it was just a very, precious, precious thing. It means dear. You are my dear.

Then in using the word "children" he is obviously referring to them in a spiritual sense, not a physical sense. You will see that even more in my next point. But how is he their spiritual father? How would they be his spiritual children? Well, obviously they are the children of God, but what connection does he have with them?

Well, go back to 1 Corinthians 3:6. He has a right, not only as an apostle, but because he has invested his life with these people and he cares about them. That is what he is trying to show them. First Corinthians 3:6 says, "I planted." That means, "I planted; there wasn't any seed there until I came. God used me to plant." "I planted, Apollos watered." Now remember, Apollos was the second pastor; he came along and watered what I had planted, "but God was causing the growth."

Look at verse 10 of chapter 3. "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it." And what is that foundation? Verse 11 tells us, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Paul says this to these immature children, who normally can't take correction. He wants to make sure they understand. He is as a loving father to a child. He says, "You are to me like my own children. I have a spiritual connection to you and that is why I am saying the hard things that I am saying to you."

A child has difficulty when somebody talks tough with them, when somebody wants to correct them. So Paul is saying, "Listen, what I am doing is as a father to a child. I have concern for you." As a matter of fact, he is going to develop this now. It is moving from just concern to a deep compassion that he has for them. I want to tell you, folks, you can receive a lot of things from people whom you know love you. It is tough when you receive it when you know that they don't love you.

Paul's compassion for the Corinthians

Let's look at the second thing then. The first thing is the concern of the apostle Paul. Secondly, the compassion of the apostle Paul

takes a different dimension here. It moves even beyond just simple concern. Paul is going further to illustrate his fatherly love for them. A stranger's words will be resented but not a father's. He loves you. Only a father would know and understand that kind of thing.

Are you a father or a grandfather? If you are you will have no trouble with this passage whatsoever. Verse 15 says, "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." Now let's make sure we understand this. God is our heavenly Father. But what he is talking about is in the sense of relationship in the spiritual world. He has a deep connection with them.

He says, "For if you were to have countless tutors." That word "countless" most of the time is translated "ten thousand," but the reason it is translated "countless" here is that it really means innumerable. Sometimes some translations pick it up and put "ten thousand." The word really means that you can't even number the quantity of them. So the apostle Paul says, "You can have innumerable tutors in your life but only one father." He is doing this to show them the concern and the compassion that he has for them.

The word "tutors" comes from two words, the word that means child and also the word that means a leader, a leader of children, an instructor of children. In the day and culture that this came out of, this person was originally a slave who had charge of the son of a wealthy person. In other words, he was somebody else's property, but he had charge over him to make sure he behaved. He would lead him to school and see to it that the child behaved properly. He was really more a guardian than an instructor, although there was instruction involved. He was a guardian. He watched over them to make sure they behaved properly.

Paul is not putting these guardians down. "Hey, these are good things. You will have innumerable tutors in your life, but what I want you to know," he says, "I am teaching you something. They will teach you and instruct you and it will be right. Do what they say if it is the Word of God." But he says, "I am coming to you as a father would to a child. Understand my heart. It is not as a simple guardian or as a simple instructor. Sure, I will teach you. But I want you to know my compassion that I have for you."

The apostle Paul was much more than just a tutor. He felt as a father to his children. He says, "for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." Now we saw how that basically took place, but look at what he says here. Look at the phrase "in Christ Jesus." That is a significant phrase. Obviously we were in Adam, and we are now in Christ. So all things take place in Him. But I think it means more than that. It means in connection with Christ, making sure they understand there is a spiritual relationship here that we have. Because of my connection with Him, I have a deep connection with you. It was in Christ Jesus that the motivation came to go to Corinth.

Go back to Acts and you will find out that God led him over there. When he got there, the Isthmian games were coming up not far from then, and he met Priscilla and Aquilla. They were tentmakers, so they made tents together, obviously making money for the ministry that God had given to him. Then Timothy and Silas came over and they stopped making tents and just started evangelizing. Out of that came a church there in Corinth.

But it was in Christ, in connection with Christ. Christ wanted a church in that wicked, wealthy city in Greece. But not only that, it was in CHRIST that the burden came to share the gospel. It wasn't Paul's burden. It was God's burden in Paul. It was in Christ Jesus that the power and the anointing came which drew the Corinthians to Christ and to conviction and to the cross.

So now it is in Christ Jesus that he has this relationship with the Corinthians. Truly, he is their spiritual father. He is writing to them and saying some hard things because he loves them and wants them to understand that if they will listen to what he has to say a transformation can come in their life.

Think about it. What father who loves his children would not do the same? I mean, it is awfully tough to do it, but what father would not do the same? Proverbs 3:12 says, "For whom the Lord loves, He reproofs, even as a father the son in whom he delights."

You can take this to any relationship where you know they love you. Bottom line, that is what he is saying. He is not stressing the father child relationship; he is stressing the relationship and how he loves them, the compassion that he has for them.

Diana is my dearest friend. She loves me, and I know she loves me. There are times when I wish she had a little signal she could hold up. That little signal would mean, "Wayne, I am about to tell you something you don't want to hear, so prepare yourself." Sometimes she is very quick to do that without any counsel beforehand. I will get in the car after a church service and ask her, "Diana, what do you think? Did it communicate?" I never think I communicate. I never listen to any of my messages, because I can't stand it. I am my worst critic. I just ask, "Did it even communicate? Did I get anything out that I think I got in?"

Sometimes she will say, "Yes, yes." I will just say, "Oh, that makes my day, man." I know the Lord is the one who approves me, but I do know Diana loves me and she will tell me the truth. But there are other times I will ask, "Diana, how do you think it went?" She will say, "You didn't say this word right and you didn't say that word right and you thoroughly confused me right here." I am thinking, "I

don't want this!"

You see, most of us don't want this. That is why Paul is trying to do. Listen, he has not said the tough things yet. You think he has been tough up until now; in chapter 5, he deals with the immorality among them which was worse than the pagan world. He is making sure they understand why he is doing what he is doing.

The people who really love us are the people who will say the hard things to you. But if you know they love you, you can receive them that much better. God has given us His Word. We don't need this clarified through Paul that He loves us. We know God loves us. That is why we have the Word. But oh, if we would just be receptive of those hard things that God wants to say to us so often.

Paul's counsel for the Corinthians

First we saw the concern of Paul, but then it moves deeper than that. He shows them his compassion. Thirdly, we have the counsel of Paul. What is it he is going to say to them right now? He says, "I love you. I am saying these things for you." He says in verse 16, "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me." Now you have got to be careful about this and understand what he is saying. The word "exhort" is the word *parakaleo*. Here it means to call upon someone, to come alongside them, to be called alongside them, to beseech them to do something, to entreat them to do something. It is a counseling word. You cannot counsel without this word. That is what it is for, to entreat them to come to the Word of God. That is what he is called alongside to do.

And what is his counsel? He says, "be imitators of me." Boy, I tell you what, the word "imitators" is a good word. It is the word that we get the word "mime" from. It is the word *mimetes*. You know what a mime is, don't you? Have you ever seen somebody do mime? How many words does a person say when they are doing mime? None. They communicate by their actions and you are supposed to be able to discern what they are doing and who they are by how they act.

So, the immediate thing you get out of this word is, "I am not concerned about your talk. I am concerned about your walk. I am talking to you about what you say; it is how you are living. That is what I am dealing with right here."

When he says "be imitators of me," mime me, he is not putting himself on a pedestal and saying, "I am up here and you are down there." What he is saying is, "Do as I do." It is in the present tense, as a lifestyle. It means to do as somebody else does.

Let me show you this in the New Testament. Perhaps you will get a better grasp of the word. Look over in chapter 11 and verse 1, just to make sure. Just a couple of things, that as I was studying, I thought might be good to bring out to make sure you are understanding what it says when it says, "be imitators of me." The apostle Paul is in no way putting himself in a position of having arrived. He has something else he is trying to say to them. In 11:1 it says, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." In other words, Paul says, "I am doing something that I have seen in Christ that He does, and I want you to do the same thing."

What is that? Back up in the context of 1 Corinthians 10:31 and look at what he says. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Did Jesus not do that to His Father? Yes. And Paul says, "I seek to do that for Him. I want Him to be seen in me, and therefore, I want you to let Him be seen in you. Do what I am doing, which is surrender, bow, trust and obey." That is what he is saying. It is not, "You do everything I do in my life. You have the same attitude towards God that I have. You receive the things that I have taught you."

Look over in Ephesians 5:1. This is one of the more tough ones where the word is used. This is why I want to do this, because sometimes we misunderstand this and we think we can actually imitate somebody else's life. No, sir. I can't; God never said I could. He can; He always said He would. You have to continue to balance yourself with that thought. In Ephesians 5:1, look at what he said. "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." You do as God does.

There was a guy who wrote a book years ago called "In His Steps," Charles Sheldon. It is a great book. But to me, it misses the heartbeat of what Christianity is all about. I can't do as God did. However, there is something here that I can understand. You see, if you think you can do as God does, you wake up in the morning and say, "God, I am going to love every brother You put in my life today, because You love everybody and I am going to do as You do." By noon tomorrow, God is going to put a brother in your life you did not know existed. And by 1:00, you are going to be saying, "God, I can't." And God is going to say, "I never said you could."

If you will take the context of the whole book of Ephesians, you will understand how to imitate God. Back in 1Cor 3:16 we read, "Be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." Accommodate Christ by your faith. Then the garment of chapter 4, that you will be wearing, is not something you are doing but something He is doing in you, that is being seen on the outside. Therefore, imitate God. You have to understand the whole context.

When you first hear, "Imitate something," you think you can jump right into gear and do it. That is not what he is talking about. There is an attitude. There is a walk here. There is more to it than just miming somebody in the sense of how we would see it.

Over in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, it is in the context of joyfully receiving the Word of God in their lives. Paul says of the Thessalonians,

"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord [How?], having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." In 1 Thessalonians 2:14 he says, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea [How? He says], for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews."

So again, do as we do, but there is more to it than just do as we do. Hebrews 6:12 reads, "that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And I think those are the two ingredients there. Patience meaning the ability to bear up under that Christ gives, trusting Him, bearing up under. These are things that God alone can empower you to do. So when Paul says, "Do as I do," he seems to be saying more than that. He seems to be saying, "Do as I have taught you."

Look at the context of Corinthians. Don't be immature. Attach yourself to Christ. That is what I do. That is what I have taught you to do. You let Christ then do through you what He can only do. So Paul is bringing them to the teaching, bringing them to the walk, bringing them to the act of surrender and the act of putting their faith into Christ. He also has talked about the willingness to be a fool in the world's eyes. That is the immediate context, the willingness to walk humbly before God, no matter how the world thinks about you.

You see, the Corinthian church was more concerned with the world than they were with God. Paul says, "We are not that way. We are the apostles. Do as we do. Humble yourself. Obey God. Let God be in you what He wants to be. Attach yourself to Him. And I guarantee you, the world will look at you then like you look at us, but don't worry about that. Do as I do. The teaching that I have given to you, you do as I do."

Paul's companion for the Corinthians

So we have the concern of Paul, the compassion of Paul and the counsel of Paul. But then you come down to the companion of Paul. I want you to see this. The reason I put the companion there is because it was a "C" and it went on with the alliteration. But the real thing I want you to see is, Paul is going to send to them his closest companion. He calls Timothy his collaborator, his brother in the Lord. Timothy is as important to Paul humanly speaking as anybody could have been in those days. Paul says, "I can't get to you, but oh, I am so concerned about you that I am going to send my closest companion, my biggest help that I have. I am going to send Timothy to you because I care about you."

Man, you have to understand what is going on. If you just read it carelessly, you don't realize what a sacrifice Paul is making. He is showing how compassionately he loves the people there in Corinth. "I am going to send Timothy, my beloved son in the faith."

Look in 1Cor 4:17. He says, "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." The ways he speaks of are the ways that are a direct result of receiving what God has said and being empowered by the grace of God to do those things. Since Paul was not there, Paul said, "I want to make sure it continues on, so I am going to send to you Timothy, my beloved."

He says, "For this reason." That ties the things together; you see the link there. Paul is saying, "The reason I love you, the reason you are like my children, the reason I feel as a father to you, I am sending Timothy. Timothy will teach you the same things that I taught to you."

"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy." The words "I have sent to you" is aorist indicative, which means it is done, he is on his way as I speak. I have already made the decision and cut him loose. He is coming to you because I have a burden for you and you are going to have to be reminded of some things.

Now he says, "who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord." Now, you talk about a guy who is close to Paul. Many people think Paul led him to Christ. However, there is a debate about that. Did he actually lead him to Christ? I am not going to enter into that debate except to say that he was strongly and spiritually connected to this man. As a matter of fact, he calls him his child in the faith. Here he says, "He is my beloved." It is like there is something unique between Paul and Timothy. Paul had sunk his life into Timothy.

Then he writes to Timothy from prison and says, "Listen, Timothy, you find faithful men and you entrust to them what I have taught you and then they will find faithful men and they will entrust it to them." He was a true disciple of the apostle Paul and co-laborer.

When Paul was in prison in 2 Timothy 4, he says, "Timothy, come to me. I am lonely. Please come to me." The one person he wanted to see out of everybody in the world was Timothy. Timothy was so important to the apostle Paul. But Paul says, "Hey, I am going to cut him loose and I am going to send him to you. I can't come, but maybe somehow by him coming to you, you will understand how much I honestly love you and care about you. You are going to have to have somebody to hold the standard in front of you, somebody to keep the life in front of you so that you will know how to walk."

They were babies who refused to grow up. They are going to have to have somebody to constantly get them moving in their Christian walk. Why would he send Timothy? He says, "He is faithful in the Lord. You can put your confidence in him because he puts his confidence in Christ just like I put my confidence in Christ." That is what Paul is saying. "You can count on Timothy. He is

faithful in the Lord and I am going to send him to you.”

I know I may have dwelled on that for a while, but I want to make sure you understand that this was a big sacrifice Paul was making here, trying to show once again how much he is concerned about these people.

Now what is Timothy faithful to do? He says in verse 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.” Do you think the apostle Paul went around, and because of his lifestyle, made up a set of principles and went and taught that to everybody? No. He taught the Word of God. He never minced the whole counsel of God. He is not speaking of his own ways. He is speaking of ways that have come from his constant study and teaching in the Word of God. “Timothy will teach you as I have taught you.” That is what he is saying.

The word “remind” is a good word. As a matter of fact, if you ever want to do a word study, do it on the word “remind” or “remember” in the New Testament. It will bless you. How many times we have to be reminded of something. Paul says in Philippians 3, “To write the same things again to you is no trouble to me. It will reap your benefit.”

Paul says, “I am sending him to remind you. YOU need to be reminded. Evidently you have forgotten something.” The word “remind” is anamimnesko. It comes from ana, again, and mimnesko, the word that means to put in mind. Together the two words mean to remind again and again and again and again. Implicitly, to put on exhibit in the mind is the priority, over and over and over and over again. It is through that the children learn particularly. Remember, these were immature children who would not grow up. The only way you teach a child is to remind them, remind them, remind them, remind them, remind them. Finally one day they become trained.

Have you ever thought about 2 Timothy 3:16? It says, “The Word of God is profitable, it is God-inspired, all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable.” All Scripture is inspired by God, God-breathed. It is profitable. What is the first thing it is profitable for? Teaching. Now hang on to this. Reproof, correction and then what? Training or instruction or training in righteousness. The word “training” is paideia. It means child training. Now do you realize where it starts and where it is headed? It starts with teaching.

I want you to understand something. Paul says, “You people have been taught. You already know this. You are going to have to be reminded, reminded, reminded until one day you grow up and your senses now are trained unto righteousness.” That is exactly what is happening here. “I am going to send Timothy to do the reminding over and over and over again.”

You tell a child, “Don’t go out in the street and play.” Does that child understand? Clearly understand? Yeah, he understands. Is he going to do it? No. You look out the door and he is out in the street. You get out there, grab him and reprove him by what you have said. You hold the standard up. “I told you not to, here is the consequence.” You discipline.

Then you give him instruction again, correction, reminding him of what you have already told him. And you say, “Now listen, do you understand? The way you don’t get this is by not doing that.” Then hopefully one day he will be trained. How many times do you have to do that to train somebody? Man, every day. Finally one day you forget to tell your child and you are thinking, “Oh, my goodness, I didn’t tell him not to play in the street.” You have told him 972 times before. You look out the window and what do you know! He is not in the street. He is in the yard! Oh, finally, he has been trained! But as long as he is a little child, he is going to have to be reminded, reminded, reminded, reminded and reminded.

So Paul says, “I am sending Timothy. I love you and he loves you. You probably won’t like him, though because he is going to keep on reminding you of the things which I have taught you, my ways which are God’s ways.”

Now, you ask, “Why are you telling me all this?” You have got to get the feeling of Corinth. They are not people who don’t know. They are people who know, but they won’t do it. Paul is having to just reprimand them for it because he loves them. And he says, “Not only am I going to reprimand you, I am sending Timothy to you and he is going to remind you, remind you, remind you, remind you, remind you and remind you until you grow up and you mature and your senses are trained unto righteousness.”

That is what somebody who loves will do. That is what compassion will bring about. Paul says, “He will remind you of my ways which are in Christ just as I teach everywhere in every church. My ways which are in Christ, God’s ways which He has taught me through the Word which I teach everywhere that I go.” Timothy had seen this. Timothy had been trained by Paul, and Timothy will do exactly what Paul had wanted him to do, just like he did when Paul sent him to Philippi. He will do the same thing he did when Paul sent him to Thessalonica to do the same thing. He will be faithful.

Paul says, “He is my truest companion. I need him. I lean on him, but you need him more than I do, and I am going to send him to you to remind you of these things.”

Okay. Tough love is when you are willing to tell somebody the hard things. It is harder for the one telling it than it is for the people receiving it. That is the heartbeat I get out of 1 Corinthians. He waits until chapter 4 and says, “Hey, man, I have been tough. Let me

explain something. I love you. I am like a father to you. You are my children.” Then he turns right around and is hard on them for the next several chapters. But he wants to make sure they understand his heart because he will say these things to them because he loves them.

So when you hear what Paul is going to say the next several chapters, just remember. Here is a father who loves his children. Boy, he is going to say the hard things so he can turn them to where they can be a blessing to the Lord. He is even going to send Timothy to be a constant reminder that even though he is not there, the teaching is and it is going to go on saying the same thing until people have their senses trained and can grow up, get out of the nursery, throw away the pacifier and start walking like they ought to walk. That is the whole point.

The tough things, tough love. Are you willing to receive the tough love, not looking at me or Paul, but looking at the fact that God loves you so much He gave you the Word, not only His Son but the written Word? Every time you open it up, it is a love letter to you. Can you receive the hard things it says to your life?

1 Corinthians 4:18-21 Spiritual Arrogance

It is a hard thing to be around arrogant people, but particularly when they are spiritually arrogant. The apostle Paul, as we have seen in chapter 4, loves the Corinthian believers. All that he has told them is from a loving heart. He has been very tough on them, but all of it has to do with people who have detached themselves from Christ and attached themselves to something else. He has said all those tough things to help them to understand that they need to come back and live by faith, come back to just attach themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a hard thing to be around arrogant people, but particularly when they are spiritually arrogant. The apostle Paul, as we have seen in recent verses in chapter 4, loves the Corinthian believers. All that he has told them is from a loving heart. He has been very tough on them from 1:12 all the way down to where we are just picking up in 4:18. All of it has to do with people who have detached themselves from Christ and attached themselves to something else and the result of all of that. If they had just lived attached to Jesus, he wouldn't have had to say the hard things that he has had to say. He has said all those tough things to help them to understand that they need to come back and live by faith, come back to just attach themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we come to 1Cor 4:18. Paul now turns to the guilty ones, and he will address all of them as he continues on in the book. They know who they are.

You know, in the military they have several readiness levels. DEFCON (DEFense readiness CONdition) 5 is the easiest level that you are ever on. DEFCON 4 means, uh oh, something is going on. We have to move it up a level. DEFCON 3 is pretty serious. DEFCON 2 is really up there. DEFCON 1 is when our armed forces are under the threat of a foreign attack. We haven't been at that very often in America, but DEFCON 1 is a point of urgency: the attack is imminent.

I thought about that. The apostle Paul, from 1:12 to 4:18, has gone from DEFCON 5 to DEFCON 1. After he has told them, “I love you, I am your father in the faith,” he turns around now and is going to move in with force. He is going to address those spiritually arrogant people. Now, by that we mean those who have detached themselves from Christ and have attached themselves to anything of the flesh.

I want you to remember, as we go through Corinthians, we see people attached to people, we see people attached to their opinions, we see people attached to the lust of their flesh, we see people attached to their spiritual gifts, we see people attached to just about everything you can attach yourself to. And the whole problem is, they detach themselves from Christ.

Before I get started, let me ask you a question. What are you attached to? That is going to tell you everything about your spiritual condition. If you are not living attached to Christ, as verses 29 talk about in chapter 1, then evidently everything else goes haywire.

Look at verse 18. We are going to read down through verse 21, and then we will look at the verses. “Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 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. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

Spiritual Insolence

Now, he doesn't tell us who these people are who are spiritually arrogant. The thought even went through my mind, I wonder if it is the leadership of the church of Corinth. He does not say that specifically, so we have to leave it open-ended. Whoever they are, the message Paul sends to them is very clear. First of all, he deals with their spiritual insolence. You know, when you are spiritually

arrogant, there is going to be an insolent attitude about you, an unwillingness to obey authority.

He says in verse 18, "Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you." Now, when he says "some," I think that is important. Go back to 1:12. This is important to me. I don't know if it is to you or not, but in my studying I saw a little difference here. He says, "Now some of you have become arrogant." In 1Cor 1:12 he says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you." Hekastos is the word used there, but the word he uses here in 1Cor 4:18 is the plural form of the little word tis, which means some of you, talking about more than one but not all of you. I think that is significant. Somewhere along the way perhaps we can discover why that is so significant.

The verb "have become" is the aorist passive indicative: something has caused some of these people to become arrogant. The subject is being acted upon when you have the passive voice. Now the word for "arrogant" is an interesting word. It is going to take us a while to deal with it. It is the word phusioo. It has two o's on the end of it. In other words, when somebody is this way, it is clearly evident to everybody. But what does that mean? Well, it comes from the word that means to blow up or to inflate something. Have you ever tried to inflate one of those air mattresses? When you finish blowing it up, it is full of air. You might mistake it for a real mattress until you jump on it hard enough and find out that it is only air when the thing pops and the air goes out and it goes flat again. It is air on the inside of it.

The idea in the New Testament is a pride and conceit. It has the thought of somebody thinking more highly of themselves than they should and, therefore, putting themselves into a position to where they will not listen to anyone else: to be an arrogant bag of wind. When I was growing up, they were called a blow hard, somebody who was always full of hot air, that kind of individual.

Well, it is used six times in 1 Corinthians, and it gives us a vivid description of what we are talking about here. Somebody who is spiritually arrogant is just a big bag of wind; that is all they are. We see some things that come out about them that is very important.

The first time it is used is in 1 Corinthians 4:6. Let's go back to it because it tells us something about the spiritually arrogant. First Corinthians 4:6 says, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes." He has dropped off Cephas and Christ and is just dealing with himself and Apollos here. He says we are doing it for a reason: "that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." Now arrogance is alongside of, exceeding, that which is written. In literal form it means to not go above that which is written, as if your will and your desire is higher than what God's desire is. So the first thing we have got to understand about a person who is spiritually arrogant is that he is certainly willing to exceed that which is written, to go above that which God has written.

Now, when a person does that, he or she obviously does not respect the authority of God. Now, if we don't respect God's authority, it is obvious we won't respect the Word as being our authority. Then, therefore, we don't respect any authority. We become our own authority. That is what it means to be spiritually arrogant. That is where it starts. The very moment I detach myself from surrendering to Christ, walking and living up under His Word, is the moment I attach myself to something else and decide that I am going to go above that which is written. I don't need the Word. I can go above it. I can exceed that which is written. We become our own authority. This person, whoever they might be, is thinking his way is right. In other words, nobody is going to change him. He is going to be like he is going to be. Nobody can tell him anything. As a result, we see other characteristics develop in his life.

Look over in 1Cor 5:2 where it is also used. It makes us insensitive to sin. That is what chapter 5 is going to start addressing head-on. It says in verse 2, "And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst." They were refusing to practice any kind of church discipline over somebody who was committing incest with somebody in his own family, as chapter 5 is going to talk about when we get there. Because you have become arrogant and have exceeded what is written and have become your own authority, now you are insensitive to sin and won't deal with it. There is no discipline of sin amongst you.

Well, in 1Cor 8:1 it shows us something else that happens to the spiritually arrogant, those who exceed the written word, those who are going to be their own authority. They are bags of wind, but they think they are doing it the right way. You become proud of your knowledge. Of course, God resists the proud. "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." So a person who is spiritually arrogant is a person who is proud of his knowledge, but he has no love to go along with it, which proves the fact that he is living that which God has spoken.

Then we find over in 1Cor 13:4 a person who is spiritually arrogant is unable to display any of the love of God. You see, this kind of love, that is, the fruit of the Spirit of God, cannot be displayed by a person who is living attached to anything other than Christ. It says in verse 4, "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and love is not arrogant."

So you are beginning to understand, I think, a little bit about what it means to be spiritually arrogant. It is a person not living attached to Christ. It is a person who has detached himself from Christ, moved above and beyond the Word of God, become his own authority and therefore, now the flesh reigns in his life. He is immature and fleshly, as Paul has already identified the church at Corinth.

This seems to be the thought of what he is talking about back in verse 18. Go back there. He says, "Now some [not all of you] have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you." Now this really got to me. The passive voice is used: you have become arrogant. Now what is it that made them become arrogant, other than the fact that they detached from Christ? Well, there is another thought here: that Paul is not coming to them. Now you say, "What has that got to do with anything?" "Is not coming" is a present participle. In other words, he is not even on his way, he is not even beginning to come back to Corinth. You say, "What does this have to do with anything?" Listen, the apostle Paul is not only their spiritual father, he is an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we saw back in 1:1. He is the authority. But, when there is no authority around, "when the cat is away, the mice will play." So those who are living exceeding the Word of God, they are saying and boasting, "Ah, Paul is not going to come back. We are just going to do what we want to do." The apostle Paul says, "That is the height of insolence. You won't submit to God. Why would I even think that you would submit to me?"

That is the insolent attitude, the rebellious spirit of a person who is spiritually arrogant. When the cat is away, the mice will play. "Well, Brother Wayne, I am not in church, and Jesus hasn't come back yet. I can just do what I want to do and nobody is going to tell me any different."

Paul is just exposing the insolent attitude they have. He says, "Many of you are doing what you are doing because of the rumor that I am not even coming." No wonder he said to the Philippian church, "I am so thankful for you because you are not only obedient when I am with you, but much more so in my absence." What does that tell you? That means the person you are being obedient to is not the man who had the authority, but it is God who gives the authority. Once I am obedient to God, then I can become submissive to others. A person who is spiritually arrogant, who doesn't need the Word of God, who detaches himself from what God has to say, who becomes his own authority, the only time he is even nervous is if somebody who is a spiritual authority gets around him.

Sitting on a plane up in first class has been more fun. I sit next to some of these guys and I ask them, "What do you do?" They say, "Man, I am CEO," of some big company. He starts telling me all about the stuff they do and then he looks at me and asks, "What do you do?" I say, "I am a pastor." Folks, if this isn't the height of what I am talking about here. They break out in a rash. They can memorize a computer manual and yet, when it comes to talking to a preacher, they don't even know how to open their mouth. I guarantee you, some of them are deacons at some church someplace and now they are nervous because somebody who represents authority is sitting next to them. Had I not sat there, they wouldn't have bothered with it. A man is what he is when he is by himself.

The height of spiritual arrogance is if the only time we get nervous is if somebody with spiritual authority comes around us and it tells you where your heart is that fast. Back in 1:1 he says, "Paul, an apostle called by Christ, by the will of God." So therefore, we know he is the authority. He said, "Some of you have become arrogant because it is said that I am not coming to you. So, you think you can just do whatever you want to do."

What is the key verse of the book of Judges? In Judges 17:6 and 21:25 it says, "In those days there was no king in Israel," nobody was in authority, "so every man did what was right in his own eyes."

Here Paul exposes the insolent attitude of the spiritual arrogant. It is an attitude that says, "I am not under anybody's authority and you are not going to tell me anything. The only time I am going to get nervous is if somebody with a badge comes around."

I was riding down the road from Memphis, Tennessee one time and I had a CB radio on. This guy came on and said, "Hey, good buddy. Put the pedal to the medal. Let the hammer down. There is not a Smokey all the way to the coast."

Well, I was just driving on. I had cruise control. Thank God for cruise control. That just keeps me honest. I set it at the speed limit and was just riding along. There was this one guy saying, "Put the pedal to the medal. There is not a Smokey around here." About that time somebody comes back on and says, "Hey, man, slow down. The guy who is telling you to put the pedal to the medal is a Smokey and he is sitting down here about 25 miles. He has 15 cars pulled off the road."

Everybody started saying all kinds of things on there that I would rather not tell you. One guy comes on. He doesn't even identify himself. He just pops on and says, "Well, if you would obey the law, you wouldn't have to worry about them." He just got off real quick. Somebody else came in who didn't identify themselves either and said, "Amen." In other words, the wicked flee.

Listen, the attitude of arrogance is that you are under no authority, so therefore, the only time you are nervous is if somebody who represents that authority gets around you. Otherwise, you are going to do what you are going to do because you have detached yourself from Christ and you are living that conceited, arrogant life of the church of Corinth.

Spiritual Impotence

Well, the second thing he does is he warns them. He said, "Now I am coming to you. I am coming to you and when I get there, I am going to observe whether or not there is any power with all these good words that you are sharing with everybody. It is one thing to

boast about it." It is not your talk, folks, it is the walk that is behind your talk. Somebody told me years ago, my reputation is what people think about me; my character is what my wife and my children know about me. But you know, you can go another step from that. It is really what God knows about me when I am by myself. It even takes you further than that.

1Cor 4:19 says, "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." You know, the word for "word" here is *logos*, which means intelligent words. But be real careful. You can have somebody who gives intelligent words, who might even sound spiritual, but that doesn't document it. Look at the life that backs it up. Do they live what they preach? Is there any power of God behind it? Is there the touch of God on their life? This is kind of where he is headed.

These people, whoever they were, thought Paul wasn't coming back. Paul said, "Hey, I am coming back," but then he qualifies it. He says, "But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills." That word "soon" means immediately, quickly, I mean, before you can blink an eye. It is the word used in Galatians 1:6 when he says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him." Then over in Philippians 2:19 we see it when it says, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly." He means right away. Paul said, "I am coming to you right away."

Sometimes we think of soon, and what does that really mean? Right away, immediately I am coming to you. But then he adds something to it. He qualifies it. He said, "if the Lord wills." You know what I like about the apostle Paul? He has come out of the nursery, hasn't he? He has already thrown his pacifier away, and he has learned some things in qualifying what he says. He has learned what Proverbs says. Proverbs 16:9, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." So it would be foolish for Paul to say, "I am coming soon." He is not real sure if God might not intervene in that, so he puts a disclaimer on it. "As far as I have anything to do with it, I am coming soon. But I know something about this. I have been this route before. God just might have other ideas before I get there." He wasn't an immature believer. God had taught him quite a bit about this. He had full intentions, but if the Lord wills.

By the way, the word "will," *thelo*, is that which God intends and which God gets involved with in carrying it all the way out to its purpose. Turn to James 4:14. James says the same thing. You see, when you are up under subjection to Christ, you can't even tell what you are going to do tomorrow. You just plan your way and let God direct your step. That is when the adventure begins. You understand that God is going to direct your paths even though you plan your way when you are attached to Him. But if you are detached from Him, you can make all kind of promises you can't keep. Verse 14 says, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." Isn't that an incredible statement? A vapor that appears and just vanishes away.

You know, I didn't understand that years ago, because days sometimes would go by so fast. But now months go by so fast, years go by so fast, and I am thinking, "Wow, just a vapor."

Look in 1Cor 4:15. It says, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.'"

Let's look at Paul's life. I know I am taking a side thought here, but remember, he is writing to immature believers. He is a mature believer. Let's just see some things he has learned in Scripture about what he just said to them. He has already exposed their own arrogance. They don't live up under the authority of God. They could give a rip. They don't live in the Word of God. But he does. What can we learn from a man who does live this way?

Well, he lives a day at a time. Look over in Acts 16:6. These are just a couple of instances in his life how Paul learned that what he intended to do might not be what God was intending to do. If you are submitted to what God is intending to do, you are willing to turn it loose and let God do it, even in the little things. I love these verses because they are so comforting. He had the right intentions. He just wasn't in the right direction yet. He says, "And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia." The imperfect tense is used in here. I mean, they tried and they tried again. They tried and they tried again. I love that because at least it is honest.

He says, "and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them." The Holy Spirit wouldn't let him go in there. Verse 8 goes on, "and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas." Aren't you glad in America that he went down to Troas? It was at Troas that he got the Macedonian vision. Paul took the fact that he couldn't get into all these other places and concluded that he must go over to Macedonia. He didn't just go by the vision. He took all the other facts, factored them in, drew a line and said, "Wow, it is obvious to me that God is sending me someplace else."

Macedonia was what is now the southernmost tip of Europe. Christianity started there and then moved up to a place called England. As a result of that, there was a group of people who came from England over to America for religious freedom. Here we are today in the United States of America. Thank God He had a better place for Paul to go.

Paul had learned this. Even though you plan your way, God directs your steps. That is what he is saying to them. "Hey, I am talking

to some immature folks here, but I am not immature because I know something. I walk with God and I am surrendered to His will. I am telling you I am coming soon, but I am giving a disclaimer because I am under authority to the One who tells me where I am going and when I am going there. And it might not be as soon as I thought it was going to be.”

Over in the book of Romans Paul said, “I can’t wait to get to the church of Rome. I can’t wait to preach the gospel to you.” Then he goes on at the end of the book and says, “I am going to come to you by way of Spain after I go to Jerusalem.” Little did he know what was ahead of him. When he got to Jerusalem, and as a result of what happened there, he spent almost five years of his life in prison, two and a half years in Caesarea and then the rest of it in Rome, on false accusations. He did get to Rome, but he went in chains, not like he thought he was going to go.

So the apostle Paul is even modeling what he is trying to tell them. “I am under authority. I am telling you, I am coming soon. And when I get there, I am going to look at your life, not what you say. But, if the Lord wills, I will be there soon. I don’t know exactly what He wants to tell me tomorrow, but I am coming. You can put that rumor to rest, if God wills. I am going to look at your life. I am not going to listen to what you say.”

An air bag when it is burst reveals nothing but an empty container. Have you bought any potato chips lately? Have you bought these big bags of potato chips? You are thinking, “Man, this will last for two months.” But what happens when you get home and let the air out? There is hardly anything in them!

That is what people who are spiritually arrogant are like. They can put on a good act. They can come to church and act like they love Jesus. They can talk it, but they don’t walk it. You put some pressure on them and what is going to be revealed is nothing but air. That is what arrogance is all about. Paul says, “When I come, I don’t want to hear what you say. I want to see how you are living, if God’s grace is enabling you to be what He told you that you need to be.”

Paul says to those who have become arrogant, “I want to look at your power.” Now the word for “power” there is the word *dunamis*. We know that word. Normally it refers to the ability required to accomplish a task our Lord Jesus assigned, when you put it in spiritual vocabulary. But really not here. That is part of it, but really that is not all of it here.

In 1 Corinthians 4:18, it refers to the essential reality of something, the true nature of something, the source of something. You see, the only source that these people had was hot air. But he wants them to find the source of something. Where is it coming from? Like in Philippians 3:10, he says, “The power of His resurrection,” not just the power but the source of that power being God Himself.

Look over in 2 Timothy 3:5. I will show you what I am talking about. In 2 Timothy 3:5 Paul talks about the last days. He uses it in such a way I think it is clear that we can see. He is talking about the source of it, not just the ability. That is part of it, certainly, but he is referring to the actual source, where it comes from. Second Timothy 3:5 says, “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.” Who is the power? The Holy Spirit of God living in us. It is God’s grace that enables us. So it is not just the ability. That is part of it, yes. It is the source. It is where you are coming from.

In the context, he contrasts it with words, because, you see, it is not just words that we are looking at. It is also the power that goes along with the words. That is what he is saying. Look over in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. When I saw this, it really hit me that I had seen this other places and I didn’t even realize it. First Thessalonians 1:5 says, “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” Now he is not talking about signs and wonders. He is talking about the greatest sign and wonder, how a man can be transformed from within, how a man can actually become enabled to be that which God has told him to be. That is real power. This other stuff, I wouldn’t hang my hat on any of it.

Paul says, “We proved what manner of men we were. We didn’t just tell you something. We lived before you what we said, you see, so that the glory would go to Him and not to us. It is not just in word, it is with power.” So he comes and says, “Hey, I hear your talk, and it is intelligent.” He uses the word *logos*. It is not just babble. He says, “I know you sound intelligent with some of the things you are saying. Some of you have come to pretty boastful conclusions here. I am not even coming to hear that. I am coming to see where you are coming from. I want to see your walk.”

You know, it is amazing how even at church, some of us act spiritual. But wouldn’t it be great if we could just be a fly on the wall in everybody’s house. No, it wouldn’t be great, but it would be honest, wouldn’t it? Where are we coming from? We talk it, but where is the power behind it. Not the power to do miracles but the great miracle of being what God tells us we are supposed to be.

Well, I think Paul illustrates this over in chapter 12 and verse 4. I think this is what he is saying there. There are three things that have got to be accompanied together if God is in it. It is not just what you say. It is God’s hand upon it, the power, the grace that enables and transforms. By the way, with that grace comes the ability to discern when it is there. That is grace in itself, to be able to discern when somebody who talks it walks it. There is a discernment, not from man, from God. Over in 1 Corinthians 12:4 he says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.” The Holy Spirit gives

the gifts, and Christ gives the ministry.

But look at verse 6. "And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons." It is like the Spirit gives the gift, Jesus gives the ministry and the Father takes care of the results. Well, if any one of those is missing, something is wrong.

You know, so many people come to me and say, "I just really believe I am called to preach. Can you get me a church?" I don't know who people think I am. But if God calls a man and if God gifts a man, then God will give the ministry. God will give the effect.

Have we ever stopped to think that some people who think they are called to the ministry might not be in the preaching ministry? It might be someplace else? All these years we have felt like if anybody is in the ministry, he has either got to a preacher or a music leader or whatever. Hey, any Christian who attaches himself to Christ becomes a minister. Let God give the ministry, and God will give the effect. But if people go to school and get a degree, they think they qualify. Everything they say sounds intelligent. But there is never the power that backs that up. Hey, don't worry about that. God is the one who does it as He wills, it says on over in 1 Corinthians.

But anyway, Paul is saying, "I am coming to see where you are coming from. I want to see your walk, not your talk." The effect, I believe, is what he is talking about.

Where is the power that is there? Look in 1 Corinthians 2:2. Remember how Paul came to them. He is his own example. He is his own illustration. First Corinthians 2:2 says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." He understood his responsibility. "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He understood that he could stand there and intellectualize any of them out of the group. But he said, "I didn't come that way. I came in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Verse 5 tells us why: "that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." The evidence of that power is in verse 5 of chapter 3. Here is the evidence of the power that worked along with Paul when he came. He didn't just speak intelligent words coming from God and from God's Word. Something went along with it. First Corinthians 3:5 says, "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

There is your effect. There is the proof in the pudding there. There is what he is talking about. You can talk and talk and talk. Where are the spiritual things that go along with it? The enabling power that God had. Words are cheap. Paul says, "I am coming to see the source of your words. I am going to check your lifestyle. I am not coming to hear what you have to say. I am coming to see how you walk.

Chapter 4 verse 20 says, "For the kingdom of God." The word "kingdom" is the territory where a king reigns. If you are saying you are members of the kingdom of God and you are part of the territory, your hearts are part of the territory where God reigns. Paul says, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power." That is a divine enablement to be what God has commanded you to be.

Paul says, "Hey, I already know of your insolence and I am coming to check and see whether there is any impotence here in your spiritual ability to be the people God has called you to be. He already knows the answer to both of those things.

Spiritual Question

The last thing I want to share with you sounds like my Mama or my Dad. Somebody who loves you will ask you this question. Look at what he says in verse 21. "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with a love and a spirit of gentleness?" Do you know what he said? He is saying, "Do you want to deal with it now or do you want me to come and deal with it?" That is what he is saying. It is like many times, my Dad would call me up on the phone when I hadn't done something. He would say, "Now Son, do you want to do it now or would you rather me come home to encourage you to do it?" It is amazing how quickly you will move knowing that the authority is coming.

I want to tell you, Paul wears the badge, folks. He is an apostle. He said, "I am coming, God willing. You either deal with it now, or I will bring the rod with me." Now do you think he is going to bring a stick and beat them? No. I am going to have to ask him in heaven. Most pastors have thought about it.

If you take a rod to somebody, it is painful, isn't it? Paul is saying is, "You think it is painful for me to write you, it is going to be a whole lot more painful if I come and have to deal with it with you. Now make up your mind. Get it right and get it right now. Do you want to deal with it now or do you want to wait until I come? I think you would rather me come with love and a spirit of gentleness." That word "gentleness" has that idea of brokenness, but it is not weakness. That is not what he is saying. It is power that is under control. He is saying, "Would you rather have me that way, like a broken horse?" When you break a horse, that horse is still powerful,

but it is broken. He says, "Do you want me to come that way, because as an apostle, I have an authority here? Do you want to deal with it before I get there? You have to make up your own mind."

What father wouldn't do this? Remember, he has already qualified most of this message anyway. In Proverbs 3:13 we read, "For whom the Lord loves, He reproves, even as a father, the son in whom he delights." He loves these people. He is not trying to embarrass them. He loves them. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives." Revelation 3:19 tells us, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

That is exactly what Paul is saying to the church of Corinth. "Don't make me have to come to you. Be zealous and repent." He has established the fact that he is their spiritual father, and now he is warning them. What do you desire? Shall I come with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness.