

Turn in your Bibles today to 1 Corinthians Chapter 4 and we are going to look at verses 14 to 21. We are going to continue to look at this idea of "Pride Versus Humility!" The Apostle Paul had visited Corinth as part of his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. Now Corinth was a truly diverse city and was an important trade route between Europe, Asia Minor, East Asia and the Middle East. So, there was a lot of different cultural and religious influences going on. Sound familiar?

But, as Paul was in Corinth, he preached the Gospel faithfully and in Chapter 18 of Acts verse 8 it says, that many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized. In verse 18 it says he stayed many days longer as he continued to disciple those that were saved. So, Paul leaves Corinth and ends up in Ephesus. It is towards the end of Paul's ministry in Ephesus that he writes this letter, because he received a report from Chloe's people that there was a lot of divisions, jealousy's and immoral behavior going on in the Church.

Besides the division the Apostle Paul finds there were a lot of outside pressures and influences that were causing the Corinthians to stray away from the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are going to see more specifics of this next week. There was also this Pride, this Arrogance that was arising in some through a lot of the in-fighting that was going on.

Let's read our verses: 1 Corinthians Chapter 4:14-21

***1 Corinthians 4:14-21***

***<sup>14</sup> I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup> That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. <sup>18</sup> Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. <sup>21</sup> What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?***

Paul begins addressing these different issues in the Church. In a way I would say, somewhat sarcastically. But to remind them that the Apostles and anyone that is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ are under pressures to live faithful to the truth and to truthfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not succumb to the cultural pressures around them. Also, there is a humility that should be evident in our lives as Followers of Jesus Christ.

Now, that does not mean we are push overs and to be walked all over and our beliefs just pushed to the side. We are to stand strong on truth but as Jesus said, "Be as wise as serpents but as innocent as doves!"

Using the wisdom of the God's Word to proclaim truth and be pure in our lives to live faithful to God's Word to not be a stumbling block to others.

The Apostle Paul is being very forthright with the church at Corinth. He is giving them a rather good verbal spanking here. But now he begins to explain the purpose behind the discipline they are receiving. Look at verse 14 again.

### ***1 Corinthians 4:14***

***<sup>14</sup>I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.***

Think about this Mom and Dad! Discipline is not to be used to break your child, but it is to lovingly nudge them in a direction for them to see their sin, their wrongdoing to a point of repentance and a direction of holiness (right living) to God and in their personal relationships.

But, there should be shame or guilt over our sin. We will get to it later but in 2 Corinthians Chapter 7 verse 10 it says this:

### ***2 Corinthians 7:10***

***For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.***

That Godly grief described there is mourning, it is a sorrow that brings a pain that you need to get rid of. The only thing that will give you relief is to repent of your sins and surrender your life completely in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mentioned it earlier, but with discipline, it needs to be administered out of love. See in verse 14 how Paul says, I am admonishing, warning, disciplining you as my beloved children. The word for beloved here is: agapetos – which is a form of agape – which is an unconditional deep love for someone.

How many times have we as parents told our children, “I am doing this because I love you!” “If I didn’t care, I would just let you act however you wanted to!” Paul is doing this out of complete love and concern for the people here in Corinth and he does not want them to keep sinning. In these next verses we see why Paul has such a love and concern for the people. Look at verses 15 and 18.

### ***2 Corinthians 7:15-17***

***<sup>15</sup>For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup>That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.***

What is one of the issues that is going on here? The division happening within the Church. They were comparing Paul, Peter and Apollos to each other and creating camps, cliques if you will in support of each of them. We see in Acts Chapter 18 where Paul visited Corinth and planted the church while he was their preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, it is through Paul’s preaching that many of them came to repent of their sins and came to have that personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We see back in Chapter 3 verses 5 through 7 about how when Paul planted, and Apollos watered but God received the increase and they were co-laborers of the Gospel. Paul planted the seeds of the Gospel in many hearts. Many repented at that time and gave their life to Christ and then Apollos came and built upon the foundation of the Gospel that Paul had laid and many more gave their lives to Jesus Christ.

Remember, Paul has been gone for about 4 years now. So, there are those that were raised up in the church to lead and they are teaching also. But we must remember how Corinth is located at an important trade route and was highly diverse in religion and beliefs. There are all kinds of voices that are calling out to the minds and hearts of these people.

Just like us! There are many voices out in the world that are trying to shape the hearts and minds of our children, young adults, those in college and yes even us that are somewhat more mature in age. The ideas of is it Creation or Evolution, Baby or not a Baby, Are their specific truths to sexuality? Is there an absolute Truth? These voices can even bring in great issues within the (church, Church) and we begin to get into in even more depth next week.

But Paul is explaining, as a Spiritual Father, that he feels about them as an earthly father would about their child. He feels since he led them to Jesus Christ that he has a love and a responsibility to see them grow in their faith and in their obedience to the Lord Jesus. Just as we as parents love our children and want to see them first give their life to Jesus and then to grow in a deep, obedient relationship with him.

There is not arrogance here in what he is stating. Look how he refers to this idea of him as a Spiritual Father in verse 15.

***2 Corinthians 7:15***

***<sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.***

How does one become a Spiritual father? Look at verse 15 again.

First, it is only through the sharing of the Gospel. Therefore, with that metaphorical description all Christians should be able to become a Spiritual Father. If you are a father you have child, Correct?

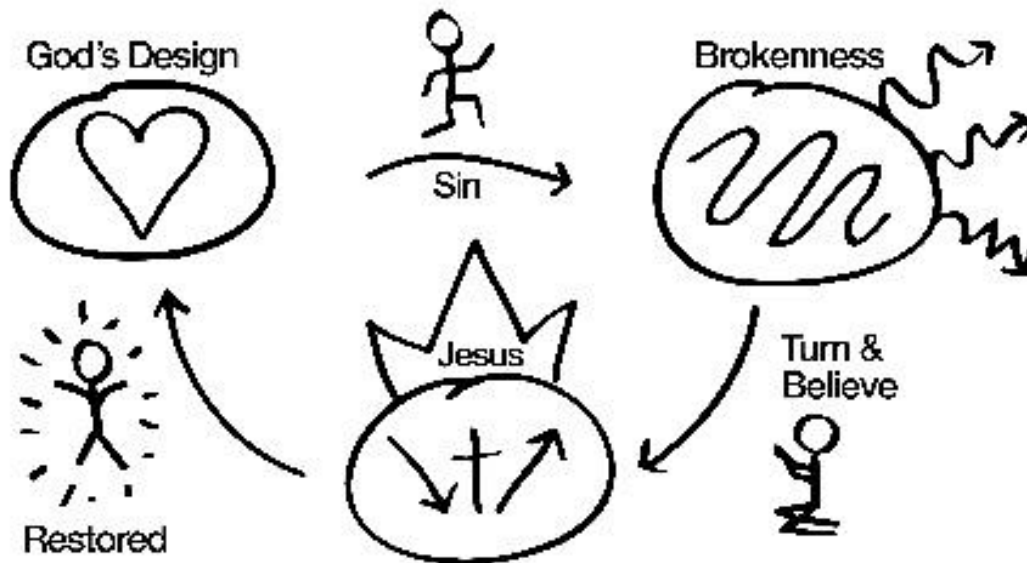
***What is Jesus' command to us as Christians! Look at the Screens! \*\*\* This is where I will step off to the left and the 3 Circles banner will need to be brought to the pulpit area \*\*\*\* Don't go to far. I will need it taken down when I am finished \*\*\*\*\****

***Matthew 28:16-20 – Are to make Disciples!***

***Acts 1:8 – To be his Witnesses!***

***2 Corinthians 5:14-21- To be his Ambassadors with the Ministry of Reconciliation!***

Without the Gospel there is no salvation! As I was studying, I just felt a strong moving to use an example to show what sharing the Gospel is!



When you proclaim the Gospel, and someone repents of their sins and turns to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in Faith then you become a Spiritual Father. But! What we hear from statistics is there are very few Christians that are spiritual fathers or mothers. Some of you may say, well it is not from the lack of trying! Keep trying! Keep sharing! But there are definitely some of us who are not sharing the Gospel! Work on it! You can do it! Remember, salvation comes through the power of the Word of God. Use his Word!

From experience and from asking a few people there is this sense of responsibility, there is this connection that is created when you lead someone to faith in Jesus. That should go without saying, because that matches up with the fact, we should be making disciples, we should be mentoring someone. That is if we are mature in the Word and being obedient to the Word also.

Being a Spiritual Father isn't just sharing the Gospel, it is living the Gospel. You cannot live it unless you are in God's Word! Look at verses 16 and 17 again.

***1 Corinthians 4:16-17***

***<sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup> That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.***

Now that is a bold statement! But that should challenge, motivate and convict us to be living in a way that is worthy of the Gospel. Just as Paul said in this verse from Philippians.

***Philippians 1:27***

***Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.***

That is what Paul is showing through that statement of being imitators of himself as he is giving them a live living example through Timothy. As they look at Timothy's life, they see what Paul is proclaiming and

teaching is displayed through the lives of all those that he has preached to and all the other churches he has planted. He said, what you see is what I do everywhere! A spiritual father will reproduce spiritual children!

Paul is saying I proclaim the Gospel; I disciple all those that are before me and if necessary, I admonish those that are not being obedient because they are shaming the name of Jesus Christ. Because I love Jesus and because I love you, I give you all I have!

Paul is saying what you see is what you get! I am not just this way on Sunday! I am this way all the time! That should go for all of us that are professing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior!

As your Pastor, I can't act and say one thing on Sunday and act and say something differently Monday through Saturday! That goes for everyone of us! Whether you are on this stage, in the back, or in a chair! We can't smile big on Sunday and be a jerk, slander people and live an ungodly life Monday through Saturday!

That is what is going on here in Corinth and this brings us that point of where Paul is saying. Don't make me come over there! Actually, he is saying, I am coming over there and this is why! Look at verses 18-21.

### ***1 Corinthians 4:18-21***

***<sup>18</sup> Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. <sup>21</sup> What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?***

See what Pride does? It brings you to a place of arrogance where you think nothing, or no one can touch you. You are not accountable to anyone. There are people in the church in Corinth that are saying!

He's not coming! I don't have anything to worry about! Paul isn't going to do anything! They are talking a big game! There are people that talk big but deep down it is a front of insecurity or they are arrogant. The word arrogant in these verses means – they are puffed up!

They are just full of themselves and they think they are above everyone else and as I already said, they think they can talk any way they want, about whoever they want and live anyway they want.

But Paul says I am coming, and I will find out where each of you stand.

What Paul is addressing here is that many are saying they are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ but there is nothing in their life that exhibits that claim. Their religion was in word only and not obedience to the truth of God's Word. The kingdom of God that is being referred to here is not Heaven. It is those that make up the body of Christ, the Church.

True salvation isn't just saying I am a Christian. There is power in our lives because of the power of the Holy Spirit that lives within us. There is humility and not pride, there is obedience to the Word of God.

The power of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit is displayed when we do not fall into the temptations of sin and we don't excuse our sin in a state of pride and arrogance. Paul is saying I am not coming to hear what you are saying but are you truly living for Jesus Christ.

You see there is an opportunity for repentance. With this letter Paul is giving everyone a chance to hear and see his words and come to a point of repentance. Paul is giving them a choice! It is all on them now! They know

the score. Are you going to change? Are you going to repent of your pride, your arrogance, your ungodly living?

Do you want me to come with a rod? Which reflects judgment, harshness! Or can I come with a spirit of gentleness and with love! Discipline either way is an expression of love!

As I read and looked at that last verse, I was reminded of something. We could say that Paul has laid down the law to the church in Corinth. Well, God has laid down the law through the Bible. We have a choice! We either repent and submit to it or we reject it and suffer the consequences.

God didn't say! Don't make me come down there! He came! He came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! He came in all his glory and in love and in a spirit of gentleness. Yes! Jesus showed his power and was frustrated with the religious who were only living by word and not obedience to his Word.

But he came in love as he hung on the Cross so that we have that choice of repentance or not! Jesus is also coming back and as it says in Revelation Chapter 19, when he does, he will rule with a rod of iron to those that have rejected him. Your choice! Repent of you sins and surrender to the Lord Jesus, or take the chance of falling under his holy and righteous judgment because you rejected what he did for you on the Cross.

True Christian! Let's obey his word and share the Gospel and let's be spiritual father's to a lost and dying world.