

The Command to Follow Paul | 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

- Verse 14 –
 - The Corinthian believers could have taken Paul's motive as **to shame you**, but Paul clarifies that it is to **warn you**.
 - The word **warn** is νουθετέω [noutheteo] which is a warning based on thought and is translated in the KJV as *warn* or *admonish*. (Nouthetic Counseling is a form of Christian counseling that rejects modern psychology in favor of Biblical instruction).
- Verses 15-16 –
 - It is likely that these verses go farther than the surface appearance.
 - The Greek παιδαγωγός [paidagogos] is more than just an **instructor** (which Apollos, Cephas, etc. each were), but was a person who was totally in charge of the care of a child until the child's adulthood.
 - In Galatians 3:24 Paul uses the word to speak of the purpose of the Law for the Jews (it protected them until the Messiah arrived).
 - In contrast to the *paidagogos* is the father, who brought the child into existence. Paul claims to be the one and only father, who had **begotten you through the gospel**.
 - As the father, he called the Corinthians to **be ye followers of me** (and not the *paidagogos*).
 - On the surface, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of his involvement as the founding Pastor. Such surface-level interpretation, however, is in opposition to the unity he has encouraged since the letter began (compare v. 6, where he encourages humility and makes clear that he doesn't set himself above Apollos).
 - So when Paul says **be ye followers of me** (rather than Apollos or Cephas), he is speaking very authoritatively and insists that the Corinthian church are **followers of me** and not of others. Note also that the following verses are heavy in first person singular pronouns.
 - Why would Paul say, in effect, "Do not divide among various teachers" then say, "follow me only?" Because in one sense he speaks of not dividing among teachers who teach the same thing, in another he speaks of a very different Gospel of the Kingdom, of Judaizing, etc.
 - The Greek word for **followers** is μιμητής [mimetas], the word for *imitators* (from which we get *mimic*).
 - Note that the simple fact of Paul leading the Corinthians to Christ and being their church's founding Pastor would not be grounds for calling for such allegiance, and would not be acceptable of any preacher today. What if, for example, a founding Pastor said, "You've had many other Pastors, but I am your founding Pastor, so you must obey me even though I moved on years ago!" Nor would it be acceptable for *anyone* who led another to Christ to expect that they had spiritual authority over that person.
 - In conclusion, Paul *must be* exerting his apostolic authority to Corinth and to **every church** (v. 17) as their only spiritual father...theirs, and ours.
- Verse 17 –
 - Presumably **this cause** is the cause of vv. 15-16: that the Corinthians would follow Paul.
 - This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Paul says that Timothy will **bring you into remembrance of my ways**.

- Pauline doctrine should be taught **every where in every church**. Without the Pauline distinction, legalism and Lordship salvation doctrines will creep in.
- The doctrine of Christian living must be based in following Paul, for such is the instruction of the inspired word of God (v. 16). Yet many in the church today believe it is almost heresy to teach that believers should follow Paul. "We follow no one but Jesus!" they would say.
- Note that the **be ye followers of me** command (v. 16) is said of Paul to be taught **in every church**, and evidence of this is given in the following cross references: 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philipians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:9, Galatians 4:12.

The Reminder for Integrity of Speech | 1 Corinthians 4:18-21

- Verses 18-19 - Paul speaks to an almost universal human condition to which we are all susceptible: our antagonistic words are much more vigorous in the absence of those we disagree with when we are not in their presence. Paul says, "for those of you who are **puffed up** you better **power** up for my arrival, because we will be having a meeting!
- Verse 20 –
 - Does this verse, as some contend, prove the presence of the Kingdom today? Absolutely not! Rather, it speaks almost directly against it on several fronts:
 - If the Kingdom is **in power** and not **in word**, it must be a visible, forceful Kingdom, one that is beyond *mere words*, but rather a physical reality. The Kingdom is not *just talk*, but will be **in power**.
 - There was, in v. 8, the implication that some in Corinth believed they **reigned as kings**, but Paul challenged them to a manifestation of their reign.
 - So what is the purpose of the verse? Paul simply uses it as an illustration. Just as the Kingdom is not "just talk," neither is Paul.
- Verse 21 - As a final encouragement to align with Paul, he warns then that, as a father (v. 15), he can come in discipline or kindness.

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