

1 Corinthians Chapter 4 Continued

1 Corinthians 4:11 "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;"

In the last lesson, Paul was explaining about the sacrifices that a minister must be willing to make to work for the Lord. Verse 11 above is just going into detail about what some of these sacrifices are. The apostles went where the Lord sent them. They were not in one place long enough to establish a dwelling place. They did not have a guaranteed salary. They ate and drank what was provided for them wherever they ministered. They were not dressed in fine apparel. Many of them wore skins of animals. The world looked down on them. They were several times even called mad men. They were actually repulsive to those who were not seeking God.

Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content."

Paul had learned to be content when he had much and when he had little.

1 Corinthians 4:12 "And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:"

We know that Paul worked as a tentmaker part of the time that he was ministering. Paul did not want to be burdened by obligation to the people he ministered to. He met Aquila and Priscilla and made tents with them for a while. This is probably what he meant by laboring with his own hands. Paul knew more rejection than most, because he would not give up on his Jewish brothers coming into the kingdom.

Paul was not resentful about any necessary labor needed to support gospel preaching.

He was stoned and left for dead, as well. It seemed that someone was out to kill him most of the time he ministered. I am sure we would have to say that he ministered under great adversity. In fact, he thought it all joy to be persecuted for the sake of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:13 "Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, [and are] the offscouring of all things unto this day."

Paul was never popular with the Jews or with the people of the world, after he received Jesus and began to minister. They called him many evil names. They thought of him as being so evil that he needed to not only be stopped, but destroyed as well.

“Filth offscouring: The scum and dregs scraped from a dirty dish or garbage pot, figuratively used of the lowest, most degraded criminals who were often sacrificed in pagan ceremonies. Not in God’s sight, but in the world’s, Paul and his fellow preachers were so designated. What a rebuke of the proud, carnal Corinthians who saw themselves at the top, while the humble apostle considered himself at the bottom.

1 Corinthians 4:14 "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn [you]."

Paul would go to any amount of suffering and humiliation to get them into the kingdom of God. Paul is not complaining about the suffering. He is also warning those who come to the Lord, that they might experience the very same problems. Paul had no physical sons, so this is speaking of those who came to Christ by his ministry. Paul counts them as his spiritual sons.

Despite their carnal, even sometimes hateful immaturity, Paul always looked on the Corinthian believers with affection.

1 Corinthians 4:15 "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [have ye] not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

Paul is saying here, that these are those who were saved through his ministry. Others may teach them more fully the Word of God, but they began by Paul's ministry. He counts himself as their father. We will find in these letters that Paul wrote that he feels responsible for them, even after he is not preaching there anymore. In fact, this very letter was to straighten out some problems they had in their church.

“Ten thousand instructors”: The term actually say “countless tutors,” referring by hyperbole to an unlimited number of moral guardians used with children. Only Paul was their spiritual father, hence, no one cared like him.

1 Corinthians 4:16 "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

Some people then, and many people of today, took this Scripture literally and could even be called Paulites. It is a very dangerous thing to choose one penman of the Bible and study just his works. We must read the entire Bible to get a full picture of what it is saying. This was not what Paul wanted at all, as we will see in the next verses. Paul was saying that he had tried to live before them the Christian life, and if he would follow the pattern he had set they would be fine. He was not asking them to worship him.

A bold, but justified exhortation. Spiritual leaders must set an example of Christlikeness to follow.

1 Corinthians 4:17 "For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."

Timothy had been an understudy of Paul. Timothy had been instructed (tutored), in the teachings of Paul about Christ and would perfectly represent him. Timothy in that sense, was an extension of Paul. Notice, it was Paul's ways that Timothy would remind them of. Timothy had been faithful to Paul's teachings.

Paul could not be in all the churches at once that he had started. There was no one better to carry on the work that Paul had begun here than Timothy. Paul knew that he could trust Timothy to do it his way, and therefore he sent him.

1 Corinthians 4:18 "Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you."

It seems that some of the Corinthians thought that Paul just did not want to come there and minister and they were pouting about it. Paul could not come.

1 Corinthians 4:19 "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power."

Notice "if the Lord will". We are warned against saying that we will do a certain thing. We do not even know whether we will be living tomorrow, so we cannot say for sure that we will do something tomorrow. You can see from this that Paul did want to come back and minister to them as often as he could. In fact, he came back to Corinth not long after he wrote the second letter to them.

They were arrogant, thinking they would never have to face Paul again. But, if God allowed, he was planning to see them soon. He would not let their proud sinning go unchallenged, for their own sake as well as the gospels. The reality of how much real spiritual power they had would become clear in that confrontation.

This is the first church Paul established, and he was very fond of the people. More than that, he felt responsible for their spiritual growth. He wanted to be sure that they were established on solid doctrine.

1 Corinthians 4:20 "For the kingdom of God [is] not in word, but in power."

For a person to just say they are a Christian is not enough. The Christianity within us must bring results. If we are really a Christian, then we will be fruit bearers. Of course, the real power comes with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The reason for the Holy Spirit within a person is so that they might have the power to minister effectively. This is not the person's power, but the power of God working within them.

1 Corinthians 4:21 "What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and [in] the spirit of meekness?"

Paul is saying that he loves them very much as a parent does a child. Parents do not want to punish children, but sometimes it is necessary to help in their training. Paul is saying here, that he prefers to teach them in a loving manner, but he will train them with force if it is necessary. Paul would rather teach them by example, and through his meekness, to turn them back to God.

Spiritual leaders need to use the rod of correction if people persist in sin. The pattern for that correction is illustrated and explained in chapter 5.

The message in this entire lesson seems to be one where a parent (in the spirit), is trying to save his child from much heartache. Paul loves them and wants them to know Christ in the way he knows Him.

1 Corinthians Chapter 4 Continued Questions

1. What did Paul say, were the working conditions in verse 11?
2. Where did the apostles go?
3. Where did they live?
4. What did many of them wear?
5. What did they have to eat?
6. What had Paul learned to do in whatever circumstance he was in?
7. Where did Paul's living come from?
8. Why did Paul not live of the ministry?
9. Why did Paul experience rejection more than most?
10. What two people made tents with Paul?
11. What adverse circumstances did he minister under most of the time?
12. How did Paul feel about the persecutions he endured?
13. Why had Paul written these things to them?
14. Paul would endure any amount of suffering to get them _____ .
15. What did Paul mean, when he called them his sons?
16. What did Paul say, he was to them in verse 15?
17. Who did Paul tell them to be followers of in verse 16?
18. What did he mean by that statement?
19. Who had Paul sent to the Corinthians?
20. Why had Paul chosen him for the task?

21. What was Timothy to remind them of?
22. Why were some of the Corinthian believers puffed up?
23. Why was it so important to use the phrase "if the Lord will"?
24. Did Paul ever come back?
25. What did Paul want to know of them?
26. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in _____.
27. In verse 21, what two different ways could he come to them?
28. Which way did Paul prefer to come to them?