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A1206 – February 5, 2012 – 1 Corinthians 4:14-21
Shall I Come As A Father Or A Pedagogue

The fundamental problem Paul is dealing with in 1 Cor 4 is arrogance. The Corinthians were in dire need of some humility because they were arrogantly passing judgment before the time and ranking Apollos over Paul as a better teacher. This was not for them to judge. Only the Lord Jesus Christ knows all the motives and complexities to be able to judge how well Paul carried out his teaching abilities with respect to Apollos.

Yet the Corinthians had already assigned Apollos a rank in the kingdom above Paul. Now the standards they used to make this ranking were the worldly standards of the day for what makes a good speaker, namely, the standards of sophistry which were the rave in Corinth at the time. What made a good speaker was not the content of what was spoken, it was the manner in which it was spoken. Both Apollos and Paul had good content but what Apollos had that Paul didn't was eloquence. And in the eyes of the Corinthians this was highly desirable, he was sort of a Christian sophist in their eyes. Paul on the other hand they saw as weak in comparison, Paul was not an attractive, eloquent speaker. But Paul's point is that the manner in which we speak it is not the issue, it's the content of what we preach that is the issue. So they need to straighten up their act and stop ranking because, first of all, it's not there's to rank, and secondly, the standards they are invoking are worldly standards.

Now an interesting implication is that Paul doesn't reject the notion that believers will be ranked in the kingdom, he only rejects the notion that we decide the rank and we do so according to standards of this world. That is left for the Lord Jesus Christ to decide and He has his own standards by which to measure. But do understand that we will all go to the judgment seat of Christ

and be personally evaluated for our works done in the body, whether good or bad, and there will be a rank and position assigned for the future kingdom.

Now fundamentally this ranking will be based on the principle that Christ spoke of in the gospels when the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. The Lord Jesus said, "He who is least shall be greatest in the kingdom." So humility is the fundamental Christian virtue that we should all strive for. Paul and Apollos were both humbly stationed as servants and stewards. And the Corinthians should consider them as examples of men who were walking the path to kingship in the future kingdom and they should follow their example if they want to be kings in the kingdom. But this would require a major change of course for the Corinthians. They are still worldly, still infants in the word of God but with an overinflated ego. They thought they had arrived spiritually but Paul said they were still babes in Christ. They thought they had so much knowledge, Paul said they didn't know a thing. So then Paul is knocking their arrogant block off. Greatness in the kingdom is not achieved by being great in the eyes of this world, but becoming the least among one another and servant of all. So if you want to become the greatest in the kingdom then you will become the servant of all in the here and now.

On that note in 4:1-5 Paul exhorted them to become like him, to become a servant and a faithful steward. And now, in vv 14-21 Paul exhorts them as a father exhorts his children, again, to become like him. Children should imitate their fathers but the Corinthian's were not imitating Paul at all. And as a father he gives them a choice to make, you can imitate me or you can continue in rebellion. But he says, I am coming to you and I will find out what choice you have made. And how shall I come to you; shall I come to you as a father, gently and lovingly. Or shall I come to you as a pedagogue, with the rod of discipline.

Now I've mentioned the father and the pedagogue. The father you know, you see him in verse 14, **I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.** Children implying a father. In verse 15 we have both the father and the pedagogue, a new term. **For if you were to have countless tutors or *pedagogues* in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.**

So then who is the pedagogue? Since we don't have any such thing as a pedagogue in our culture let's figure out who the pedagogue is. This is imagery from Roman culture again. There's lots of imagery throughout the letter of 1 Corinthians that comes from Roman culture and to understand what Paul is saying we have to understand Roman Culture. On this point of the pedagogue let's start with the Greeks because the Greeks preceded the Romans and gave them their philosophy of child rearing.

In Greece you had Plato and Plato wrote a book called *The Republic* which is a very influential book in history. In the *Republic* Plato sets forth that the State is ultimate, the unity of the state, he emphasized the one over and against the many; the State at the expense of the individual. As Rushdoony states, "its center of orientation was not the individual and his fulfillment but rather the city-state and its destiny." So then the individual's role is to serve the city-state, the city-state is ultimate. Therefore when it came to child rearing, it was considered secondary to serving the city-state and so the parents not having time to do both would turn their children over to others to raise them so they could go deal with the more important matters of city affairs

So child rearing took on a specific format. A child was seen as going through four stages. First, the newborn infant. They would place the newborn under the care of a wet nurse. And the wet nurse would feed and care for the infant, change its dirty diapers and all the rest of it for the first 2-3 years of life. Second, when the infant became a little child the parents would hire a nanny figure and she would teach them how to talk, basic manners, that kind of thing until the little child was 6 years old. At age 6 the child would start school and so they would hire a pedagogue, who was usually a family slave or servant. His job was to take the child to school and supervise his behavior, make sure he didn't hang out with the riff raff of society, make sure he got his homework done and actually learned the material and he was also his disciplinarian, he carried the rod. And finally, when he turned 16, if he had learned responsibility the father would come and put his toga on his son and it was that day that the son was free from the pedagogue, now he was a man and an official citizen of Greece.

So you have the Greeks following this practice virtually everywhere. Except in Sparta; the Spartan's did things differently. But throughout the rest of the Greek Empire they built their philosophy of child-rearing on the idea of the ultimacy of the city-state.

Now the Romans saw child rearing as the parent's duty until they came into contact with the Greeks. And when the Romans saw the Greeks they were very impressed with their intellectual thought; with Socrates, with Plato, with Aristotle. The thought of these philosophers formed the substance of Greece and the Romans adopted Greece. So Rome not only was powerful militarily, they were philosophically the descendants of the Greeks and with this came an even stronger emphasis on the ultimacy of the State. Rome itself became an ideal and to be a Roman was to be at one with the Roman State. So then the family was not defined in terms of blood, it was not ultimately about blood ties, it was ultimately about being a Roman. Roman citizenship is what made you part of a family that was free from blood ties. And so while they did recognize the blood family it was deprecated to the State family and so the ultimate cause was Rome itself. So when it came to the blood family they took over the four stages of child rearing from the Greeks; starting with a nurse, then a nanny, then a pedagogue and finally freedom from the pedagogue and full Roman citizenship.

So Paul says in verse 14, at this time I am admonishing you as a father. **I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.** The first letter to the Corinthians is to admonish, but their response to the letter will determine how Paul comes next. And Paul does intend to come to them as you see in verse 19, **But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out.** But when he comes, verse 21, how shall he come? Shall he come as the pedagogue, with the rod of discipline or shall he come as the father, with a spirit of love and gentleness. Will they still be immature or will they be mature.

So then the Corinthian's have to decide how they are going to respond to Paul's letter. Are they willing to change their attitude? If they don't Paul's going to come as a pedagogue and issue a stiff rebuke.

Now, what Paul wants, theologically speaking, is the best for his children, as any good father does. And what is best for them is that they are preparing to

rule in the kingdom. The Corinthians are going to enter the kingdom as all genuine Christians will, but they are not going to enter and reign. And Paul wants them to reign with him and Apollos as kings in that future millennial kingdom; but there is a path to this kingship that they are not walking. That path is described in vv 10-13 where Paul says, “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are sensible in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹²and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, *even* until now.” Everything along the path to kingship is upside down so far as the world is concerned. If you want to be a king in the next world you have to be a fool now; if you want to be a king in the coming kingdom you have to be weak so far as the world is concerned now and if you want to reign in the millennium you have to be without honor so far as this age is concerned. But that is the path to kingship. All believers will enter the kingdom but only those who walk the path to kingship will reign in the kingdom

So then you have to have the attitude, I don’t care what men think, I care what God thinks. And I may be a fool in men’s eyes but I’m wise in God’s. And I encourage you not to worry what men think and to do what God says. Become like Paul. Verse 15 explains how Paul became their father. **For if you were to have countless pedagogues in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.** It was through the gospel. Paul was the first to arrive at Corinth and preach the gospel to them. They were his converts. And that made him their **father** in the sense that they were spiritually reborn through his preaching of the gospel. They may have had ten thousand pedagogues who supervised their behavior in Christ, who educated them in Christ, who disciplined them in Christ, but they had only one father through the preaching of the gospel, and that was Paul.

Verse 16, **Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.** That imitation is described in vv 10-13. Do as I do says Paul. Be as I am. Verse 17, **For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in**

Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. So now they are going to have a reminder. One of their siblings is going to come and be an example to them. Timothy was one child of Paul's who learned to imitate him, he had learned to be like his father and that makes a father proud. Paul was proud of Timothy because he had become a **faithful child in the Lord**. But the Corinthians were not faithful children in the Lord, they were rebellious little brats. And so Paul says I'm going to send you one of my faithful children so you can see how to live.

So we have two things Paul used to correct: Paul's words and Timothy's works. The two must always go together to be effective; words and works. The words must be sent by letter and the works must be dispatched by Timothy. Paul says, **I have sent** him, aorist tense, meaning Paul had already sent Timothy. They had been in Ephesus together but because of the reports Paul received about the Corinthians he decided it was necessary to send Timothy to them to remind them of Paul and also he sent this letter as if from a father. So then Paul shows you must put words and works together. It does very little good to simply say a lot of words to your children, you also have to show them the works, you have to live by your own standards you talk about. And if you don't the children are the very first ones to see your inconsistency. And then they get hardened to you because, well, you talk the talk but you don't walk the walk. And now you tell me to walk the walk and talk the talk. Well, I don't think so. That's a double standard and that kind of living won't make for a good outcome. Words and works must go together.

So in this church the elders have to talk the talk and walk the walk, especially me because I do most of the talking. So I have to have a walk consistent with my talk. And I strive to do that, I strive to live what I preach which in my understanding is to preach and live what the Bible teaches, to lay down an example to follow. Now I don't mean to say I am the perfect example, that I am perfectly sinless, but the point isn't to be perfectly sinless, the point is to lay down the Christian form, this is what it means to be a Christian, this is how to think, this is how to live. Now follow me, follow my example. Or I might say, now Mark Beall, he's a faithful child in the Lord, walk like him, watch him, he's going to remind you of my ways. But in any case there has got to be consistency between one's talk and one's walk if they are to ever be taken seriously. I am reminded of Cornelius Van Til the Reformed theologian because while theologians seek many things the thing

he sought, his highest goal was to be a consistent Calvinist. And I respect that very highly because he didn't seek to be pleasing to others, he sought to be consistent to the Christian faith so far as he understood it and that is far more than most Christians in the history of the world have understood it if his writings are any indication of his understanding. And it's that continuous striving toward greater and greater consistency in every area of life that should be the goal of all Christians, to be thinking and living as consistent to the Christian faith all the time. Whoever is doing that is the greatest witness for Christ at that time. And that was Paul's desire, that was Timothy's desire and that is my desire.

So then Paul sent Timothy to them to be this living example of what he was saying their lives ought to look like. **Now**, verse 18, **some have become arrogant, puffed up, as though I were not coming to you.** That is, some were saying, Paul won't come, Paul is nothing but a lot of hot air and baloney talk, he's just trying to scare us but we're not scared because Paul isn't really coming. Oh really says Paul, you're so smart you know what the future holds? You know what God has planned? Well, that's typical of arrogant people; always dictating what can or can't happen in the future. And I just love to listen to these people wax eloquent because the things they say can never happen end up doing what? Being the very things that happen.

Paul had a very different attitude about the future, verse 19, **But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills**, see Paul recognized that God controls whatsoever comes to pass, not men. History ultimately is that which occurs due to the word of God. And every Christian ought to say I will do thus and such, **if the Lord wills**. It doesn't have to always be spoken but it should be our attitude.

Now the way this works, think of it, you have today, you have tomorrow, maybe. Do I plan, do I not plan? Some Christians say, the hyperspiritual types, don't plan anything, the Bible is against planning, just trust the Lord. Another group, the carnal types, plan everything without considering what God wants. But the Bible takes a third position. You can and should plan things, there's nothing sinful about planning, it's just that when you plan things you go in with the attitude that God's plan can trump my plans. And that's how you can count it all joy every day. The day may not go as you planned but it does go as God planned and if you will just relax and roll with

the punches I guarantee you at the end of the day you will look back and say, hmm we got through that and there are things I never dreamed would happen today. It may have been a hard day, it may have had some tragedies, but if you worked through it trusting the Lord all the way through, you will be confident that God works all things together for good. But the Corinthians didn't have that kind of attitude about the future, they were carnal types and thought they were so brilliant they could say Paul will never come here and therefore we don't have to straighten up, we know the future and we are going to do whatever we want.

But Paul says **I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills**, and if you turn to chapter 16 you'll see more of Paul's plans to come. In verse 2 he's giving some direction on putting money back to help the church in Jerusalem. He says, **On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.** **3When I arrive**, so is Paul planning on going to Corinth? It should be obvious he is. Verse 5, **But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia.** Is Paul against planning? No, and you'll see throughout the passage that Paul has plans; it's just that he knows his plans are subject to change. That's an element you'll also see throughout the passage. Notice verse 6, **and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.** Perhaps. See? That means maybe. Verse 7, **For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.** There it is again, I have a plan but only if the Lord wills, if the Lord permits, so I recognize finally it is up to the Lord. One way to think about this is that God has plans with a capital P and I have plans with a little p. Verse 10, **Now if Timothy comes**, now maybe he will, maybe he won't, I dispatched him but guess what? God may have other plans for Timothy and he may not make it to Corinth. But if he does, **see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.** And so forth. Let's go back to 1 Cor 4:18.

The point is that if you are truly humble then you plan but you have this additional factor built into your plan and that factor is that the Lord's plans control. And so the humble person responds to the Lord when things aren't going as planned, he adjusts. Paul had room for adjustment and you should

too. And if you don't, number one you're arrogant and number two you're going to be frustrated day in, day out and you're going to go out of your mind trying to control the direction of history and you're never going to have any rest. So get over it, you don't control history.

But verse 18, there was a group of Corinthians that had this kind of arrogance. So Paul says to them in verse 19, I've got your number and I'm going to figure out the source of your words. He says, **But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.** **20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.** Alright then, we have the kingdom of God come into the discussion. There are about five uses of the expression kingdom of God in the NT epistles and these are commonly used to say, see you premillennialists, the kingdom of God really is now, the church is the kingdom of God, there is a now dimension to the kingdom. The problem with that approach is that it would contradict vv 5 and 8. In v 5 rank in the kingdom will be decided by Jesus Christ Himself and His judgment is yet future. So then, how could we already be in the kingdom of God? And v 8, Paul wished that they were kings that they might reign with them. But that they were not now reigning in any sense is clear from vv 10-13, they were the scum of the earth, not kings. At most you can say from the NT that church age believers have a new citizenship in the kingdom, but we are not yet in that kingdom, it remains future.

So then what is Paul saying in verse 19? Why does he bring in this kingdom of God business? Well, let's work with the Greek a little bit to get the right sense. In the middle of verse 19, **and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.** Now, he's not saying I'm not going to find out what you said, that's not the sense of the Greek. He's saying I shall recognize when you say it; that word **find out** should be translated "recognize." **I shall recognize, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.** In other words, I will listen to the words of the arrogant but through the words I will recognize their power. You know, what is the source of what they are saying? Is the source the Spirit or is the source the flesh? See, Paul could recognize that. All he had to do was listen to you talk and he could recognize whether you were speaking from the Spirit or from the flesh. Well, how could he know that just by what I'm saying? Because he knew the word of God. That's how. And he could compare what you said with

what the Spirit of God says in the Scripture and if it didn't line up it was of the flesh. It's that simple. And you can listen to people and I do listen to people all the time and its called discernment, being able to discern between the truth of the word of God and a whole lot of hot air and baloney talk, a whole lot of lies and filth and empty words.

Turn to 1 Thess 1:5 so you see another use of this concept of words without power, without any real significance. Words alone can't accomplish anything fantastic. And the Greek word here for power is the word used of miraculous power. Paul is saying I'll know if your words can really accomplish something. If they were who they thought they were, rulers and such, then they would have the power to establish the kingdom. But obviously they did not. Here's another example of words alone and the weakness of words when not in conjunction with the Spirit of God. "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;" See, you can preach the gospel in word only, there's nothing wrong with it, that's all you can do, the Holy Spirit has to do the rest. And if He doesn't work in conjunction with the gospel preached then nothing is going to happen, people are not going to be converted, but when he does work in conjunction with the gospel preached then there are tremendous results. So then words alone can't accomplish anything.

Let's go back to 1 Cor 4:20. Paul is simply saying in v 19 that when I arrive and I hear what you are saying I will recognize the source of your words. Now verse 20 explains, **For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.** That is to say, the kingdom is not established by word but by power, not by speech but by authority. And if the word power is to be taken as miraculous power then it is a rebuke against those at Corinth who thought they were king and possessed authority. But Paul says, if that were so your power would be manifested in that you would have established the kingdom. But as it is all you have is boastful, arrogant **words.**

Verse 21, **What then do you desire?** You have a choice here Corinthians. Are you going to continue in this boastful arrogance? Are you going to continue passing judgment before the time as if you are kings? **Shall I come to you with a rod as the pedagogue, or shall I come to you with love and a spirit of gentleness as of a father?** What do you want O Corinthians. You have a choice here. You can respond positively to my verbal warning and

Timothy's example and when I arrive it will be a wonderful time together. Or you can choose to go negative and I will come with the rod of discipline. The rod is the symbol of discipline and Paul is threatening that if they don't shape up he's going to rebuke them severely.

How then did they respond? Turn to 2 Cor 7. Apparently Timothy did make it to Corinth and live as an example for them to follow. But apparently this didn't help at all. They kept on being arrogant and saying Paul will never come. So Paul sent a severe letter by way of Titus. Titus was like the big guy at school who, if all else failed, you would send in and he would shut every body down. He was the big guy on campus and it took Titus coming to put the fear of God into the Corinthians. Verse 6, "But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; ⁷and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. ⁸For though I caused you sorrow by my letter," that's the severe letter, another letter Paul wrote that we don't have captured. He says it caused you sorrow but "I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— ⁹I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance;" sorrow and repentance aren't the same thing, you can feel sorrow but not be repentant, but he says, "for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us." That is, you got back on the path to kingship and rewards in the kingdom. Verse 10, "For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation," that's the present dimension of sanctification, being saved from sin and it's deadly consequences, "but the sorrow of the world produces death." Being sorrowful just because of some worldly reason and not because you're truly convicted of your sin is a worldly sorrow and it does you no good at all. So then the Corinthians did get turned around, they finally did have a change of mind but it took awhile. Timothy went and he was unsuccessful. Paul's first letter went and it was unsuccessful. Paul sent Titus with the second letter and finally it was successful. So there were some Christians that were in hardcore rebellion and that's why they're called the carnal Corinthians. So let's learn the lesson that Paul had in mind for us, we can continue in rebellion and self exaltation and over inflated ego, all the arrogant stuff, in which case we are going to come under intense divine discipline or we can get with the program

and become humble like Paul and take the path to kingship in the future kingdom established by God's power.

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