

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

- A. Paul pleads for a correct attitude toward the apostles (1-5).
 - 1. He asks that they be looked upon as (1) servants, that is, assistants who serve their Master, Christ; and (2) stewards, that is, administrators of the mysteries of God—His revealed wisdom (1).
 - 2. He shows that the one thing required of a steward is that he be found faithful to his master (2).
 - 3. He indicates the correct standard by which the Lord's servants are judged (3-4).
 - a) He is not concerned about the Corinthians passing on his his qualifications to be an apostle or about human standards which they may use.
 - b) He does not pass on his own qualifications.
 - c) It is the Lord who examines and approves His servants.
 - (1) Paul does not know anything against himself, but this has no bearing on his appointment as an apostle.
 - (2) The one who passes on his qualifications and approves him as an apostle is the Lord.
 - 4. He points out the necessity of refraining from passing judgment (5).
 - a) Stop passing judgment before the time of judgment, that is, before the Lord comes.
 - b) He tells what the Lord will do in the matter when He comes.
 - (1) He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.
 - (2) He will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.
 - (3) When this is done, the praise that may come to each one will be from God, not man.
- B. Paul gives his readers a much needed lesson on humility (6-13).
 - 1. He explains why he has been using his name and that of Apollos (6-7).
 - a) It was for their sakes—probably to spare them the embarrassment of being mentioned by their names.
 - b) By so doing, he wanted them to learn not to go beyond the things which are written, that is, the things of the Old Testament which he has just quoted in the epistle against pride and arrogance of men.

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- c) His purpose was to keep one from favoring a certain leader and being puffed up against another.
2. He raises questions that emphasize the lesson (7).
 - a) Who made you to differ, that is, in possession of gifts, in responsibilities, or in other matters?
 - b) What do you have that you did not receive?
 - c) Then he asks the question that brings the first two to bear on the problem: If you received them, why boast as though you didn't, that is, as though they were yours in your own right?
3. He reveals their lack of humility (8-13).
 - a) As to the Corinthians, he ironically says, "You are already filled (having partaken of heaven's banquet); already you are rich (having received heaven's riches); already you have come to reign (in heaven with life's battles over)."
 - b) As to himself, he expresses his fervent wish (1) that this were really true of them, and (2) that the apostles were also rejoicing with them in heaven.
 - c) As to the apostles, he shows what was happening to them for Christ's sake.
 - (1) God had set them forth as men doomed to death.
 - (2) They were a spectacle to the world for men and angels to behold.
 - d) He emphasizes the lesson by pointing out the contrast between the apostles and the Corinthians (10).
 - (1) The apostles are fools for Christ's sake, but the Corinthians are wise in Christ.
 - (2) The apostles are weak, but the Corinthians are strong.
 - (3) The Corinthians have glory, but the apostles have dishonor.
 - e) He shows what the apostles suffer and how they react to trials (11-13).
 - (1) They are hungry, thirsty, persecuted, unsettled, and have to toil with their hands for a living.
 - (2) Being insulted, they bless; persecuted, they endure; defamed, they console; they are like refuse or the off-scouring of all things.
- C. Paul admonishes the Corinthians as beloved children (14-21).
 1. His purpose in writing is not to shame them but to admonish them (14).
 2. He is their father in the gospel even though they may claim

ten thousand tutors. And because he is their father, he urges them to imitate him (15-16).

3. He explains why he sent Timothy to them (17).
 - a) Timothy is his beloved and faithful child in the Lord.
 - b) Timothy was to tell them of Paul's ways in Christ as he taught in every church.
4. He tells them of his proposed journey to Corinth (19-20).
 - a) Some were puffed up, saying he would not come.
 - b) He assures them that he will come if the Lord will.
 - c) When he does, he will know about the arrogant ones, that is, he will find out not just what they are saying, but what they really are.
 - d) He explains this attitude: The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.
 - e) A serious question about his coming visit: Shall I come to punish—with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

Attitude Toward the Apostles (1-5)

Text

4:1-5. Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful, 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5 Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.

Commentary

Let a man account of us.—This chapter brings to a close the discussion of the subject of division which had been reported to Paul by members of the household of Chloe. Up to this point, Paul has mentioned the problem of wisdom in contrast to the word of the cross which was the revealed wisdom of God. He has shown the correct view of men in relation to the church as a means of overcoming the party spirit that lay at the root of the problem of division. He has raised the appreciation of all for the things of God by reminding them that they were the temple of God and that the Spirit of God was dwelling in them.

He now pleads for a correct view of the apostles as the ones through whom the Corinthians had believed and who had continued to instruct them in the Christian life.

He uses a significant word with which all were familiar in presenting this plea. "Account" suggests the bookkeeper's term for entries in his ledger. Paul is suggesting that they enter this in their ledger to his credit. They are to set it down in their minds so as to make the accounts balance. He is asking them to look upon the apostles in their relation to this problem in a way that will bring to bear all that has been said by him upon the subject of division. The use of the plural pronoun does take in all the inspired teachers, apostles in particular, as the ones through whom God carried out the project of building the church and caring for it as one would cultivate his field.

as of ministers of Christ.—The apostles are Christ's servants; they are not to be thought of as ones to divide the body of Christ. In chapter 3:21-23, Paul has explained that he and Apollos and the other leaders really belong to the church as their servants. There is a sense, however, in which they also belong to Christ. This is of primary importance in the solution of the problem before them. They were ministers (literally, deacons) who were to perform a service for the church under the direction of the Lord. He uses another word that is translated "minister" in this context. It means a subordinate or an attendant. Originally, it referred to the galley slave who was chained to his oar. But this idea is not to be read into the New Testament usage. There it refers to the one who has a subordinate position that requires absolute devotion to his superior. It is the word that describes the temple guards who were subordinates of the ruling body of the Jews. Paul considered himself as such a servant of Christ. He is a subordinate whose sole duty is to please the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the church is Christ's and the appointed servants are Christ's, there is no reason for dividing the church over loyalty to any man. Christ demands absolute priority in the lives not only of teachers but also of all other members of His body, the church. See Col. 1:18.

and stewards.—This important word also enforces the lesson of relationship between teachers and Christ. It means "household servant." Joseph was such a slave in the house of Potiphar. His task was to manage the affairs of his master and to look after his property. He was strictly accountable to the master for the proper discharge of his duties. This accurately describes the inspired apostle's relation to Christ. They were not appointed by men and not accountable to them. Christ appointed them and equipped them to do the task He

had for them, and He held them accountable as stewards who were watching over "the mysteries of God."

the mysteries of God.—Arndt and Gingrich in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* define "mystery" as a secret. See my comment on 2:6-9. These are not mystical things or mysterious things. They are those things in God's plan to save the believer in Christ that would have remained forever hidden to man had not God revealed them through the inspired apostles and prophets. Essentially then, the term refers to the Bible as the revealed will of God. The apostles were to watch over, guard, and protect that which belonged to God. Paul's appeal to Timothy emphasizes this important truth: "O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (I Tim. 6:20-21).

that a man be found faithful.—This seems to be the most important qualification of a steward—faithfulness to his master. Jesus' story of the steward who was accused of wasting his master's goods illustrates the attitude toward unfaithful servants (Lk. 16:1-20). So far as the apostles were concerned, their responsibility was that they be faithful to Christ. They were not to gather men about them for their own glory and thereby divide and destroy the church. Thus the descriptive terms that refer to the apostles and the necessity remaining faithful to the Lord all show the wickedness of the divided state of the church.

that I should be judged of you.—Having laid down the basic principles that govern his relation to the church and to the Lord, Paul proceeds to state that it is an inconsequential matter that some of them were presuming to pass on his qualifications to be an apostle. The word for "judge" in this context means to examine one's qualifications for office. See comment on 2:14-15. The one who is spiritual (the inspired apostle) is judged (examined as to his fitness for the task) by no man. Man didn't appoint the apostles of Christ; He did. No man, therefore, has the right to pass on their fitness for the work Christ had for them to do. Why then should one say, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Cephas"? Who were they to approve one apostle above another? This is the party spirit that was causing splits in the church at Corinth. Paul let them know that it was a very small thing to him that some were attempting to disqualify him as an apostle of Christ by appealing to human standards or verdicts handed down by men.

I judge not mine own self.—That is, Paul did not pass on his own qualifications to be an apostle, and surely the Corinthians were less qualified to do so. "Judge" in this context is still the word for passing on one's qualifications for office.

I know nothing against myself.—This remark, like everything else, must be taken in the light of its context. Paul is saying that he did not know anything against himself that would disqualify him as an apostle. Of course, he knew that at one time he had been a persecutor of the church. By his conduct, he had insulted God. See I Tim. 1:12-13. He had even consented to the death of Stephen. But this did not prevent his being appointed to God's service for by God's grace he had obtained mercy because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus who appeared to him on the Damascus way appointed him a minister and witness both in the things he had seen and in the things that would be shown to him (Acts 26:16). He sent Ananias to him saying, "Get up and get yourself baptized and wash away your sins because you have called on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

not hereby justified.—"Justify," "justification," and "righteousness" are usually used in the New Testament with the meaning that has to do with God's forgiveness of sin or His looking upon the one who is justified as being right in His sight because of faith in Christ who shed His blood for the remission of sins (Rom. 3:21-26). But it may also be used in its ordinary sense as in this case. Paul is saying, "I know nothing against myself, but that does not justify me in assuming that I am qualified to be an apostle of Christ. It is the Lord who passes on my qualifications and approves me as His apostle."

judge nothing before the time.—This word is accurately rendered "judge" in this instance. It refers to the act of weighing evidence, making decisions, and handing down verdicts as a judge on the bench would do. The Corinthians were doing exactly this thing when they said, "I am of Paul" or "I am of Apollos." They were not qualified to do this for they did not have full information and did not know the hearts of men. This is very similar to Jesus' statement, "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). He was forbidding hypocritical judging. He, of course, made allowance for the fact that men are capable of recognizing false prophets, for He said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16). It would seem that by this standard the Corinthians should have been able to see through the false teachers who were promoting division in their midst.

In handing down verdicts that glorified one man and dishonored

another, they were violating another principle, that is, the time God has set for judgment—the coming of the Lord.

bring to light the hidden things.—All men face the judgment day before the Lord (Rev. 20:11-15). The one who sits on the throne knows the hidden things that are in darkness. They may not all be evil, for that matter. But God who knows the hearts of all men (Acts 1:24) will judge with righteousness. The light of His truth will illumine the secrets of men's hearts and make manifest their plans, thoughts, and desires (Rom. 2:16).

then shall each man have his praise from God.—Praise from God! This should satisfy the need of any man. Why then should they seek the praise from men and in so doing divide the church of God? "Well done, good and faithful servant" from God is more than all the praise from men.

A Much Needed Lesson on Humility (6-13)

Text

4:6-13. Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. 7 For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 8 Already are ye filled, already ye are become rich, ye have come to reign without us: yea and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. 9 For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonor. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; 12 and we toil, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now.

Commentary

transferred to my self and Apollos for your sakes.—Paul simply named himself and Apollos instead of naming the ones who were causing the strife in the church. He is teaching a lesson on the correct relation of men to the church. He might have used the names of the

guilty parties, but for their sakes—perhaps to spare them the embarrassment with the hope that they might change their ways—he didn't. There are times when evil doers have to be pointed out by name. Paul didn't hesitate to do it in the case of Alexander and Hymenaeus (I Tim. 2:20). See John's reference to Diotrephes (III John 9).

It is doubtful if this can refer to the splits in Corinth that are mentioned in 1:2. There it seems that leaders were gathering others about them and forming parties in the church by calling attention to their own preference to Paul or Cephus, or Apollos.

that ye might learn.—The lesson is one on humility. He wanted them to learn it as he spoke of himself and Apollos.

beyond the things which are written.—This is a reference to the quotations from the Old Testament which Paul has used in 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19. Taken together, they are a strong protest against the conceit that was causing men to boast of their own wisdom. Paul tried to get the Corinthians to see that real wisdom for the mature mind was the wisdom revealed in the word of the cross as it was spoken by the inspired teachers.

puffed up for the one against the other.—This refers to the pride and conceit of the leaders who were causing so much havoc in the church. People were for one leader and against another. With arrogant pride, they were alligning themselves with a favorite leader and looking with disdain on others. Some favored Apollos and assumed an arrogant attitude toward Paul—the names of Apollos and Paul were substituted for the names of the real party leaders.

For who maketh thee to differ?—They needed to learn the lesson of humility to offset the pride and arrogance that was destroying the fellowship between brethren in Christ. Paul raises three questions in order to make them see the point. (1) Who maketh thee to differ? Does this acknowledge a distinction or suggest that all are members of the same body, even though they may have different functions? See 12:12. It seems that Paul is reminding them that no one is elevated above another in Christ's plan for the church. He is supreme, and every believer has the same honored position as a member of His body. (2) What hast thou that thou that thou didst not receive? Whatever anyone had by way of natural talent or acquired skill or spiritual gift such as those mentioned in 12:8-10, it was not his to boast about to the disparagement of others in the church. Man as the creature of God has received so many gifts from Him. For example, he has received physical strength necessary for his responsibilities;

he has received a mind that enables him to think and to make choices. These are some of the things that make him different from the animal. Whatever he had in "spiritual gifts" (miraculous powers) were given by the Spirit as He determined. There was nothing in all this to cause them to be proud as if others had not received the same gifts. (3) Why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive it? The basic error indicated by this question seems to be their disregard for God. If they received their gifts from God, there is no excuse for the state of division that existed among them.

Already ye are filled.—Because of their arrogant attitude toward him as God's servant, Paul ironically presents the Corinthians as having already arrived at the goal of the Christian life—heaven with all of its blessings. He sees them sitting at the heavenly feast enjoying the riches of heaven, but he and the teachers like him are still struggling under the humiliating experiences that he suffered for their sakes.

I would that ye did reign.—Although Paul had spoken ironically, he could wish that what he said of them were really true, that is, that they were in heaven as victors over all the trials of life. It is no wonder that one who had suffered so much for others should long for the time when the victory for all the faithful, including himself, would be won. He told the Philippians of this longing: "I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake" (Phil. 1:23-24).

as men doomed to death.—The figure is a familiar one of that day. It represents condemned men awaiting the hour when they would be torn to pieces by wild animals before the eyes of the pleasure mad crowds. The condemned men are the apostles—not because they are criminals, but because God knew that they would give their lives in His service. Jesus told Peter some things that were to happen to him, "signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God" (John 21:19). Peter was aware of this and wrote that "the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me" (II Pet. 1:14). See also Paul's statement to Timothy (II Tim 4:6-8).

a spectacle unto the world.—The pageant in which the apostles are being led to their death is performed before the eyes of the world. The world in this instance is the whole universe—men and angels behold the spectacle. Not all the men who beheld the spectacle were evil, for many who witnessed the faithful apostles were convinced by their lives that the gospel they preached was the truth. See Acts

5:33-42. Stephen's Christlike attitude in death must have made a very great impression on the "young man Saul." But angels also were watching the dedicated men as they went to their death. Peter mentions their interest in the scheme of redemption (I Pet. 1:11-12). Some more light is thrown on their interest in men who suffer for Christ by the writer of *Hebrews*, for he asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb 1:14)

fools for Christ's sake. Another touch of irony. They were willing to be looked upon by the world as fools for the sake of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. Actually, they were men of mature wisdom as Paul had shown in chapter two. The Corinthians, on the other hand, were not wise. They thought they were, however, as a result of their own thinking. Those who accepted the revealed wisdom of God could, of course, be called wise. But their problem was that too many of them were only "babes in Christ." The contrasts in this verse are designed to produce humility in the hearts of the readers of the epistle.

we are weak.—Paul freely acknowledged his weakness, that is, without Christ he was weak. Concerning the "thorn in the flesh"—whatever that was, we do not know except that it was given him to keep him from being "over much exalted"—the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest in me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 12:8-10). The strength of the Corinthians also lay in their relation to Christ, but in all probability the apostle is speaking ironically again—they were claiming to be strong.

ye have glory.—More irony, perhaps. Actually, they were receiving glory from men. But from the same men, the apostles were receiving dishonor. The nature of that dishonor is seen in the long list of things they were suffering for Christ. This dishonor was going on "even until now"—the time of writing the epistle. By that time they should have been acknowledged for their real worth as servants of Christ.

filth of the world.—The degradation of these faithful servants of the Lord reaches its climax in this term. They were like dirt that could be swept up from the floor or like an incrustation of filth that had to be scraped off of things to which it had clung.

*Admonition to Beloved Children (14-21)**Text*

4:14-21. I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel. 16 I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me. 17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will; and I will know, not the word of them that are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

Commentary

I write not these things to shame you.—The ironical touch of the scolding just administered probably did shame them, but Paul's purpose was not this as an end in itself. He wanted them to do something about their problem. For this reason he wrote to them as to beloved children. The tenderness of Paul was like that of Jesus. Of Him it is said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles hope" (Matt. 12:20-21). But no one should presume upon the gentleness of either Jesus or Paul, for when it became necessary, each was capable of administering the severest kind of rebuke. Admonition and chastisement were marks of a good father (Heb. 12:7-13). Paul's tender care for the Corinthians is always breaking through the dark clouds of severe condemnation of conduct unbecoming to a Christian. Paul really loved his children in the Lord.

ten thousand tutors in Christ.—Regardless of the number of tutors they might have, one fact remains: they have only one father in Christ. False teachers dogged the steps of Paul wherever he went, trying to upset the faith of his converts. See II Cor 11:13-15. But there were the faithful teachers like Apollos also. Whether good or bad, the fact remained that Paul was first to preach the gospel to

them. It was through their obedience to the word of the cross which he proclaimed that they had become Christians.

The word "tutor" was a familiar one to the Corinthians. It described the trusted slave or some other parson who watched over the welfare of boys for their father. It was often the duty of this person to take the children to school and get them home safely. There was a difference, however, between the tutor and the teacher. Others might be likened to the tutor, but Paul was the teacher.

in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel.—The power to bring the new creature in Christ into being was in the gospel which Paul preached. Since he preached it and they believed and acted upon it, he could refer to himself as the one who had begotten them in Christ.

James uses a similar expression to explain the cause of the Christian life: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). Peter uses the same figure: "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which liveth and abideth" (I Pet. 1:23). Although there are some who do not agree, it is possible that John refers to the same thing when he says, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God" (I John 3:9). All this seems to be in agreement with what Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The Spirit's part has to do with the preaching of the inspired Word. Water, in connection with the instruction of the Word, has a place in the new birth. Washing away of one's sins in baptism is accomplished because of its connection with the Word (Eph. 5:26). The cleansing power is in the blood of Christ to which the sinner comes when he is "buried with Christ through baptism into death" (Rom 6:4).

It will be helpful in this connection to consider the following uses of water in connection with the process of becoming a Christian. (1) Water is used in relation to regeneration. "According to his great mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration"—an act that brings about the new birth—"and renewing of the Holy Spirit"—the act of the Holy Spirit that makes one new. (Titus 3:5) The Holy Spirit's part is in the use of the Word which the inspired apostles proclaimed. (2) Water is used in relation to separation from sin. "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. 10:1-2). (3) Water is used in purification from sin. "Having

our bodies washed in pure water"—water that purifies because God said to use it in this connection (Heb. 10:22). (4) Water is used in relation to salvation from sin. "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God" (I Pet. 3:21). According to this passage, baptism is the act by which the believer asks God for a good conscience, for in baptism the blood of Christ washes away sins (Acts 22:16).

The Corinthians as "babes in Christ" had experienced the new birth for they had been baptized into Christ. This is a mark of the beginning of the Christian life. It is not a sign of Christian maturity. *be imitators of me.*—In 11:1, he adds the words, "even as I also am of Christ." One wonders how many teachers or preachers today would dare to say this; yet every one who is qualified to teach should set the example for his pupils to follow. The Christian teacher should, of course, be an imitator of Christ. Since Paul was their spiritual father, they were under obligation to imitate him. It is natural for the child to imitate the parent. As to the Corinthians, they were to imitate Paul by translating into life the lessons he taught them.

I sent unto you Timothy.—Timothy was a young man of "unfeigned faith." Both his grandmother and his mother were believers in Christ (II Tim. 1:5). Paul pays high tribute to Timothy when writing to the Philippians. He said, "I have no man likeminded, who will truly care for your state" (Phil. 2:30). He was often sent on important missions such as this one to Corinth. He was to remind them of Paul's ways in every church.

some are puffed up.—Some assumed that Paul was not coming to visit them again. Perhaps they were saying that he was afraid to do so, and that he was sending Timothy instead. He quickly dispels their doubts by saying, "I will come shortly, if the Lord will."

not the word of them that are puffed up, but the power.—Paul was not concerned about the arrogant boasting of some who were against him; he wanted to test their real force. Was there anything to them other than high sounding words?

the kingdom of God.—Just as they had failed to recognize the church as the temple of God, so they also failed to recognize the true nature of the kingdom of God. It was to be found not in words but in power vested in the inspired apostle to deal with sinners. Upon his arrival, all the arrogant boasting of the enemies of the kingdom would be put to the test.

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rod or spirit of gentleness.—Paul put the issue up to them. They could change their ways before he got there. He evidently hoped for this, for they were his beloved children. But as their spiritual father and teacher in Christ he had an obligation to chastise them when they needed it. The symbol of chastisement was the rod. For a suggestion as to the possible outcome of the matter, see II Cor 7:8-10.

Summary

Chapter four brings to a close the discussion of the subject of division by correcting the thinking of the Corinthians about human leadership.

Paul asks them to look upon him as one who served them as the Lord's subordinate accountable to Him. Since the emphasis is on the relation of the leader to the Lord, it was of little consequence to him that they were attempting to pass on his qualifications to be an apostle. He didn't even do this himself. The Lord who appointed him to the apostleship examined him as to his fitness for the task. For this reason, the Corinthians were commanded to stop expressing opinions as to the superiority of one leader over another. They could not know the hidden facts necessary to make such judgments. This judgment belonged to the Lord and must await his coming.

Paul explained why he used his name and that of Apollos in discussing the work and responsibility of leaders. In chapter three, he had told how he had planted and Apollos had watered. He had laid the foundation, and another had built upon it. These leaders were servants, (deacons), but the Corinthians needed to be reminded that it was God who gave the increase. In chapter four, he uses his name and that of Apollos as examples of teachers who were faithful to the Lord in order to show the Corinthians that they were not to go beyond the things that are written, that is, things written in the Old Testament and quoted in his letter that still have meaning to his readers. These references constitute a solemn warning against the inflated egotism of men. While they did differ in the gifts they had received, there was no reason for them assuming an arrogant attitude toward brethren in Christ. Any gift they had was given to them. Why then be puffed up as if it were their by their own right?

To further deflate their egotism, he addresses them in terms of irony. He represents them as being already in heaven sitting at the heavenly feasts and enjoying the riches of heaven. If they had been, Paul would have been there too. But he hastened to tell them about the humble state of the apostles. The Corinthians were made strong and wise through the gospel, but the apostles were considered to be

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fools and weaklings by some. They faced the hard lot of doing good to those who spitefully used them.

Paul did not write these things to shame them, but to admonish them as his beloved children. They may have had many teachers, but he was their spiritual father, for they had heard the gospel from him. As his children in the gospel, he urged them to imitate him. He reminded them of the coming visit of Timothy who would call their attention to the things he was teaching in all the churches.

Lest some mistake Paul's tenderness for weakness, he closes this position of his letter with just a suggestion of harshness. It has to do with his intended return trip to Corinth. To set them at rest on the issue, he said "I will come, if the Lord will." Whether his coming would be in joy and peace or in correction would be for them to decide. Undoubtedly, his fond hope was that they would listen to him, correct their errors, and be ready to receive him as one who loved them as a father.

Questions

1. What points has Paul made in his program to correct the sin of division as he led to the discussion of chapter four?
2. What is the figure back of the word "account"?
3. What does it suggest as to the course of action for the Corinthians in their attitude toward the apostles?
4. What is the significance of the use of the plural pronoun in this connection?
5. What is the literal meaning of the word translated "ministers"?
6. How does this differ from the word translated "minister" in 3:5?
7. What bearing does the use of these two terms have on the problem of the correct view of men in relation to the church?
8. What is the meaning of the word "steward" in this chapter?
9. How does the position of Joseph in Potiphar's house illustrate the relation of the inspired apostles to the church?
10. As stewards, what was the task of the apostles?
11. What are "the mysteries of God"?
12. What was the most important qualification of a steward?
13. What bearing does this have on the problem of the correct view of the apostles in relation to the church?
14. What is the meaning of the word "judge" in the phrase, "that I should be judged of you"?
15. What bearing does this have on the claim of men who said, "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Cephas"?

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16. Why was Paul not concerned about being judged by the Corinthians?
17. What did Paul mean when he said, "I judge not myself"?
18. How harmonize his statement, "I know nothing against myself" with the known facts of his life before becoming a Christian?
19. What is the meaning of the word "justify" as Paul uses it in this chapter?
20. What is the special sense in which it is usually used in the New Testament?
21. In the sentence, "judge nothing before the time," what is meant by "judge"?
22. How does this differ from the other word translated "judge" in this context?
23. Why were the Corinthians incapable of judging?
24. What is the time of judgment?
25. What are the hidden things of darkness?
26. What did Jesus have to say about judging?
27. How does the reference to "praise from God" help solve the problem of the correct view toward men in the church?
28. Why did Paul use his own name and that of Apollos in his discussion of the sin of division?
29. Why did Paul in other circumstances mention by name those who were causing trouble in the church?
30. What did John say about Diotrephes?
31. What lesson is Paul teaching in this connection?
32. What is meant by the phrase, "beyond the things which are written"?
33. What does "puffed up" mean?
34. What were the Corinthians doing as suggested by the expression, "for the one against the other"?
35. Why did Paul ask, "Who maketh thee to differ?"
36. Why did he ask, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"
37. What things had they received?
38. What basic error is suggested by the question, "Why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive it?"
39. What bearing do these questions have on the problem of division?
40. Why say that Paul speaks ironically when he says, "already ye are filled"?
41. To what did he refer by "filled" and "rich"?
42. Why did he say, "I would that ye did reign"?

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43. What did Paul write to the Philippians about his desire for heaven?
44. What is the figure presented in the phrase, "men doomed to die"?
45. What did Jesus reveal to Peter about his death?
46. What did Paul write to Timothy about his anticipated death?
47. What effect on the Corinthians did Paul expect his remarks about suffering to have?
48. What is meant by "spectacle unto the world"?
49. What did angels have to do with it?
50. What is meant by "fools for christ's sake"?
51. Why did he say, "we are weak"?
52. To what weakness did he refer?
53. What did Paul imply when he said, "ye have glory"?
54. What is the meaning of Paul's remark about "filth of the world"?
55. What was Paul's purpose in writing this rebuke?
56. What term shows his great love for those who became Christians under his preaching?
57. What was the work of the tutor?
58. How does it explain the position of the teachers in Corinth?
59. What term describes Paul's relation to the Corinthian Christians in contrast to "tutor"?
60. What does he mean by, "I begat you through the gospel"?
61. What does the New Testament say about the use of water in connection with becoming a Christian?
62. Why were the Corinthians to imitate Paul?
63. What did Paul think of Timothy?
64. Why did he send him to Corinth?
65. Why did he say, "some are puffed up"?
66. What did he plan to learn about the leaders in Corinth if the Lord should permit him to visit them?
67. What did he mean by saying, "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"?
68. What choice did he leave to the Corinthians as to his intended visit?

For Discussion

1. What is the place of example in the learning process?
2. What effect would a correct example have on the problem of "splints" in a local congregation?