

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS 4

The chief heads of this chapter are the account that ought to be had of the ministers of the Gospel; cautions against censoriousness, rash judgment, pride, and self-conceit; the uncomfortable circumstances and situation of the ministers of the Gospel for the sake of preaching it; the apostle's fatherly affection to the Corinthians, and his authority over them; his resolution in submission to the will of God of coming to them, and the manner in which it might be expected he would come. The apostle exhorts to have in proper esteem the preachers of the Gospel, and that because they are Christ's ministers and stewards of his grace, and faithful in the discharge of their duty, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:1,2). And as for himself, whom he includes in the number of the faithful dispensers of the word, he cared not what judgment was passed upon him; nor should he think fit to be set down by it, partly because it was human, and arose from an ill spirit; and partly because he judged himself; as also because his conscience testified that he faithfully discharged his office; and besides, the Lord was his judge, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:3,4) who in his own time would judge him; and he, as every other faithful minister, shall have praise of God, and therefore before that time judgment was not to be passed by men, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:5) and then gives a reason why he had mentioned his own name, and the name of Apollos, under such figurative expressions as he had done in the preceding chapter, that they might be examples of modesty and humility for others to follow, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:6) and expostulates with those who were vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds; that seeing they were no better than others, and what gifts they had were not of themselves, but of God, they had no reason to glory and vaunt it over others, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:7) and in an ironical way expresses the exalted and flourishing condition they were in, and which he rather wishes than asserts, and which carries in it a sort of a denial of it, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:8) and goes on to represent the miserable condition that the faithful preachers and followers of Christ were in, and that in order to abate the pride and swelling vanity of these men, (~~400B~~1 Corinthians 4:9-13) showing, that it was far from being a reigning time in the churches of Christ; his end in mentioning which, as

well as the sharpness he had used in reproof, were not in order to expose them to shame, but for their admonition, (~~404~~1 Corinthians 4:14) and that he did not take too much upon him in dealing thus freely and roundly with them, appears from the spiritual relation he stood in to them, as a father, (~~405~~1 Corinthians 4:15) and therefore it became them as children to submit to him, and imitate him, (~~406~~1 Corinthians 4:16) and an instance of his paternal care of them, and love to them, was his sending Timothy among them, whose character he gives, and whose work and usefulness he points out to them, (~~407~~1 Corinthians 4:17), and closes the chapter with a promise of coming to them, if it was agreeable to the will of God; and the rather he was bent upon it, because some had given out he would not come, and rejoiced at it; wherefore, in order to try them, whether they were only verbal or powerful professors, he was desirous of coming to them, (~~408~~1 Corinthians 4:18,19) since religion did not lie in talking, but in an inward powerful experience of things, (~~409~~1 Corinthians 4:20) which he feared was wanting in some by their outward conversation; and therefore puts a question in what way they would chose he should come unto them, and hence should accordingly order their conversation and behaviour, (~~410~~1 Corinthians 4:21).

**Ver. 1.** *Let a man so account of us,* etc.] Though the apostle had before said that he, and other ministers of the Gospel, were not any thing with respect to God, and, with regard to the churches, were theirs, for their use and advantage; yet they were not to be trampled upon, and treated with contempt, but to be known, esteemed, and honoured for their works' sake, and in their respective places, stations, and characters; and though they were but men, yet were not to be considered as private men, and in a private capacity, but as in public office, and as public preachers of the word; and though they were not to be regarded as lords and masters over God's heritage, but as servants, yet not as everyone's, or as any sort of servants, but

*as the ministers,* or servants, of Christ; as qualified, called, and sent forth by him to preach his Gospel; as ambassadors in his name, standing in his place and stead, and representing him, and therefore for his sake to be respected and esteemed; and as such who make him the subject of their ministry, preach him and him only, exalt him in his person, offices, blood, righteousness and sacrifice, and direct souls to him alone for life and salvation:

*and stewards of the mysteries of God*; though they are not to be looked upon as masters of the household, that have power to dispose of things in the family at their own pleasure; yet they are to be regarded as stewards, the highest officers in the house of God; to whose care are committed the secret and hidden things of God; whose business it is to dispense, and make known, the mysteries of divine grace; such as respect the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the union of the two natures, divine and human, in his person, the church's union to him, and communion with him, with many other things contained in the Gospel they are intrusted with.

**Ver. 2.** *Moreover, it is required in stewards*, etc.] Upon mentioning that part of the character of Gospel preachers, as stewards, the apostle is put in mind of, and so points out that which is principally necessary in such persons: as,

*that a man be found faithful*; to the trust reposed in him; to his Lord and master that has appointed him to this office; and to the souls that are under his care: and then may a minister be said to be so, and which is his greatest glory, when he preaches the pure Gospel of Christ without any human mixtures, the doctrines and inventions of men; and the whole Gospel, declaring all the counsel of God, keeping back nothing which may be profitable to souls; when he seeks not to please men, but God; and not his own glory, and the applause of men, but the honour of Christ, and the good of souls: and such a faithful steward was the apostle himself.

**Ver. 3.** *But with me it is a very small thing*, etc.] It stood for little or nothing, was of no account with him, what judgment and censures were passed on him by men with regard to his faithfulness in the ministry not even by the Corinthians themselves:

*that I should be judged of you*; not that the apostle declined, or despised the judgment of a church of Christ, rightly disposed, and met together in the fear of God, to try prove, and judge of his ministry, and his fidelity in it; but he made no account of theirs, and slighted it as being under bad influence, the influence of the false teachers, who had insinuated many things among them to the prejudice of the apostle's character; wherefore he set it at nought and rejected it, and rightly refused to submit to it, and, indeed, to any mere human judgment:

*or of man's judgment*: it is in the Greek text, "or of man's day": in distinction from the day of the Lord, or the day of judgment; and because

that men have their stated days for judgment, and because of the clearness of evidence, according to which judgment should proceed. This is not a Cilicism, as Jerom thought, but an Hebraism; so the Septuagint render  $\zeta\omega\eta\alpha \mu\omega\upsilon$ , in (<sup>2476</sup>Jeremiah 17:16)  $\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\alpha\nu \alpha\nu\psi\rho\omega\pi\omicron\upsilon$ , “man’s day”; and very frequently in the Talmud<sup>f41</sup> is the distinction of  $\mu\upsilon\mu\zeta \gamma\eta\upsilon\delta$ , “the judgments of God” and  $\mu\delta\alpha \gamma\eta\upsilon\delta$ , “the judgments of men”; the former the apostle was willing to be subject to, but not to the latter; he appealed from men to God; he cared not what any man thought or said, or judged of him; he not only was indifferent to the judgment of the Corinthians concerning him, whether they did or did not praise him, but of any other person; and so the Syriac version renders it,  $\zeta\eta\alpha \text{ rb } \text{ l } \text{ k } \hat{\text{ m }} \text{ wa}$ , “or of any man”: he adds,

*yea I judge not mine own self*; for though as a spiritual man he judged all things, and so himself, his conduct, state, and condition; examined his own heart and ways, and was able to form a judgment of what he was and did; yet he chose not to stand and fall by his own judgment; and since he would not abide by his own judgment, who best knew himself, much less would he be subject to theirs, or any human judgment, who must be greater strangers to him; and this he said, not as conscious to himself of any unfaithfulness in his ministerial work.

**Ver. 4.** *For I know nothing by myself*, etc.] Which must be understood with a restriction to the subject he is upon, faithfulness in the ministry; otherwise he knew much by himself of indwelling sin, and the corruption of his nature, which he sometimes found very strong and prevalent in him, and of the daily infirmities of life; but as to his ministerial service, he was pure from the blood of all men; he honestly declared what he knew to be the mind of God, and concealed nothing that might be useful to men; in this he had a clear conscience, void of offence both towards God and men,

*Yet am I not hereby justified*; from all fault and blame, which might possibly escape his knowledge and observation; for in many things all offend, and no man can understand all his errors; and there might be some mistakes which the apostle was not privy to, or conscious of; and were he even free from all, he declares, that such an unstained integrity, in the discharge of his ministerial work, was not the matter of his justification before God, nor did he depend upon it:

*but he that judgeth me is the Lord*; either who adjudges me to eternal life, justifying me through the righteousness of his Son, in which alone I desire to be found, living and dying; or he that knows my heart, and all my ways, will be my judge at the last day; and to his judgment I appeal and submit, and sit easy in the mean while under all the censures and calumnies of men. The apostle did, as his Lord and Saviour had done before him, who, when he was reviled and reproached by men, conscious of his own innocence and integrity, committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

**Ver. 5.** *Therefore judge nothing before the time*, etc.] This is said to prevent rash and precipitate judgment, and agrees with that well known Jewish maxim, *ִּיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדָּם בְּיָמֵינוּ*, “be slow in judgment”<sup>f42</sup>; not hasty to pass sentence; it is best to leave things to the great day of account, than to be free in censuring one another. There is a time “fixed” for the awful judgment, though of that day and hour knows no man: judge nothing

*until the Lord come*; who at the fixed time will certainly come to judgment, and that suddenly, at unawares, in an hour no man knows of:

*who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness*; meaning not so much vices, immoralities, wickedness of all sorts committed in the dark, and which it is a shame to speak of; but those hidden things of dishonesty, those secret arts and private methods which false teachers have made use of to conceal themselves, and carry on their base designs to the injury of truth, the souls of men, and the cause of Christ:

*and will make manifest the counsels of the heart*; what were the views and intentions, the aims and ends of these men in taking upon them to be preachers of the word; when it will appear that these were not the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men, but filthy lucre, popular applause, or some such mercenary view, and sinister end.

*And then shall every man have praise of God.* Every regenerated soul; everyone that is a Jew inwardly; everyone that has the circumcision of the Spirit; and particularly every faithful minister, who is more especially designed; to whom it will be said, “well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”. The apostle, in these words, has respect to the false teachers who sought the praise of men, and not the honour which comes from God; and which the true ministers of the word will have another day, however despised and criticised by men now.

**Ver. 6.** *And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred,* etc.]

Not what he had said concerning the different factions at Corinth, one being for Paul, and another for Apollos, and another for Cephas, as if these several parties did not really go by those names, but by those of others, the false teachers; only the apostle, to decline everything that looked like reflection, put these, as the Syriac version renders it, “upon” his own “person”, and Apollos’s, the sooner and better to put an end to such divisions; for it is certain, from his way of arguing and reasoning, that these are not fictitious names, but they were really divided, and were quarrelling among themselves about himself, Apollos, and Cephas: but his meaning is, when he says,

*I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos* these things; that he had “brought these comparisons”, as the Arabic version reads it, concerning himself and Apollos; namely, that one was a planter, and another a waterer; that they were both labourers and builders, ministers or servants, and stewards: and these similes, and such a figurative way of speaking he had made use of, as he says,

*for your sakes;* for the sake of the members of this church, that they might have right notions of them, and accordingly account of them, and behave towards them: or, as he adds,

*that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written:* meaning, either in the word of God in general; or in some particular passages of Scripture he might have respect to; or rather in the above places in this, and the foregoing chapter, where he gives the fore mentioned characters of ministers; where, in the apostles themselves, in their own words, from their own account, they might learn, on the one hand, not to ascribe too much to them, nor, on the other hand, to detract from their just character and usefulness: and also,

*that no one of you be puffed up for one against the other;* speak great swelling words of vanity, and envy, for one minister against another; when they are all one, bear the same character, are in the same office, and are jointly concerned in the same common cause of Christ and the good of immortal souls.

**Ver. 7.** *For who maketh thee to differ from another,* etc.] This question, and the following, are put to the members of this church, who were glorying in, and boasting of the ministers under whom they were

converted, and by whom they were baptized, to the neglect and contempt of others; when the apostle would have them consider, and whatever difference was made between them and others, was made, not by man, but God; that whatever good and benefit they had enjoyed under their respective ministers, were in a way of receiving, and from God; and therefore they ought not to glory in themselves, nor in their ministers, but in God, who had distinguished them by his favours: whatever difference is made among men, is of God; it is he that makes them to differ from the rest of the creation; from angels, to whom they are inferior; and from beasts, to whom they are superior; and from one another in their person, size, shape, and countenance, which is a physical, or natural difference. It is God that makes them to differ from one another in things of a civil nature; as kings and subjects, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, which may be called a political, or civil difference; and there is an ecclesiastical difference which God makes in his own people, who have gifts differing one from another; there are diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations among them, and all from the same spirit: but the grand distinction God has made among men, lies in his special, distinguishing, and everlasting love to some, and not others; in his choice of them in Christ unto everlasting salvation; in the gift of them to Christ in the eternal covenant; in the redemption of them by his blood; in his powerful and prevalent intercession for them; in God's effectual calling of them by his grace; in his resurrection of them from the dead to everlasting life, placing them at Christ's right hand, and their entrance into everlasting glory; when the distinction will be kept up, as in the above instances, throughout the endless ages of eternity; all which is owing, not to anything of man's, but to the free grace, sovereign will, and good pleasure of God.

*And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* whatever mercies and blessings men enjoy, they have in a way of receiving, and from God the Father of all mercies: all natural and temporal mercies are received from him; even such as respect the body, the make, form, and shape of it, perfection of limbs, health, strength, food, raiment, preservation of life, continuance in being, with all the comforts of it: and such as relate to the soul, its formation, which is by the father of spirits, its powers and faculties, natural light, reason, and understanding, all its endowments, abilities, all natural parts, and sharpness of wit; so that no man ought to glory in his wisdom, as if it was owing to himself, when it is all of God. All supernatural and spiritual blessings are received from God; such as a

justifying righteousness, sanctifying grace, remission of sin, the new name of adoption, strength to perform good works, to bear and suffer reproach and persecution for Christ, and to persevere to the end, with a right and title to eternal glory.

*Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* To glory in any mercy, favour, or blessing received from God, as if it was not received from him, but as owing to human power, care, and industry, betrays wretched vanity, stupid and more than brutish ignorance, horrid ingratitude, abominable pride and wickedness; and is contrary to the grace of God, which teaches men humility and thankfulness. To God alone should all the blessings of nature, providence, and grace be ascribed; he ought to have all the glory of them; and to him, and him only, praise is due for them. That proud Arminian, Grevinchovius<sup>f43</sup>, in answer to this text, said,

“I make myself to differ; since I could resist God, and divine predetermination, but have not resisted, why may not I glory in it as of my own?”

**Ver. 8.** *Now ye are full*, etc.] That is, in their own opinion: these words, and some following expressions, are an ironical concession. They were not full of God, and divine things; nor of Christ, and of grace out of his fulness; nor of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, as Stephen and Barnabas are said to be; nor of joy and peace in believing; nor of goodness and spiritual knowledge; but they were full of themselves, and were pulled up in their fleshly minds with an opinion of their abilities, learning, oratory, and eloquence, of their ministers, and of their own great improvements in knowledge under their ministrations. They fancied they had got to a perfection in knowledge and were brimful of it; and as the full stomach, from which the metaphor is taken, loathes the honeycomb, so these persons loathed the apostle’s ministry, and the pure preaching of the Gospel; imagining that they had attained to something above it, and stood in no need of it; when, alas! they were but babes, children in understanding, and needed milk instead of strong meat; so far were they from being what they thought themselves to be.

*Now ye are rich*; not in faith; nor in good works; nor in spiritual gifts and knowledge, though some among them were; but that is not here intended: the meaning is, they were rich, and abounded in knowledge in their own



account. Like the Laodiceans, they conceited themselves to be rich, and increased with goods, when they were poor, and wretched, and miserable.

*Ye have reigned as kings without us.* The saints, in the best sense, are kings, made so by Christ; and have not only the name, and the ensigns of royalty, as crowns and thrones prepared for them, but kingdoms also: they have a kingdom of grace, which they enjoy now, and shall never be removed; in which they reign as kings under the influence of the Spirit of God, over the corruptions of their own hearts, which are laid under the restraints of mighty grace; and over the world, which they have under the feet; and over Satan, who is dethroned and cast out of them; and they shall inherit the kingdom of glory hereafter; but nothing of this kind is here intended. The sense of the words is, that these persons imagined that they had arrived to such a pitch of knowledge, as to be independent of the apostles; needed no instructions and directions from them, and were in great tranquillity and ease of mind, and attended with outward prosperity, so that they lived, as kings, the most happy life that could be desired; upon which the apostle expresses his hearty wish for them:

*and I would to God ye did reign;* not in carnal security, and in affluence of worldly enjoyments, which the apostle was not desirous of for himself, and other his fellow ministers; nor in a spiritual sense, merely as believers in common, and as he then did; but with Christ in his kingdom state here on earth:

*that we also might reign with you;* for all the saints will be together when Christ takes to himself his great power, and reigns; they will all reign with him on earth a thousand years; this is a faithful saying, nothing more true, or to be depended on, that those that suffer with him shall also reign with him; and not a part of his people only, but the whole body: hence the apostle wishes, that this reigning time for the church of Christ was come, then he and the rest of the apostles would reign also: but, alas! it was a plain case, from the condition they were in, of which the following words give a narrative, that this time was not yet.

**Ver. 9.** *For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last,* etc.] Meaning either in time, in respect to the prophets and patriarchs under the former dispensation; and to the apostles, who were sent forth by Christ when on earth; when he, and Barnabas, and others, had received their mission since his ascension; or in state and condition, who though they were set in the first place in the church, yet were the least in the esteem of

men; and were treated as the most mean, vile, and abject of creatures; were set or showed forth to public view, and made a gazing stock by reproaches and afflictions. And

*as it were appointed to death*; were continually exposed unto it; were in death oft, always carrying about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus; and were all the day long killed for his sake; all which the apostle not only thought, but believed, were not casual things, fortuitous events, but the determinations and appointments of God; and were brought about in his wise providence to answer some valuable ends, which made him the more easy under them, and reconciled unto them.

*For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.* The word translated “spectacle” signifies a “theatre”; and the allusion is to the Roman theatres, in which various exercises were performed, for the gratification of the numerous spectators, who were placed around in a proper distance to behold; and not so much to the gladiators who fought, in such places, for the diversion of the multitude, as to those unhappy persons who were cast to the wild beasts, let loose upon them to devour them; which horrid barbarities were beheld by the surrounding company with great pleasure and satisfaction; and such a spectacle were the apostles in their sufferings and persecutions to the “whole” world, distinguished into “angels” and “men”. By “angels” may be meant the devils, who stirred up the princes of this world against the apostles, to persecute and afflict them; than which nothing was a greater pleasure to these envious and malicious spirits: though good angels may be also included, as witnesses of the faith, courage, and constancy of the saints, and as comforters of them in all their tribulations; but evil angels seem chiefly designed: and by “men” are meant wicked men, who are as much pleased to behold the barbarities and butcheries committed upon the people of God, as the Romans in their theatres were to see the tragical scenes that were acted there.

**Ver. 10.** *We are fools for Christ’s sake*, etc.] They were so in the esteem of men, for their close attach merit to a crucified Christ; and for preaching the doctrine of salvation by him; and for enduring so much reproach, affliction, and persecution, for his sake and the Gospel’s:

*but ye are wise in Christ.* This is ironically said; for his meaning is not that they were truly wise in Christ, in the knowledge and faith of him, in preaching his Gospel, or professing his name; but they were so in their own eyes, and made use of much worldly wisdom and carnal policy in their

profession of religion. Their ministers took care to preach, and they to profess Christ, in such a manner as to retain the favour of the world, and to escape reproach and persecution.

*We are weak*; in your account; our bodily presence is weak, and speech contemptible; we are men of mean capacities and abilities; nor are we able to express ourselves in that strong and masculine way, with those masterly strokes of eloquence and oratory your ministers do; or we are pressed down with infirmities, and afflictions, and persecutions.

*But ye are strong*; your ministers are men of great parts, strong voice, masculine language, and powerful oratory; and you abound in outward prosperity, and are free from persecution for the cross of Christ.

*Ye are honourable*; high in the favour and esteem of men for your wisdom and learning, your riches and wealth, power and grandeur.

*But we are despised*; are in dishonour and disgrace, for the mean appearance we make, the Gospel we preach, and the cross we bear.

**Ver. 11.** *Even unto this present hour*, etc.] What is about to be related was not what befell the apostles now and then, and a great while ago; but what for a considerable time, and unto the present time, was more or less the common constant series and course of life they were inured to:

*we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked*; wanted the common necessaries of life, food to eat, and raiment to put on, and gold and silver to purchase any with; which might be, when, as it was sometimes their case, they were in desert places, or on the seas; or when they fell among thieves; or had given all away, as they sometimes did, for the relief of others; or when they were not, as sometimes, taken notice of, and provided for, where they ministered, as they ought to have been.

*And are buffeted*; not only by Satan, as the apostle was, but by men; scourged, whipped, and beaten by them; scourged in the synagogues by the Jews with forty stripes save one; and beaten with rods by the Romans, and other Gentiles.

*And have no certain dwelling place*; were in an unsettled state, always moving from one place to another, and had no place they could call their own; like their Lord and master, who had not where to lay his head; and

like some of the Old Testament saints, who wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, in deserts, and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

**Ver. 12.** *And labour, working with our own hands*, etc.] As the apostle did at Corinth, (<sup><488B></sup>Acts 18:3) and elsewhere; partly to minister to his own necessities, and those of others; and partly that he might not be burdensome to the churches; and also to set an example of diligence and industry to others; though he had a right and power to claim a maintenance of those to whom he ministered.

*Being reviled, we bless*; as Christ commanded, (<sup><4154></sup>Matthew 5:44) and the apostle himself directed and exhorted to, (<sup><5124></sup>Romans 12:14)

*being persecuted, we suffer it*; that is, patiently; neither resisting our persecutors, nor murmuring and repining at our unhappy circumstances; but taking all in good part, as what is the will of God, and will make for his glory.

**Ver. 13.** *Being defamed, we entreat*, etc.] Being blasphemed, as the word signifies, being evil spoken of, our good name taken away, and characters hurt; we entreat or pray to God for them, that he would convince them of their evil, give them repentance unto life, and remission of their sins, according to Christ's direction, (<sup><4154></sup>Matthew 5:44) and in imitation of his example, (<sup><4734></sup>Luke 23:34) or we entreat them; so the Syriac version reads it, *^whnm ^ny[ b*, "we beseech them": not to blaspheme and speak evil of us, since it will be to their own hurt; we give them smooth words, and soft language, not rendering railing for railing, or reviling for reviling:

*we are made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things unto this day*; referring, as some think, to (<sup><2155></sup>Lamentations 3:45) or to the lustrations and expiations among the Heathens, who when any calamity was upon them, particularly a plague among them, used to take one of the refuse of the people, and sacrifice him by way of expiation; or any living creature, as a sheep which with imprecations they cast into a river, or into the sea, fancying it carried away all the contagion along with it; hence, by way of reproach, such that were under disgrace, and were ejected, and exiled, were called *καψαρματα*, "purgations"; the refuse of the people, by which the rest were purged<sup>f44</sup> or the reference is to any dirt, or filth in common, swept out of houses, and trodden under foot; and so expresses the mean and abject condition of the apostles, and with what disdain and contempt they were treated in the world: all which shows that they were

far from reigning as kings; and whilst this was their case, who were at the head of the interest of Christ, it must be a vain conceit of the Corinthians, that they reigned as kings without them.

**Ver. 14.** *I write not these things to shame you*, etc.] Though they had a great deal of reason to be ashamed of the vain opinion they had of themselves, and that they suffered the faithful ministers of Christ to want the necessaries of life, when they abounded so much with the good things of it; and though the apostle's view in giving this narrative was to bring them under a sense of their faults, and to a conviction of them, and so to shame for them, in order to their future reformation and amendment; yet it was not merely to put them to the blush, but to admonish and instruct them, that he enlarged on these things:

*but as my beloved sons I warn you*; they being his children in a spiritual sense, for whom he had the strongest love and affection, as their spiritual Father; and as it was his place, and became him standing in such a relation to them, he warned, admonished, and put them in mind of their obligations and duty to him.

**Ver. 15.** *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ*, etc.] Or “schoolmasters”; by whom he means the false teachers, whom, for argument sake, he admits to be instructors in Christ, or ministers of his, as in (<sup>471123</sup>2 Corinthians 11:23) and who were many, and of whose number the Corinthians boasted; though they were not so numerous as here supposed; for the expression is hyperbolical: perhaps some reference may be had to the multitude of schoolmasters, tutors, and governors, and who also were called *twba*, “fathers”, which those that were Jews of this church at Corinth had before they believed in Christ; as the members of the great sanhedrim, the great number of doctors, wise men, Scribes and Pharisees, who pretended to instruct them: now though it should be allowed, that the present teachers among them were instrumental in instructing them further in the knowledge of Christ; or as the Arabic version reads it, “in the love of Christ”; yet they had no hand in their conversion; the apostle first preached the Gospel to them, and ministerially laid Christ the foundation among them, and directed them unto him, and was the minister by whom they believed; these teachers at most and best built on his foundation, and that only wood, hay, and stubble; and whereas they were only a sort of schoolmasters, and not fathers, they taught with mercenary views, and for lucre's sake, and with severity, as such men do; and not with such a single

eye to their good, and with that tenderness and affection a parent has, and in which relation he stood to them:

*yet have ye not many fathers*; as it is in nature, so it is in grace; how many masters and instructors soever a child may have, whether together or successively, he has but one father; and so how many after instructors, either nominally or really, believers may have to lead them on, or who pretend to lead them on to a further knowledge of Christ; yet have they but one spiritual father, who has been the happy instrument and means of their conversion, as the Apostle Paul was to the Corinthians;

*for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel*; which is to be understood of regeneration, a being born again, and from above; of being quickened when dead in trespasses and sins; of having Christ formed in the soul; of being made a partaker of the divine nature, and a new creature; which the apostle ascribes to himself, not as the efficient cause thereof, for regeneration is not of men but of God; not of the will of the flesh, of a man's own free will and power, nor of the will of any other man, or minister; but of the sovereign will, grace, and mercy of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. The Father of Christ beget us again according to his abundant mercy; and the Son quickens whom he will; and we are born again of water and of the Spirit, of the grace of the Spirit; hence the washing of regeneration, and renewing work are ascribed to him: but the apostle speaks this of himself, only as the instrument or means, which God made use of in doing this work upon the hearts of his people; and which the other phrases show: for he is said to do it "in Christ"; he preached Christ unto them, and salvation by him, and the necessity of faith in him; he directed them to him to believe in him, and was the means of bringing of them to the faith of Christ; and it was the power and grace of Christ accompanying his ministry, which made it an effectual means of their regeneration and conversion: and which were brought about "through the Gospel"; not through the preaching of the law; for though by that is the knowledge of sin, and convictions may be wrought by such means; yet these leave nothing but a sense of wrath and damnation; nor is the law any other than a killing letter: no regeneration, no quickening grace, no faith nor holiness come this way, but through the preaching of the Gospel; in and through which, as a vehicle, the Spirit of God conveys himself into the heart, as a spirit of regeneration and faith; and God of his own will and rich mercy, by the word of truth, by the Gospel of grace and truth, which came by Christ, so called in distinction from the law which came by Moses,

begets us again as his new creatures; which shows the usefulness of the Gospel ministry, and in what account Gospel ministers are to be had, who are spiritual fathers, or the instruments of the conversion of men.

**Ver. 16.** *Wherefore, I beseech you*, etc.] Though he might have used the power and authority of a father, yet he chose rather to entreat and beseech them; saying,

*be ye followers of me*; for who should children follow, but their parents? The Vulgate Latin, adds, “as I am of Christ”; so Chrysostom in his time read it; and Beza says he found it so written in one Greek exemplar; and so it is in one of Stephens’s; it seems to have crept in from (~~410~~1 Corinthians 11:1). However, though it might not be now expressed by the apostle, it is to be supposed; for he never desired any to follow him any more, or further than he followed Christ; particularly he was desirous that these his spiritual children would follow him, and abide by him in the doctrine of a crucified Christ, he had preached among them, and not the false apostles, who had represented his ministry as weak and foolish; and in his life and conversation, especially in his humble carriage and deportment among them, and in his tender love and affection for them; observing their growing pride, haughtiness, and vain opinion of themselves, and those unnatural divisions and animosities which were fomented among them; and also in bearing reproach and persecution cheerfully and patiently, for the Gospel of Christ; a detail of which he had given them in some preceding verses.

**Ver. 17.** *For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus*, etc.] This is an instance of his care of them, concern for them and respect unto them; that he not only writes unto them, giving his best advice and counsel, promising to come unto them; but in the mean while sends Timothy to them, whose character is here given as one dear to him, and in all things trusty and faithful:

*who is my beloved son*; so, in his epistles to him, he often styles him his son, his own son in the faith, his dearly beloved son; not that he was the instrument of his conversion, for he was a disciple of Christ before the apostle was acquainted with him; (see ~~440~~Acts 16:1) but either because of his age, he being younger than he; or because of his great affection for him; and chiefly because, as a son with a father, he served him in the Gospel, (~~362~~Philippians 2:22) and since he was so familiar with him, and so much



loved by him, it might reasonably be thought he full well knew his ways and methods of doctrine and practice.

*And faithful in the Lord*; a faithful steward of the mysteries of grace; faithful in the Gospel of Christ, and to the souls of men; a faithful minister of the Lord's; one who had been tried, proved, and found faithful, and therefore might be trusted to, and depended upon:

*who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways*; his way of preaching, and the doctrines he taught; and what should be the manner of life and conversation agreeably thereunto, and to his own; and all those rules and orders he gave for the discipline and management of the affairs of churches; all which he had formerly delivered to them, though they, through length of time, and the ministry of the false teachers among them, had greatly forgotten them: wherefore Timothy is sent, not to teach them new ways, nor, indeed, to teach at all, whose youth they might be tempted to despise; but only to put them in mind of what the apostle had formerly taught them: and which are recommended by their being such ways,

*which be in Christ*; the doctrines he had preached among them, the sum and substance of them were Christ, and him crucified; the ordinances he had delivered to them were what he had received from Christ; and all the rules and methods he had proposed to them for the regulation of their conduct, and the management of their ecclesiastical affairs, were such as were agreeably to the mind of Christ, and tended to his glory; he took no step, nor proposed any to be taken, but in Christ, and for the good of his interest: and he adds,

*as I teach everywhere*, in every church; the faith he delivered everywhere was one and the same; the Son of God, preached by him, was not yea and nay; the trumpet he blew always gave a certain sound; the rules prescribed by him, and orders he laid down, for the conduct of life, and government of churches, were exactly alike in all places; he taught no doctrines at Corinth, nor enjoined the observance of any rule, but what all other churches were taught and directed to; his plan of doctrine and discipline was the same everywhere.

**Ver. 18.** *Now some are puffed up*, etc.] Some with their gifts, learning, and eloquence, and with the high station they were in, in the church; believing they should continue therein undisturbed, thinking them selves safe and



secure through the absence of the apostle, and which they flattered themselves would always be the case:

*as though I would not come to you*; and others that were for Apollos and Cephas against Paul, were puffed up against their fellow members on the same account; hoping they should never see him more, to put them in any other situation than what they were in, by demolishing their factions and parties; and others, as the incestuous person, and those that took encouragement to sin by his example, were also puffed up upon this score, and mourned not over, nor repented of their iniquities, but remained secure and hardened; believing the apostle would never more come among them, to call them to an account for their malpractices.

**Ver. 19.** *But I will come to you shortly*, etc.] This he said as threatening them, but not by way of prophecy; for it is not certain that he ever did come to them after this; but by way of promise, as it was then the real intention, inclination, and resolution of his mind, though with this condition,

*if the Lord will*; which is rightly put, and what the apostle had a continual regard unto, in all things he was concerned; (see <sup><501D></sup>Romans 1:10 <sup><501B></sup>Hebrews 6:3) and though it is not absolutely necessary that this should be expressed by us always in so many words; though should it, as the sentence is short and full, there would be no impropriety in it; yet this should always be the sense of our minds and conduct in all the affairs of life; (see <sup><501B></sup>James 4:13-15)

*and will know not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power*; meaning chiefly the false teachers; and that his concern would be, not so much to observe their masterly language, the eloquence of their speech, the quaintness of their expressions, the cadency of their words, how nicely they were put together, and how fitly pronounced; but what life there was in their ministry, what power went forth with their words, and how effectual their preaching was to the, conversion of sinners, and the edifying of the church of God.

**Ver. 20.** *For the kingdom of God*, etc.] By “the kingdom of God” is not meant the kingdom of heaven, or the ultimate glory and happiness of the saints; though that is a kingdom prepared by God, which he gives to his children, calls them to by his grace, and will give them an abundant entrance into, when time shall be no more with them; and though that is

not attained to “in”, or “by word”, by mere talk and profession; not everyone that says Lord, Lord, shall enter into it; or that professes the name of Christ, and prophesies in it; but “in” or “by power”; through the power of God, beginning, carrying on, and finishing a work of grace upon the soul, and keeping it, through faith, unto salvation: nor the kingdom of grace, or that internal principle of grace in the soul, which reigns, and by which Christ reigns there, and by which the saints appear to be kings as well as priests unto God: though this also does not lie “in word”, in a profession of faith, in talking about love, and in making pretensions to the knowledge of divine things; nor merely in deeds, and outward actions, in bodily exercise, in a form of godliness, and a round of religion, and a show of righteousness;

*but in power*: in internal powerful godliness; for true godliness is a powerful thing; faith is powerful, and so is love; and so is prayer, and preaching; and so is all religion, internal and external, where there is the life and truth of grace, and that in exercise. But I rather think the Gospel is here meant, often in Scripture called the kingdom of God, and the doctrines of it, the mysteries of the kingdom; because it is a message from the King of kings; the means of setting up the kingdom or grace in the heart; its subjects are things concerning the kingdom of God; it is what has brought life and immortality, or an immortal life to light; and gives the best account of the invisible glories of the heavenly state, and points out the saints’ meetness for it, and title to it; declaring that except a man is born again, and has a better righteousness than his own, even that of Christ’s, he shall neither see nor enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now the Gospel is not in “word”; though it lies in the word of God, the Scriptures of truth: and treats of the essential word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ; and cannot be preached without words, even the words of men; yet is not to be preached with wisdom of words, with enticing words of man’s wisdom, or in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth; nor does the efficacy of it lie in, or depend upon the words of the preacher, or on mere moral persuasion: for whenever it is effectual, it comes not “in word only, but also in power”; (SM6 1 Thessalonians 1:5) and by “power” is meant, not a power of working miracles the first preachers of the Gospel had, and by which it was greatly confirmed; nor a godly life and conversation which that enforced upon, and engaged both ministers and people to; but the powerful efficacy of the Spirit, attending the preaching of the Gospel to the quickening of dead sinners, the enlightening of blind eyes, and unstopping

of deaf ears; the softening of hard hearts, the delivering of persons from the slavery of sin and Satan, the transforming and renewing of them both inwardly and outwardly; and to the comforting, enlivening, strengthening, and establishing of the saints; all which can never be ascribed to the persuasive language of men, but to the power of God; and which is the more apparent when it is observed what mean and despicable instruments in the eyes of men are made use of: what the doctrines are that are preached, not being of man, nor agreeably to his carnal reason, but esteemed foolishness by him; and the manner in which they are propagated, not in a carnal way, by outward force, but by the foolishness of preaching: and the opposition made to it both by the enmity of man's heart unto it, by the men of the world, and by Satan and his principalities and powers.

**Ver. 21.** *What will ye?* etc.] Or “how will ye, that I should come unto you?” as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions read it: since the apostle had determined upon his coming to them: and had made mention of it, he puts it to them, in what manner they themselves would choose he should come unto them;

*shall I come unto you with a rod;* either as a schoolmaster, as were their false teachers, with a “ferula”; or as a father with a rod of correction and chastisement, assuming his paternal authority, putting on severe looks, and using roughness; or rather as an apostle with the apostolical rod; by which is meant not excommunication, which is what belongs to a whole community, and not any single person; but a power of inflicting punishment on the bodies of delinquents, by smiting with diseases, and even with death itself; for as the prophets of the Old Testament had a power from God of inflicting diseases and death upon offenders; so had the apostles of the New, as appears from the instances of Ananias, and Sapphira, and Elymas the sorcerer:

*or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?* with the affection of a father, with a pleasant countenance, and a meek spirit; in opposition to that roughness and sharpness, he had an authority, as an apostle of Christ, to use in proper cases; and therefore as the latter would be most eligible by them, his suggestion is, that they would behave accordingly, that there might be no occasion to come to them in the former manner, which was not desirable by him, There seems to be an allusion to a practice among the Jews, in the punishing of a drunkard or gluttonous person; the rule for which was this<sup>f45</sup>,

“they first correct him **j bçb wa µyrbdb** “with words”, or “with a rod”, as it is written, (~~Q1B~~ Deuteronomy 21:18) and have chastened him; but if he adds and repeats (i.e. goes on in his sin), then they stone him.”

Or rather the allusion is to the judges in the sanhedrim, one of the instruments or ensigns of whose office was “a rod or staff” to smite with; it is said <sup>f46</sup> of R. Hona, when he went to the sanhedrim, he used to say, bring me the instruments of the Tabernae (the place where the sanhedrim sat); what are they? “the staff” (in Cocceius’s edition it is **yrj wj** , “the rods”, and the sandals, the trumpets, and the thongs); the gloss is, “the thong” for scourging, “the staff” (or rods) for beating the rebellious until they return, the “trumpets” for excommunication, and the “sandals” for plucking off the shoe; things in which the judges of the court were concerned, and here the apostle proposes to come as judge; (see ~~Q1B~~ 1 Corinthians 5:3,12).