

"I Became Your Father Through The Gospel"

1 Cor 4:14-21

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

“With this passage Paul brings to an end the section of the letter which deals directly with the dissensions and divisions at Corinth.” (Barclay, 1 Cor, 41).

Paul speaks to the fellowship as a father would their own son or daughter. Tender yet firm. Compassionate yet steadfast.

Although this is a historical narrative, it is revealing to see how Paul mentored those under him. As a mentor and/or leader there are four actions expressed by the apostle as he seeks to draw the Corinthian fellowship back into a pattern of unity.

I. A mentor or leader admonishes (vv. 14, 15 "admonish as a father")

Paul's intent at this point was not to shame the fellowship. He uses a strong contrasting connector to stress his purpose in writing. He did not wish to bully them into obedience. Like a father, he sought to win them by love.

The word admonish is our word **nouthetic**. **Nouthetic** is a large word that takes its meaning based on the situation.

- With the unruly it warns.
- With the feebleminded it comforts.
- With the weak it supports.

As we invest our lives into the lives of others we must be sensitive to the situation at hand and admonish our disciples with words that are appropriate to the situation and circumstances.

II. A mentor or leader patterns (v. 16 "imitate")

Since verses 14 and 15 are true, verse 16 follows.

The word imitate is our word mimic. Paul's assumption is that whatever is noteworthy in the leader is only because of what God is doing in and through the individual. There is nothing noteworthy in the absence of Christ.

What is it that Paul would have them imitate? Paul wants them to embrace the centrality of Christ in the local assembly.

III. A mentor or leader reminds (v. 17 "remember")

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Paul reminds them that many act as guides, but few can claim to be the "father". It was not uncommon to have delegated the instruction of one's child to a trusted servant or tutor. That instructor might carry tremendous weight with the child, but ultimately there was only one father.

A. Remember my ways which are in Christ

"Biblical Christianity embraces both creed and conduct, both belief and behavior." (Carson, The Cross, 110). There was an enormous disconnect between what the Corinthians knew to be true and how they were behaving.

B. Remember I teach everywhere in every church

What Paul was saying to the Corinthian fellowship he said to all of the body of Christ. This truth is not just for us, but for all people everywhere.

IV. A mentor or leader corrects (vv. 18-21 "come with a rod or with love")

When people are overtaken in a fault it is the responsibility of the body and especially the leadership to seek restoring one to the body of Christ and to a pattern of life that exemplifies the cross-work (Gal 6:1).

The Kingdom of God which is embodied in Christ crucified is the power of God manifested in and through transformed lives. Rhetoric that is man based has no power to change a life, only the word of the cross can do this. For in Christ crucified resides the power of God for the saving of sinners.