

“Mystery Managers”
1 Corinthians 4 WBC
Jerry Grey 3-23

Introduction: You will remember the outline for the first four chapters deal with divisions in the church over leaders and how we should followed them. Paul will here continue this discussion about ministers, pastor, bishops, and apostles. ***What we call leaders is not as important as the character they are to embody.*** Basically, Paul is pounding these folks for putting leaders, of any kind, on a pedestal. Proper respect is needed and imitating godly leaders is what it is all about. Evidently, there were still problems after the ***“previous letter”*** because Paul used four chapters to get this fixed. Pastors are to be respected... not worshipped, encouraged... not degraded.

In chapter four, Paul will teach us how to ***“consider”*** properly our leaders. Many people want to be leaders but don’t want to have the characteristics of a leader. I started to entitle this message, ***“So You Want to Be a Leader?”*** After Paul explains what leaders go through, you may want to reconsider.

As we go through this passage I want you to think of all the people you know that have disrupted churches and caused divisions and church splits. See how they measure up to Paul’s words. I am talking about leaders and lay people. The point is that we need to evaluate ourselves.

Characteristics of a Pastor (Leader):

- **A Mystery Managers- 1-5**
- **A Spiritual Spectacle- 6-13**
- **A Faithful Father- 14-21**

The pastor (Leader) is a steward of all of God's spiritual blessings. A steward is a manager. In this case, the pastor manages the things of God until His return.

Luke 12:35-40

35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

NIV

Read Genesis 24 for a view of the oriental practice of the slave and master relationship. Here is a few verses from that chapter.

Gen 24:1-4

Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. 2 He said to the chief servant in his household, **the one in charge of all that he had**, "Put your hand under my thigh. 3 I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, 4 but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

NIV

A servant doesn't own anything; the servant manages His masters belongings. Abraham trusted his servant to tend his business, even after he was dead and gone. Does that sound familiar?

A Mystery Manager: Verses 1-5

Verse 1: Paul tells the people in Corinth how they should view the pastors and their job. Paul says, “consider” us this way...

The word **consider** is **logizomai**. This refers to how you take inventory of something or esteem something. This is to number, reason, regard, or think on something.

Servants- (KJV Minister): The first thing Paul asked of them was that they consider he and his men as servants. The Greek word is **huperetes**. **Huper**, from **hupo**, is a derivative of **eresso** which means to row. This is an under-oarsman. This would have been the slave at the bottom of the boat. Paul uses this as an example of the humility that the leader should have. This is a powerful description of what the servant of Christ should be like. Paul says they were the lowest of the low for servants. John the Baptist referred to himself as not having the right to even unlatch the Lord's sandals.

Mystery Manager: To be the manager of a man's belongings is a big deal; to be the manager of God's business is awesome and an important responsibility. The pastor is the overseer or steward of the church. Some churches do not like the pastor to be involved or to make decisions. That's not biblical. Some say, “you just preach pastor, we will take care of the rest.” Well, that's not his job.

Greek: **οικονομος– oikonomos**. This is basically the words *house* and *law* together. This is the house manager. This would be the overseer, financial or fiscal agent. Treasurer, preacher of the gospel, chamberlain, or steward.

The pastor is the steward of the mysteries of God. Paul will use this word more in later verses. We are familiar with this word and it is used by Paul frequently. If I counted correctly, Paul used the word mystery 20 times. John used it 4 times, all in Revelation. Jesus also used the word mystery in Matthew 13 when He spoke of the *mysteries* of the Kingdom.

The pastor (and leaders) are the managers of these mysteries by the calling of God. What is the big mystery?

Rom 11:25

25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this **mystery**, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

NIV

Rom 16:25

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery** hidden for long ages past...

NIV

1 Cor 2:7

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been **hidden** and that God destined for our glory before time began.

NIV

1 Cor 13:2

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all **mysteries** and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

NIV

1 Cor 14:2

2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters **mysteries** with his spirit.

NIV

Eph 1:9

9 And he made known to us the **mystery** of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

NIV

Eph 3:2-4

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the **mystery** made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

NIV

Eph 3:9-11

9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this **mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 **His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,** 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NIV

Eph 5:31-32

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound **mystery** — but I am talking about Christ and the church.

NIV

Eph 6:19

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the **mystery** of the gospel,

NIV

Col 1:25-27

25 I have become **its** servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this **mystery**, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

NIV

Col 2:2

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the **mystery** of God, namely, Christ,

NIV

Col 4:2-3

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the **mystery** of Christ, for which I am in chains.

NIV

2 Thess 2:7

7 For the **secret** power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way

NIV

1 Tim 3:8-9

8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the **deep truths (Secrets)** of the faith with a clear conscience.

NIV

1 Tim 3:16

16 Beyond all question, the **mystery** of godliness is great:

NIV

Rev 1:19-20

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The **mystery** of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this:

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

NIV

Rev 10:7

7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the **mystery** of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

NIV

Rev 17:5-8

5 This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY

BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. 7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the **mystery** of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

NIV

The disciples asked Jesus about this mystery in Matthew 13. You know this to be the chapter about the Kingdom and how to live in it. The oft repeated phrase is "The Kingdom of heaven is like..."

Matt 13:10-13

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the **secrets** of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

NIV

The spiritual leaders job is to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom. **1 Cor 2:6-7** explains it as well as any place in scripture. This is our job. This is our main task. The Shepherd is a ***Mystery Manager (A Truth revealer, if you will)***. When a church calls a pastor, what is the first thing they look for in a man? Most times, it is not this. They seek a baby sitter and a man who will neglect the Word and Mysteries of God to expend his time on anything but the Word. After the resurrection, about what did Jesus have a conversation with Peter? Feed My Sheep.

Verse 2: Faithful- The leader is also supposed to be faithful. Well, faithful to what? If He is a servant of Christ and a mystery manager of God, then He should be faithful to Jesus and His Word. He should be faithful to his flock. If he is a shepherd, he should smell like sheep.

The text uses the word **expected** or **required** here, v.2. The word expected is **zeteo**. This means desire, required, seek after, endeavor. You would think that this would be understood completely by all the leaders that go into ministry full time and to all the lay people that serve. However, it is not. Faithfulness is the birthmark of the growing and abiding Christian. No one has ever left the fold that was faithful.

I have met and worked with some lazy people in the ministry. Watching a lazy preacher is like watching a man shoot a howitzer from a row boat. If he is lazy, his people will be lazy. If he doesn't prepare for the pulpit, he has forsaken his main calling.

I will call the Lord as my witness today. In 40 years, I have never come to the pulpit, the lectern for a Sunday School lesson, or a simple devotion unprepared. Every encounter with the lost and with my sheep is an opportunity *to reveal the mystery*.

One person told me the other day about a Saint that died and had just gone to heaven. She said her grandmother used to say when someone died that, "well... now they know the secret." Man, I like that.

Nehemiah 4:6

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: *for the people had a mind to work.*

KJV

Prov 12:27

27 The lazy man does not roast his game,
but the diligent man prizes his possessions.

NIV

Prov 26:15

15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

NIV

How many people know the food I am preaching is on line and available to study? The Word of God dissected and presented in the easiest form I know, yet not even read. Get spiritual food from somewhere please. At least bring your hand to your mouth.

Eccl 10:18

18 If a man is lazy, the rafters sag;
if his hands are idle, the house leaks.

NIV

If the shepherd doesn't feed the sheep, they learn to bite each other.

Matt 25:26

26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?

NIV

Verse 3: Crucified with Christ- Some of you could get freed up for life right here. You spend all your time worried about what people think of you and don't care what God thinks. Paul didn't have this problem. Now, I am not talking about taking constructive criticism and growing from iron sharpening iron. What I am saying is that many of you worry so much about what people think, you can't function. You need a healthy dose of reality. Not everybody is going to like you. That's their problem. Please God and you need not worry about others.

Key thoughts to help:

- People are critical because it helps them pull you down to their level of insignificance. People criticize to build themselves up.
- Jealousy is behind 90% of character attacks.
- People pick all your flaws out to help themselves feel more obedient to Christ.
- People criticize because they don't have all the information. The way things look is not how they are, I promise.
- Some people are critical just cause that's the way they are. They have nothing to offer, so they complain. We ignore them. If you are the complainer, people will ignore you too.
- Those who work and participate get heard.

Here's why Paul says we are not to be divided over who is the best leader. Here's why judging others is so bad.

Greek: elachistos- this is the word for smallest, little, or least. This is the superlative form. **elachistos** is used as an equivalent to the word **mikros (micro)**. A modern translation would be this... "I care *very little* what you think of me."

Why does Paul say this? What gives him spiritual grounds to make this claim? He says, "I am not capable of even judging myself, how could I judge another? You can't even judge yourself either, how can you judge me? If you will not even judge yourself, and will lie about your own guilt, how could I trust your judgement about me? Can't. I will just be faithful to Christ and let you deal with *yo self*."

Verse 4: This is one really great verse. This verse explains so much about the human mind and heart. Our motives are exposed here in the text. Paul claims that he is not conscious of any offense against himself. The NIV says, "my conscience is clear,

but that doesn't make me innocent." The two important words here are these:

Greek: suneido- With oneself to be conscious or to be privy to. This is to know, consider or be aware of.

Greek: dikaios- to be justified or right. This root always refers to words of righteousness or justice.

Translation: Even if I am not aware of any sin in my life or any offence to others, that still doesn't make me just or right. Paul says he could not justify himself. You can't either.

Here is the truth. Humans are always trying to justify themselves. Until you are evaluated by God, you ain't just.

Greek: anakrino- This means to be evaluated, questioned, searched, judged, interrogated, or asked by the Lord.

We are so corrupt in the flesh, we will justify anything if put in the right position. The only way to make sure your heart is right, and your righteousness is pure, is if God clears your conscience. The Holy Spirit has to release you from guilt, or you are not safe.

Application: So why would you bog yourself down in other people's opinions when they can't even judge themselves and you can't judge yourself purely? They can't judge you and you can't judge yourself? Paul says in v. 3 that he cared very little of the Corinthians opinions. Paul was a mystery manager, a faithful servant, and a faithful father. He had little time for preacher worship.

Verse 5: Patience- Here lies my favorite word of counsel for most problems in the Christian faith. **Give it time.** God is rarely on my timetable. Time reveals many, and all things, and reveals

them thoroughly. Many people have criticized me over the years by asking me, “when are you going to deal with that?” Most times, I am just waiting on God. Many, many, times, if you will be patient, things will work out, or truth be revealed.

Paul says not to come to a conclusion too quickly on spiritual matters. Don’t judge too quickly. Time will make the decision for you. If you are unsure now, wait for the Lord.

Greek: καιρος– appointed time. HCSB says, prematurely, not a great translation. The NIV picks up on this in its translation. The NIV uses appointed in its translation, which is the best translation. The KJV gets close with the word time. Do not judge matters until the **appointed time**. Time will give you the answer. Who is right in this situation? Give it time. Should I take this job or that job... give it time. Should I trust this person... give it time. If you are forced to rush into matters I would question its validity. Uncertainty, confusion, and fear, are not of God. Who was right in that disagreement? Give it time. When time reveals the truth, you have to be person enough to accept it, even if you are in the wrong.

Greek: φωτιζω– **photizo**. To bring to light. Our English word photo comes from this word. Enlighten, illumine, to make see, to make or bring to light.

Greek: kruptos skotos- what is hidden in darkness.

The last phrase in the original says that God will manifest the counsels of the hearts. How would you like the counsels of your heart to be revealed up on our screen today. Your thoughts and actions that you justified about yourself and others popped right up there for all to see? I’ll take a hard pass.

Greek: each- 'εκαστος, hekastos. This is each, every, any, one, both, particularly any man or woman. You don't have to worry about getting in trouble or missing rewards because of me. ***We will all be rewarded according to our sin or obedience.*** When God reveals the motives and intents of my heart, I, and only I, will be rewarded (praise) or suffer loss. Each of us is responsible for ourselves. That happens when the Lord comes. Give it time.

Adam and Eve though they didn't die as God said when they sinned. But time proved them wrong. Noah said it was going to rain and no one believed it. Time proved them wrong. God promised a Messiah and time proved Him correct. Jesus has promised a Second Coming and time will reveal the truth. I am seeking the praise of God and not from man.

A Spiritual Spectacle: Verses 6-13 (Intro with Rom. 12:3)

Paul brings himself and his helper's lives into the fray as an example here. Many times a personal example is the best example because it is personal. You will also see that Paul uses a bit of glorified sarcasm as well. Maybe a good bit of sarcasm.

Paul gets to the main point that he started back in 1:10-12. The divisions and prideful rivalries over human leaders revealed a great measure of pride and arrogance in the Corinthians. **The Corinthians loved philosophy, important people, and human wisdom.** Their fighting was immature and useless. Paul will now contrast their pride with what a real apostle's life was like and he will use sarcasm to drive home the point.

We may call this section... ***“so you want to be an apostle?”***

Verse 6: Here are three good translations to this verse that will help us. This is a tough translation and one hard phrase to understand.

1 Cor 4:6

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a **figure transferred** to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

KJV

1 Cor 4:6-7

6 Brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself as **examples** for you. I did this so that you could learn from us the meaning of the words, "Follow what the Scriptures say." Then you will not brag about one person and criticize another.

Easy-to-Read Version

1 Cor 4:6

6 Now these things, brethren, I have **figuratively applied** to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

NASU

My personal opinion of this last section is that Paul is looking back to what he has spoken to them concerning human wisdom and its misguided place in the Christian's life. I also think that he is about to drop the *theological hammer* on them concerning all the other question he will answer in the rest of the book.

When Paul uses the phrase, "beyond what is written," I think he is looking back and looking forward. The obvious sin that Paul is attacking, to me anyway, is pride. Without this enormous problem of pride, there would have been no choosing one apostle or preacher over another. The **"previous letter"** had not been well received and Paul was taking care of that. That, in and of itself, shows the pride that the church leaders had.

Paul's goal, as always, is restoration. He wants them to learn this lesson and that the church cannot survive with divisions. I like the way Paul starts this section... “Now,” brothers... You can almost hear the frustration in his voice.

Greek: μετασχηματιζω, metaschematizo. This is **meta**, “**with**” and “**schema**,” “figure, mode, fashion.” The scripture always identifies allegories and figures. This is just one cool word. This is a figure of speech. An illustration. HCSB says, “I have **applied these things** to myself and Apollos. The NKJV says, “I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes.” The NASBU says...

1 Cor 4:6

6 Now these things, brethren, **I have figuratively applied** to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

NASU

Paul used himself as an example to the Corinthians in hopes of teaching them to remain in the scriptures. Don't go beyond what is written. Do what I said in chapters 1-3, and what I say in 4-16 says Paul. Stay in the scriptures and these divisions will go away.

Greek: ἵνα– hina. Now listen carefully, this is important. The **hina** is translated as “**that**” or for the “**purpose of**” in scripture. When the writers tells you the purpose, you don't need to figure it out. That's as easy as an interpretation as you will get.

Paul wrote this and used himself as an example “**so that**,” they would benefit and learn not to go beyond “**what was written**,” and “**so that**,” they would not be inflated with pride by choosing one leader over another. **If you go beyond what is written then you prove your arrogance. You think you know**

better than God. You think your beliefs, visions, and dreams, and opinions are better than the word.

Greek: A classic and heart stabbing use of language by Paul. He uses the word “**phusioo**,” from “**phusis**.” The first meaning to blow up, to be inflated, make proud, or puff up. The second refers to germination, expansion, spring up. A great description of an angry, prideful, blowup.

I dug up a seed once and look at it to see what it looked like in the germination process. It had swollen up and looked like it was going to pop. The insides had changed metamorphically and had turned into a big zit with a root. I can’t help but think about the passage that illustrates this prideful explosion.

Heb 12:15

15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root **grows up (phuo)** to cause trouble and defile many.

NIV

Don’t let pride cause divisions. If you feel it swelling up or you get puffed up, mortify that deed of the flesh.

The Sarcasm is On!

Verse 7: We will look at this verse as Paul presented it to us. Notice the **who**, the **what**, and the **why** in verse 7. Paul is still going back to the previous chapters to draw the truth to a conclusion. How could the Corinthians actually pick out a man to follow in such a prideful manner? **The Corinthians felt they were superior to others.**

I would say that nothing hurts us more than when we have another person look down on us or convey the conclusion that we have been surmised and found wanting. Let me put it this way...

“they think they are better than you.” The church had nothing to be proud of and they had many problems. In the remaining chapters we will see this play out.

Greek: diakrino. The translation of this word, in this context, can be a bit difficult. The basic meaning of the word is to judge, to contend, to waiver, to discern or doubt. “Who Makes.” Basically, the text says, *what gives you the right to act superior and judge other’s worthiness?* What makes or judges you to be superior? What gives you the right to make distinctions about others? This word denotes separation. In other words, a person separates themselves from others as superior because they separated their perfections from other’s failures or imperfections.

Paul actually changes the plural **“you”** here to a singular **“you.”** I think Paul is speaking to one specific person. He knows the person that is causing the big problems. One individual was really puffed up.

The comments and translations to these next few words are priceless. The various translations from different translators and scholars are telling:

First question- *Who makes you different from anyone else? Who regards you as superior. For who makes you so superior? Who concedes you are or have any superiority? Who defines you? Who elevates you to a place of rightful boasting? Who has given you the right to assume a position of such arrogance? Who makes these determinations about your exalted status? What kind of self-delusion is it that allows you to put yourself in a position to judge another person's servant (Taylor, NAC p. 119-120).*

I think many of us have actually spoken these words like this, “Who do you think you are.” I know I have, and Paul does too.

The second question speaks of the equality of the Christian's "**grace life.**" How can anyone think they are better than anyone else if all they have, and are made of, has come by grace. You brought nothing of value to the table at salvation. Nothing! You were saved by grace and if you possess anything that blesses the kingdom, you received it from Christ. Hero worship is not acceptable. **Jesus is our hero by grace.**

What does, "If in fact you did receive it mean?" The reason there was so much pride and misguided affection for a certain leader, instead of Jesus, was most likely because this individual with which Paul was dealing, was lost. Maybe he had not received grace.

The third question was asked to force contemplation upon this person about their reasons for prideful boasting. If you know we have nothing except by grace, then why are you acting as though you didn't receive from God?

Therefore, no more preacher worship! No more idols. It is okay to respect and imitate those God puts in your life for mentorship, but never replace Jesus for anyone else. **Taylor says, "boasting implies human achievement and fails to recognize the free grace of God"** (NAC, Taylor p. 120). Do not think too highly of yourselves, or men. We all love Romans 12:1-2. What about verse 3?

Rom 12:3

3 For by the **grace** given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

NIV

Rev 19:10

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. **Worship God!** For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

NIV

Rev 22:8-9

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book.

Worship God!"

NIV

Verse 8-9: Paul transitions back to the second person plural here (Y'all). This is a sarcastic comparison with the self-perceived superiority of the Corinthians and the reality of the apostles life.

Paul uses three sarcastic remarks to describe the Corinthians:

- **They were full.** One scholar puts it neatly... "Paul, with scathing irony contrast the present suffering of the apostles with the Corinthian's own perceptions of their supposed exalted status. Garland comments, the apostles live according to the wisdom of the cross; The Corinthians imbibe the wisdom of this age and pass themselves off as kings" (Taylor, p. 120).

The Corinthians are saying they are full of spiritual food and have no need for more growth. They had arrived. The original is **κεκορεσμενοι** from **κορεννυμι**. **Kekoresmenoi** refers to being a glut, sate, full, or to eat enough. This is a **perfect passive participle**. That means they had

received in full, completely, on a continual basis, all that God has to offer.

- **They were rich.** This is **plouteo**. This refers to being increased with goods. This means that the Corinthians placed a lot of faith in their own goods and services. They had all they needed. They must have felt they were already kings because God saw them as special and saved them. They were blessed with wisdom and material goods more than others... superior due to their goodness. Many people actually would never say this out loud but really feel this way. They really think they need no help at all because they are the reason for their success. They are full and rich.
- **They are kings.** Paul says they did this without the apostles. “You are reigning without us.” Our root word here is **basileus**. Sarcastically, Paul says they had become **kings** and Paul will soon speak to what a real servant is like. They were actually not kings, and they were even farther from being servants. They did this on their own, right! Sarcastically, Paul says, “I wish we could reign with you.”

In the last section, Paul will deal with this problem by addressing their failure to give Paul the respect he deserved as their father in the faith. ***Paul’s admonition was that they follow his way of life by imitating his surrendered life to Christ.***

Verse 9: The word **dokeo** is used. “**I think,**” or I suppose, is the meaning. My favorite is “**to be of a certain reputation.**” Paul says the apostles are seen in this way... as being on display for suffering, being in last place, compared to men that are going to die. Paul is a servant, not a cult leader or famous philosopher, or politician in Rome. Paul has sold out for the gospel of Jesus

Christ. Paul says that he and his men were placed in the world as a spectacle for the world, angels, and men.

Greek: Spectacle: Theatron. A theater. Paul's life was on the big screen. He had been appointed to die for the cause. All of heaven and earth was watching this man's life.

Verse 10: We are **fools- moros**, Paul says. We are **weak- feeble, sick, impotent**. We are **dishonored- atimos, no honor, despised**. In the eyes of the world the Corinthians were wise, strong, and distinguished. What a comparison? **You may be a Corinthian in this world, but when the Son of Man visits the earth... it will not matter.**

Verses 11-13: So you want to challenge the great apostle? Here is how Paul was grown in his faith and became the man he was spiritually. This is not a passage Osteen will preach. He is all about the material blessings of following Jesus. *Noting truthful will ever be heard from the false prophets because they lose business.*

- Hunger- **peinao**, famished, to pine, or crave. Right then. That present hour.
- Thirst- **dipsao**
- Poorly clothed- **gumniteuo**, naked, stripped, poorly clad.
- Treated roughly- **kolaphizo**- buffeted, to hit with the fist. To chastise or punish.
- Homeless- **astateo**, no certain dwelling. Missionaries.
- Hard labor- Two words for work and labor. Hard work.
- Reviled- **loidoreo**, reproach, vilify, abusive, a blackguard (a 15th century word for menial tasker or scoundrel). The menial workers of a kitchen or household, scurrilous language, an unprincipled contemptible person.
- Bless when persecuted- Matthew 5 beatitudes obeyed.

- Endure it all- James 1 completed.
- Slandered and give grace- Blasphemed is the word.
- Garbage or dung- garbage, dung, to clean off the trash from a surface, to clean the pig pen.
- Dirt on the sandals- **peripseme**, this is the scrapings. The rinsing or scraping of a dirty vessel. The washing of an area of scum. In the ancient papyri it was used as a greeting... used in public places as an ironic greeting... “your humble servant or your offscouring” (Rogers, in loc).

Does this break your heart a little bit. The great man of God was broken, humbled, and beat down, so that God could mightily use him. Your life is rich in Christ because of this man’s faithfulness. You have what you need for Cristian maturity and growth because of Paul’s life.

If we don’t recognize this, we are no better than the **“Corinthian wisemen.”** Look back at verse 1. Paul was not a marquee apostle that went from town to town presenting himself and his ministry for fame, fortune, power or pleasure. Paul was not selling books. He had no tape ministry. Paul was willing to put up with the Corinthians because of his servant mindset and calling. Paul was a humble slave that endured the calling of the cross. We really have no idea what it’s like to be humbled in this fashion.

God made Paul a spectacle to the world, angels, and men.

At His calling...

Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he **must suffer for my name.**"

NIV

Look back at verse 3. Now you can understand it in context better. This is why Paul didn't care what they thought of him. He had a different master to obey.

1 Cor 4:3

3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

NIV

Illustration: Story of Sanford's friend in California, Michael Tackwood. He could not read or write. God saved him and now is a street preacher. He gets beaten up, reviled, persecuted, cursed at and he is still humble, forgiving and preaches on the streets of California.

On page 123 of the NAC commentary, Taylor says, "the world's opinion of the apostles may be summed up in two phrases, translated by the NIV as, "scum of the earth" and "refuse of the world," terms used metaphorically for anything contemptible. Apostles were regarded by the world as the most detestable of all people, but, as such, the apostles incarnated the scandal of the cross."

Preachers today that call themselves apostles are a bit confused, my opinion.

We have a choice to make. Our goal will be to please the world around us, or we can choose to be servants, mystery managers, and people of the faith, as we display ourself as spectacles in the kingdom of God. I pray that I will be considered a servant. I have no authority or rights over my Master.

Faithful Father: Verses 14-21

Paul has described the way he wants the Corinthians to consider him and his leaders. They were servants, mystery managers, a spectacle, and now he describes himself as a faithful father.

Verse 14: This is what a good father does. A spiritual father looks out for the best interest of his children. Worldly wisdom and secular business lets you survive on your own. The church and spiritual life should be different. We have all heard our parents tell us that we will have to make our own way. We need to be a hard worker and smart because nothing in this world will be handed to you. And by the way, that is good advice. But disciplining new believers should be different.

Illustration: When I was in the pipe trade I had many journeymen that were really helpful and taught me their skills. Many others would never tell you anything because they see you as a threat to their jobs. Many times I have seen this in the church.

Spurgeon speaks in his book, *Praying Successfully*, about the new converts and their struggles. Spurgeon says that he knows of new converts that have troubles with family, friends, and co-workers due to their new faith. They try to get help in their tribulations by seeking out mature believers with whom they may speak. As I have often found as well, Spurgeon says that the Christian believers don't help the new converts. They brush them off or don't help at all.

Illustration: “Christians should pray for young people who are newly converted, for their worst enemies are often those in their own household.” “I would not mind so much,” a new believer said, “if I had a Christian friend to go to. I spoke to a Christian the other day, and he did not seem to care about my situation at all” (CHS, p.19).

“I have noticed that some Christians appear to keep to themselves, they don't seem to notice the troubles of beginners in the Christian life. Don't let this be the case with you. My dear brothers and sisters, cultivate great love for those who, having come into the army of Christ, are harassed by adversaries. Like King David, they're in a cave. Do not disown them. They're trying to do their best. Stand side by side with them. Say to the persecutors of a young Christian friend, I too am a Christian. If you are dishonoring that young man with your ridicule, let me have my portion of it. If you are pouring contempt upon him, give me a share of it, for I also believe as he believes” (CHS, p. 20).

Paul knew that discipleship takes time, energy, and money. We are their parents in the faith. Paul's goal was restoration and forgiveness, not shame for destruction. I have also seen mature believers actually get into conflict with young Christians and try to run them off from the House of God. This is a sad situation. Maybe all of the difficulties that you're having in your life right now might be there because God is bringing judgment upon you for how you treat the new believer. Be the mature believer and fix the problem. Suck it up a little bit will ya. Grow up a little bit will ya.

Greek: Shame, entrepo. This word refers to being turned inside out. To invert or to cause to think inwardly. In the NT it refers to causing shame. To withdraw, turn back, or turnabout. Paul was not trying to get the Corinthians to be depressed or to cause them to quit. Notice how it is used in the context of 1 Thess 3:14-15.

2 Thess 3:14-15

14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel **ashamed**. 15 Yet **do not** regard him as an enemy, but **warn him as a brother**.

NIV

Paul says the same thing here just in a bit of a different way. Notice how Paul uses this word in Titus:

Titus 2:6-8

6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be **ashamed** because they have nothing bad to say about us.

NIV

Paul was in the business of warning people about sinful rebellion. Being ashamed has lost its punch today. People in this millennium don't blush anymore. Paul uses the word **noutheteo**. This is to gently caution or reprove. The word means to bring to mind. This is calling attention to something or admonishing a person. Shame is a good thing. The aggressive behavior that you're seeing from the transgender community is because they're ashamed of what they're doing. The entirety of the pride movement and their aggressive behavior is because of their shame. You may not like that but it's the truth. A convicted sinner will either repent or double down on their sinful behavior to combat the feelings of conviction. Many people will not come to Woodlake Baptist Church because the conviction is too great.

The Corinthians were his spiritual children and he had a spiritual and biblical right and authority to speak into their lives. Your pastor and spiritual leaders have a right to speak into your life. Your friends have a right to speak into your life, so take heed.

Verse 15: The person that leads you to Jesus has a special place in your life. Don't mess it up with pride. When you join a church, you become a part of the family and rest under the pastor's love, guidance, and spiritual table.

You will learn many things over the years from so many other believers, but you will only have one person that led you to Christ.

Paul also makes it clear that many times the Father we have in the faith may not have led us to the Lord, but is a great example of a spiritual Father. We have many spiritual Fathers and Mothers here this morning.

How do you become a spiritual Father or Mother? “Through the gospel.” Paul uses the word **paidagogos** for the word **instructor**. This is the English word paedagogue. This is one that took the children to school or instructed the children. This is a schoolmaster. A tutor.

Question? How can you tutor your sheep if you don’t know them? If you don’t spend time with them you can’t instruct them.

What do you instruct them in? The gospel. The faith. The kingdom.

Verse 16: Paul uses a powerful word for his desire that the Corinthians follow him. He starts with the word beseech (**parakaleo**). This refers to a passionate plea. Then Paul says imitate me.

The Greek word is mimetes. This means to imitate or follow. This always makes Baptists nervous when we say imitate someone, but Paul say that we must have people in our lives that live out the gospel, and the faith, in the power of the spirit for us to see it. **Mimetes** means to mimic or ape. The doctrines of scripture are easier to understand when we see them lived out in real time.

Mentors:

- Have an older mentor
- Have equals to grow in fellowship with.
Sharpen iron!
- Be a mentor to someone younger.

Illustration: Knowing the doctrines about legalism and freedom is one thing... seeing a person of maturity live that out is another. Teaching balance in the Christian life is not an easy doctrine to understand at first, then we learn from others how to be balanced in our walk.

Verse 17: Paul goes a step further, he sends Timothy. There is nothing better than having people in your life that know what you believe and know how you think. Timothy is a true ambassador for Paul. If I can't be there, it is such a comfort to send a person that knows what I believe and what I approve.

- Timothy was a son.
- Timothy was loved.
- Timothy was faithful.
- Timothy was mature.
- Timothy was in Christ.

What was Timothy's job?

- To remind the People.
- Paul's way- **'οδος, hodos**. This is the word for road, or way. The true meaning is **journey**. When Jesus said He was the **Way**, the **Truth** and the **Life**, He used this word. When used figuratively, we say, "this has been a long journey, or this was a tough way to go." "I have walked this way for Jesus." "This is the way, walk ye in it." We are not talking

about the conditions of the road... we are talking about the journey.

- Paul sent Timothy to remind the people about how he walked with Jesus on his journey. This is the “faith life” we live.
- To teach the people. Teach them, and help them. Discipleship is a hands on task. You cannot disciple yourself alone. Some people can get grounded in the faith on their own, but fellow believers can speed this process up exponentially. Timothy is proof that churches need pastors. If a man will not pastor, then he should get out of the ministry.
- Teach them to be consistent. What Paul taught in Corinth, he taught everywhere. What he did at church is what he taught at home. Paul did not compromise.

Verse 18: The biggest problems of man! God hates them too. Pride and arrogance.

This is the same word as in verse 6. “Don’t go beyond what is written and you won’t get puffed up.”

Greek: phusioo. To blow up or get puffed up. Root word refers to germination. A bursting forth. A swelling up, e.g., like a seed when it swells just prior to germination.

I call this the bull frog disease. When people think they are better than others or even better than God... they get arrogant. Arrogance will take millions to hell.

Verse 19-20: The problem with arrogance is Paul will always show up in person. So will Jesus. One thing the arrogant people always forget... when you are arrogant, you have to back it up. When we are dealing with kingdom work, spiritual power is the measure of success, not talk. Paul is submitted to Christ. Paul

operates according to the will of God. When you are submitted to the Lord, you have no worries about what others think.

Paul was God's ordained spiritual father to the Corinthians. You may be thinking right now, "What gives Paul the right to talk to them like this?" Welcome to arrogance! We are all in need of humility when we are corrected. I know that's hard, but it is necessary.

I have seen people rebel and act like children when reprovved. I have acted horrible when reprovved. To take an admonition is to be spiritually mature. Paul was going to challenge their spiritual power when he arrived. I don't think I would like to challenge the great apostle, would you?

Illustration: How do you respond?

You are about to leave the room and someone says to you, "Hey, don't forget your umbrella." You say, "I know it it's raining outside, I am not gonna forget my umbrella. What do you think I am, stupid?"

Response # 2: "Oh thank you so much. I do forget this umbrella often. Thank you for the reminder, you are so kind."

Illustrations: Arrogance

The story goes that the admiral, looking out from his command post on the deck looked out and saw lights in the distance, clearly heading straight for him. He radioed the message ahead: "Turn aside, 10 degrees starboard." The radio beeped back – "Negative. Advise you turn aside 10 degrees starboard." Furious, the admiral radioed back: "No, you turn aside. I am an admiral I am in

command of a battleship” The message was returned: “I am a private. And I am in charge of this lighthouse”

Verse 21: Have your parents ever asked you this question? “Is that what you really want to do?” If you have heard that, then you have also probably heard this... “Okay then, if that’s the way you want it.” If you hear that last statement, you are in for a ride my friend.

God to Jerry- You want to do what? Are you sure that’s what you are planning? You are going to do this in spite of the conviction and unction of the Holy Spirit?

Jerry to God- Yes, I can make it work. I have been praying and you have not given me a clear answer or answered quickly enough. I think I will plow ahead and do my own thing. You can bless the mess later or get me out of it.

God to Jerry- Okay, if that’s what you want to do. If that’s the way you want it, go ahead.

I have been a spiritual father to lots of people over the years. I have never pushed my opinion on them. I always make suggestions and see how they respond. Most people just ask me what I think to see if I will agree with them or bless their mistake before they make it. Most people don’t really want my opinion, especially if it comes from the scripture.

Don’t ask the mystery manager, the spiritual spectacle, or your spiritual father what he thinks, unless you are willing to hear the truth.

Arab proverb: *Arrogance is a weed that mostly grows on a dung hill.*

American proverb: Arrogance is a kingdom without a crown.

Prov16:5

5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

ESV