

# Wreckage and the Fire

## The Kingdom Is More Than Talk

**Text:** 1 Cor. 4:20 – “<sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.”

- **Introduction**

- **Once new a man** back in Monroe, LA that couldn't help, but brag about himself. No matter what you said you could do, he believed he could do it better.
  - If you were good at sports, he was Odell Beckham Jr.
  - If you were good at acting, he was Robert De Niro.
  - If you had a fast car, he was Dale Earnhardt. **(Despite the fact that he had an old beat up, 2002, Hyundai Elantra)**
  - **Our church would have an annual family day during the summer at the beautiful Kiroli Park.**
    - We would play flag football, and he would show up with his best football cleats, his Nike G2 Pro football gloves, and a mouthpiece. He looked like he was getting ready to try out for Wide Receiver in the NFL Combines. The only problem was he could never catch the ball.
    - After every play he would come back to the huddle and argue with us about not throwing it to him, convinced that he would singlehandedly win the game for us if we would just throw the ball somewhere in his direction.

- **His reputation was so bad** that youth students would bet him that they could do more pushups or pullups than him. He couldn't help himself. He would stand there for 30 mins arguing with a bunch of kids half his age about what he could supposedly do. But when it came time to cash in those 50 pushups that he promised, he could only do 5 or 6, or those 20 pullups, he could barely get one.
- I can stand here and tell you story after story about this guy, but the main point is that he had a problem with pride and that caused him to run his mouth too much. But when it came time to display all of that power, his pride ended up making him look like a fool.
- **There Is A Big Difference Between Boasting Something And Being Something**
  - One relies on the Portrayed Appearance of a person, while the other relies on the Perfected Substance of a person.
- **The Kingdom Is More Than Talk**

## • **Pray**

## • **Recap Previous Chapters**

- Up to this point, Paul has repeatedly confronted the issues associated with pride and rhetoric.
- The church had been arguing over who had the better teacher, whose style and eloquence was more awe-inspiring, and even pride in themselves because of spiritual gifts that they were operating in.
- But in chapter 4 begin to find out where the real power lies.
- **The Power To Be Faithful In Serving** (Vv. 4:1-3)

Think of us in this way: as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. <sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself.

- **V. 1 – Servant:** *hyperetas* – the under-rower on a ship; the man below deck pulling the oars.
  - **Completely hidden.**  
Totally unseen.  
No stage or spotlight.  
But you can **feel the power** deep within that is driving the ship forward and splitting through every wave.
  - Consistently Paul has reiterated to the Corinthians that **Hidden Motives Eventually Get Exposed, While Hidden Faithfulness Eventually Gets Rewarded.**
- **V. 1 – Stewards:** *oikonomos* – a manager of someone else's resources.
  - **Paul can plant the seed,** but the seed isn't his. It's just a gift that God gave him to pass along to the church.

- **Apollos can water that seed**, but the water isn't his. It's just a gift that God gave him to pass along to the church.
  - He keeps repeating the idea that no one should seek any kind of glory or fame for their giftings or abilities.
- **V.2 – Found Faithful**
  - This is ancient Greek courtroom language. Even today, at the end of a trial someone will stand up from the jury and say, "We the jury ***Find*** the accused guilty."
  - **"Faithful"** - *Anakrinein* – to examine in order to prove or validate someone's qualifications.
    - **Scholars believe that there is intertextual evidence** that some people in Corinth were trying to argue Paul's qualification or legitimacy to even be an Apostle.
      - **Paul responds** by letting them all know that he is not worried about their examinations of his qualifications, because only God can be the judge of that.
      - **So, what are the qualifications that God uses to determine the faithfulness of a servant?**
        - **True faithfulness is measured by Obedience.**
        - Paul knows that he is considered faithful as long as he is obedient to God. No matter if that makes him popular or hated, rich or poor, honored or persecuted.

- Repeat this: **The Kingdom Of God Isn't Depending On Me To Sound Powerful, Its Depending On Me To Have The Power To Be Faithful**

- **The Power to Walk in Humility** (Vv. 4:6-8)

**<sup>6</sup>I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us what “Not beyond what is written” means, so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another. <sup>7</sup>For who sees anything different in you?<sup>[a]</sup> What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive?**

- Paul then goes on to say that they should adopt this same way of think in order to keep them from becoming “puffed up” – V. 6

- **Three question – V. 7**

- **What Makes You So Different Or Special?**

- He’s probably insinuating that all of the spiritual works that they have been operating in has given them a false sense of favor.

- **What Do You Have That You Did Not Receive?**

- Gifts, talents, callings, anointings?
- Answer this very carefully. You might just let your pride show.

- If these things that you consider to make you special are gifts from God, then **Why Do You Boast About Them?**

- This is the whole point that Paul has been making about himself, apollo, and others, that none of us are any more special than anyone else.
  - I plant the seed, Apollos waters, but that doesn't make either one of us special because the true power of growth comes from God.
  - So, you prophesy? Cool, that doesn't make you special.
  - So, you lay hands on people and they are healed? Cool that doesn't make you special.
  - Oh, you have dreams and visions? Cool, that doesn't make you special.
- Buckle Up – V. 8
 

<sup>8</sup>Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! If only you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you!

  - “All you want” - Satiated – You have eaten until you are full:
    - i.e.. your full of yourself.
    - You have everything you want, because all you want is you.
  - Already you have become rich.
  - “You have become Kings” – *e-basil-eu-sate*
    - Verb – Aorist Active Indicative (a past completed action; reigned) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Person (You All)

- You've already begun to reign (He means spiritually), and I wish that you really did reign so that we also might reign with you.
- You think that you have already begun reigning over the affairs of the spiritual realm, but you have no idea what that even means
  - Imagine trying to teach your child something for school, and they begin acting like they know it all, so you plop the book down in front of them and say, "then please teach me so I can be as smart as you", knowing all the while that they don't even understand a fraction of what they think they do.
  - How foolish is it for us to think that we are so special and deserving of recognition, but we fail to recognize that we don't truly have any giftings or abilities apart from God?
  - The Kingdom Of God Doesn't Depend On Me To Exalt Myself. It Depends On Me To Have The Power To Stay Humble.
- **The Power to Endure Suffering** (Vv. 4:9-13)
 

<sup>9</sup>For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to humans.<sup>10</sup> We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are sensible people in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honored, but we are dishonored. <sup>11</sup>To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are naked and beaten and homeless, <sup>12</sup>and we grow weary from the work of our own hands.

When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

○ Paul paints a picture of Himself and the other Apostles as fools in a theatre or a colosseum, where everyone is watching.

- “Exhibited... sentenced to death” – to set something out for a demonstration or show... unto death.
- “Spectacle” – Theatron – where we get the word theatre. Like a theatre where people would go to watch a Greek tragedy or comedy.
- “Fools for Christ sake” – He is intentionally keeping the theatre imagery going; claiming that God has cast him as the fool of the show.

○ Watch what he says here,

- “We (the Apostles) are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ.
- We are weak, but you are strong.
- You are held in honor, but we are held in disrepute.”

○ **It’s almost like Paul is sarcastically saying,**

- “I get it now. All of us Apostles are the fools. We are the idiots, and you all have been right all along.”
- “That’s what keeps causing us to be persecuted and you’re not, because we keep doing all the wrong stuff.”
- “Y’all aren’t persecuted, because y’all are preaching and teaching the right stuff.” **\*WINK\***
- “You’re not saying anything to make anyone mad. DUH! Why didn’t I think of that?”

- “That’s why we are starving, naked, beaten, and homeless. Because:
  - “When people curse and berate us, we speak blessings over them (we should be like you and curse them back).”
  - When we are persecuted, we endure (We should be like you. We should cower down and keep quiet).”
  - “When we people slander our reputations, we speak kindly about them (But we should be like you and cause more division).”
- They have become the “rubbish of the world” and “the dregs of all.”
  - These two phrases were some of the worst insults that you could call someone. This doesn’t simply mean that you are the trash of the world, but the very dirt and drippings that come off of the trash.
  - These are terms used to refer to criminals and other undesirables.
    - If this portion of a city’s population got too big, they would gather them into a colosseum and let gladiators or wild animals destroy them.
    - It was seen as purifying the city of filth.
  - Paul is trying to use sarcasm to show them how messed up their perception has become. They think that they are some how special.

- They like to name drop the different Apostles that they claim to follow, but yet they scrutinize and ignore those same Apostles.
  - But Paul shows them that the ones making a real difference for the Kingdom of God do not count themselves too special to suffer.
- Because Kingdom Power Isn't Seen When I Get Out Of The Fire. It's Seen When The Fire Can't Take Me Out.
  
- **The Power to Live as an Imitation** (Vv. 4:14-17)
  - “I am not writing this to make you ashamed but to admonish you as my beloved children.”
  - Correction does not equate to humiliation
  - Conviction should never lead to shame
    - Bad leaders will manipulate and disguise their abuse of power as loving correction.
    - Gaslighting people into thinking that they were terrible way you treat them is somehow your way of showing love is manipulation, and manipulation is witchcraft.
    - A good leader will love and lead you with a father's heart.
  - V. 16 “I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me.”

- **A Good Leader Will Guide And Correct You By Example, Not Just By Words.**
  - Paul is telling them to be cautious of listening to all of other leaders, because there are 10,000 people parading around as good teachers.
  - But as a good Father/Leader, **I Can't Just Talk The Talk, I Gotta Walk The Walk.**
  - **Talk Is Cheap, But Action Will Always Cost You Something.**
- Now, if we are going to talk about imitating we have to talk about **The Mr. Miagi effect.**
  - **Wax on, wax off. Over and over, until somebody throws a punch and you instinctively have the right defense.**
  - **Paul is using a rabbinical tradition** where Rabbis and teachers might see someone who has potential to be a good student, and they would say “follow me”, just like Jesus did with His disciple.
    - During this time there was a saying, that you should **“cover yourself in the dust of his feet..”** You should be so close to him that the dust from his shoes is covering you.
    - **This wasn't just about following closely behind someone, but a complete alteration of your lifestyle.** You would take on every aspect of his life: his habits, his tone, his posture, the way he ate, the

way he walked, when he went to bed, when he woke up, the way he dressed. Everything.

- Even Jesus said in Luke 6:40, that when a disciple becomes “fully trained” he will be like his teacher.

- But this isn’t just for the student’s personal benefit. They were expected to transmit this imitation of life down through the generations.

- In 2 Tim. 2:2 we already see this through 4 generations: 1) From Jesus to Paul, 2) Paul to Timothy, 3) Timothy to faithful men, and 4) faithful men to others.

- The Kingdom Of God Is Not Dependent On How Much I Can Talk About Christ, But Rather The Power To Imitate Christ.

- **The Power of Kingdom Authority** (Vv. 4:20)

“For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.”

- Paul is not saying that words do not matter. Of course, it is important for the gospel to spread around the world by those who have the courage to proclaim it. But what Paul IS saying is that Words Alone Are Not Enough.

- We’ve already mentioned in previous chapters that Corinth had a culture full of performative philosophers that would stand out in public and try impress people with their loud, boisterous, and eloquent ideas.

- Unfortunately, the church of Corinth had adopted that model as well.

- And unfortunately, the church today has adopted that model as well.

- So, Paul is telling the Corinthians, and us:
  - You make claims of authority but lack the required character.
  - You have tantalizing speech, but its empty of transformational substance.
  - You are conceited with a pride that opposes the humility of the cross.
  - You have all of your rhetoric with no relevant reality.
  - You have your performance, but you don't have the power.

- **Talk Can Only Describe The Kingdom, But Power Will Demonstrate It.**

- Power will save sinners
- Power will set the captive free.
- Power will break addictions
- Power will mend the broken hearted.
- Power to tear down strongholds over our city
- Power to call the lost sons and daughters back to the father
- Power will heal the sick
- Talk can't do it, but POWER can raise the dead.
- Paul said in chapter 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to them... but to us it is the POWER of God."
  - The world sees it as foolishness
  - They see it as weakness
  - They see it as a failure
  - But I look at that rugged cross and I think of that empty grave

And I'm reminded that the same Power  
That raised Jesus from the dead  
Lives on the inside of me  
Because of that, "Greater is He that is in me than He that is in  
the world."

- I wonder if I have a church today that would say,  
"We've done enough talking. Now we need some power."  
I don't want to talk about it  
I want to be about it.

### **Altar Call**

Some of us in this room have learned how to *sound* powerful...

- We know the language
- We know the Scriptures
- We know when to shout
- We know when to clap
- We know how to respond

But when it comes to being faithful...

when it comes to staying humble...

when it comes to enduring pressure...

when it comes to actually living like Christ...

We don't seem so powerful anymore.

I want to encourage anyone today, if you are lacking in any of these areas  
our prayer team is coming to the altars now. They are ready to connect  
their faith with yours and pray for God to release a renewing of His Power.  
Because **The Kingdom Of God Does Not Depend On Talk But On Power.**

