

Sermon Notes

Paul as Pastor

1 Corinthians 4:7-21

May 3, 2015

Introduction: Pride—what’s present and what’s to come

Paul’s message is about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and he is challenging the Corinthians to consider whether or not they are following *the* Messiah who was once crucified. Pride has been at the root of their problems, and pride never seems to be content to be alone; it seeks fellowship with other sins and always spawns other problems. Pride, when it gives birth to its children, results in many messes, and they are usually hard to pin down because they sound so good, so helpful, using good names, and stating good intentions. Pride has led to the party-spirit and, pride has led to their negligence with sexual immorality in the congregation (ch. 5).

Pastoring in the thick of it

Paul—as pastor—gets into the thick of it, and he does so by going right at the way they think of themselves, and this always sloshes over into the way they think of others. The reality is, they were recipients of grace yet they were not marked by grace. It’s as if they had forgotten that all of this is *all of grace*. 4:7—Look at you! Who do you think you are? What do you have that you did not receive!? As you are leveling all these judgments, what if we stopped and judged you for a minute?

The Ant & the Elephant: A Story Re-told

This is a graceless boasting...and once pride takes up residence, grace is kicked to the curb. Paul *pastorally* starts in on this grace-lessness, and he does so in a startling way. These are pointed and provocative questions, meant to puncture their pride.

Here’s looking at you... (4:8)

Paul speaks with a slice. He says they are already *full, rich, and reigning as kings*. These are pokes and jabs. What Paul will do is hold these words up to the mirror so that a reverse will be seen. But first...

Here’s looking at the apostles (4:9-10)

This is what the Lord has done: God has displayed the apostles as the last, the least, the lowest...as those condemned to death. Paul will use two words which shine the light on the lies of pride: “displayed” and “spectacle.” The apostles—as servants of the Lord—are actually likened to prisoners in a victory parade, however, they are not the victors, they are the prisoners. They are also a theatrical sight; the word “spectacle” is the Greek word *θεωρία (the-oh-riah)*. Similar to those prisoners who were required to give their lives in the arena/theater, the apostles are giving their lives while the Corinthians were sitting in their arm chairs.

The Contrasts...

You are FULL, but (4:11) we are hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, beaten, and homeless.

You are RICH, but (4:12-13a) we are laborers, reviled, persecuted, and defamed.

You are KINGS, but (4:13b) we are like the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things.

The apostles were being treated as their Master was treated; they were living according to their crucified Lord. In this, we are taught how to respond when faced with condemnation, offense, and false accusation.

Father talk (4:14-21)

Paul refers to them as his beloved children; he speaks to them like a father. He has corrected them, and while some might think he was too harsh, or that his language was “over the top”, he explains that these words are given as warnings. They have many teachers, but only one father, and this is a reference to the fact that Paul was the one who planted the church.

Paul as father; Call no man your father? Hopeful Clarification

Some take the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:9 in a tightly bound way to mean that we should not call anyone father or dad. However, that’s not what Jesus meant, nor is it what He did, neither is it what the Scriptures do. In order to clear this up, we need to ask two questions:

(1) What does Jesus *not* mean?

(2) What does Jesus mean?

The father talk continues and he has been using everything at his fatherly disposal to teach and train the Corinthians. This is also why Paul says that he is (he hopes) on his way (4:19), and asks how they want this to go when he gets there.

In Conclusion

The kingdom is visible (4:20)

Sometimes, some remain stubborn (4:21; ch. 5)

Now and the future: concern and consequences.



SUOMI. Irregular.

Finnish Folk Melody
ARR. ULRICH S. LEUPOLD, 1909-

Reverently

1. A - rise, my soul, a - rise! Stretch forth to things e - ter - nal,
Though hid from mor - tal eyes, He dwell in light su - per - nal,
2. List to the harps of heaven! Hark to the song vic - to - rious,
To mor - tals is not given To chant its strains all - glo - rious;

And haste thee to the feet of thy Re - deem - er God.
Yet wor - ship him in hum - ble - ness and own him Lord.
The nev - er - end - ing an - them sound - ing through the sky,
Yet sing, my soul, the praise of him who reigns on high.

His ban - quet of love A - waits thee a - bove; Be -
Who bought with his Blood The ran - somed of God; To

Worship — The Lord's Day

hold, the mar - riage fes - tal of the Lamb is come!
him be ev - er - last - ing power and vic - to - ry.

Re - joice, my soul, re - joice, To heaven lift up thy voice:
And let the great A - men Re - sound through heaven a - gain.

Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia! A - men.