



## First Corinthians 4:14-21

### Verse 11-13 [From Session 12]

The apostles had it rough! Today, many Christians throughout the world are **reviled, persecuted, defamed**, and treated as **filth**.

The world is a dangerous and evil place. Being a Christian and choosing to live a godly life is not easy and will often be met with opposition. We can expect opposition to the gospel of Christ to increase in the last days. Christian thought and values, when voiced publicly, will be met with reviling (verbal abuse), and worse. The apostles were considered scum and the **offscouring** of all things, meaning the stuff that is worthless and scraped off.

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### Verses 14 - 16

Paul's intention was never to **shame** his spiritual children, and that should never be the intention of any pastor. Instead, as his **sons**, he was eager to **warn** them.

Paul contrasts two groups of men, **instructors**, and **fathers**. A benefit of the Corinthian church is they had many instructors, Apollos and Cephas being two of them mentioned. Paul likes to use hyperbole when he writes. Hyperbole is an exaggeration to make a point, e.g. **ten thousand** instructors. The way the word instructor is used here is like a tutor or a supervisor of boys until they reach manhood. Among the Greeks and Romans, boys had instructors who would guide them in morals. This church was blessed to have many.

But what was even more of a blessing is they **didn't have many fathers**, they only had one, Paul. And in Jesus **Christ**, Paul birthed this church through (only) the **gospel**. He was their pure father in the faith, and Paul's faith rested solely on Christ and him alone. Paul, as their father, was *determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Corinthians 2:2). His goal was to only tell them about Jesus Christ.

He wasn't an apostle for the fame or glory (read vss. 11-13). It is in that sense that Paul tells them to be his followers. The Greek word is μιμητής *mimetes*. It is from this Greek word we get our English word *mimic*. Paul used this same word in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, when he said of the Thessalonians, "You became followers of us, and of the Lord." Paul is saying to the Corinthians, *follow me in Christ!*

**Verse 17 -**

**For this cause.** What **cause** does Paul mean? Because the Corinthians forgot the doctrine (teaching) that Paul, their father in the faith, had taught them. They needed reminding so they could follow Paul.

**Have I sent unto you Timothy** (Timotheus in the KJV, it is the Greek form of the name Timothy and means God-honoring: *time: honor*, and *Theos: God*). Paul depended on and trusted **Timothy, his beloved son, and faithful in the Lord.** Paul mentions Timothy in 11 of his 13 letters. Only in Galatians and Ephesians is Timothy not referred to; although he became the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

**Bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ;** Correct doctrine is the key to a healthy church. Doctrine just means teaching. 2 Timothy 3:16 summarizes the importance of doctrine. There is coming a time (probably already here) when men will not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3,4). The letters of Paul are essential because they contain the doctrine for the church. It is only through *Pauline* doctrine that we can know how to live the Christian life in the dispensation of grace.

**As I teach everywhere in every church;** Paul's doctrine never wavered. He learned it from Jesus Christ directly ([Galatians 1:16](#)). Timothy had been with Paul so often he was somewhat an expert on his doctrine since he heard Paul teach it everywhere.

**Verse 18 - 21**

**Some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.** Some in the church were feeling bold in their speech and actions because Paul was not with them in person. It is much easier to build yourself up and pull someone else down when they are not present. That is what makes social media so damaging. People are out of control and puffed up, that is until they meet the person face-to-face.

**But I will come shortly.** Paul is putting them on notice that he plans to come to see them if the **Lord will.** When he does, then he will see what kind of power these **puffed up** church members have.

Paul makes a point about the **kingdom of God.** The kingdom, he says, is not **words, but power.** Earlier he accused the troublemakers in the church of thinking they were kings, reigning in the kingdom. They were speaking a lot of words, but the kingdom is not about words, it is about **power.** The Kingdom of God is literal and powerful, it is not made up of the words (not just talk) of men who think they are kings and better than everyone else.

As their father, he can discipline them or treat them gently. Fathers, led by the Holy Spirit, as Paul was, can discern what is needed for the child to mature.

