

***I CORINTHIANS***  
***Chapter 4:14-21***

**INTRODUCTION:**

In the course of my ministry of almost 39 years, I have found that people's idea of a pastor vary from church to church or even from person to person. Often times a pastor is trying to lead a church that has lost people's name on church rolls and carnal people who desire their way rather than God's way. Many choose not to follow the pastor's leadership, but choose to go their own way. In many cases when a pastor seeks to lead a church to become obedient to God's Word they remove the pastor and find one they like who will not rock the boat. - ***II Timothy 4:3 - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"***

There are a variety of ideals about a pastor which is often due to a misunderstanding of the pastor, his role, and his responsibilities from a Biblical point of view. Because the pastor is easily misunderstood, it is no wonder that so many ministers are burnt out or weary with the ministry. According to a 1991 survey of pastors by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth:

80% believe the ministry negatively affects their family life.  
33% say being a minister is an outright hazard to their family.  
75% reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.  
50% feel unable to meet the needs of their job.  
90% feel that no matter what their training, it is inadequate to cope with the demands of the ministry.  
70% says they have a lower self-image now than when they started.  
40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.  
70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.

Why do many ministers feel the way they do about the ministry? In my opinion, it is because the minister and his ministry is too often misunderstood by people.

In ***verses 14-21*** we are given insight into a pastor's heart. Paul is speaking as a pastor and as he does, he gives truths that helps us to understand a pastor.

***VERSES 14-15:***

Paul says in ***verse 14 - "I write not these things to shame you, but as beloved sons I warn you."*** Paul's words about what he has written refer to everything he has said thus far in the book of - ***I Corinthians***. In his writings, he had not beat around the bush, he shot straight and pulled no punches. He makes it clear that he was not trying to be hard on them, but helpful to them. He wanted something for them and in them. What and how he had written was due to something he deeply desired for them.

Paul explains a pastor by first helping the people to understand what drives and motivates the pastor as he seeks to lead God's people in the way of God's Word.

He calls them his - **"beloved sons"** in **verse 14** and speaks of himself as a - **"father"** in **verse 15**. These believers were Paul's sons in the faith. He was their spiritual father. He was the one that had presented the gospel to them, which God used to bring them to the knowledge of God's saving grace.

He says in **verse 15** - **"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers."** The word - **"instructors"** is a word that refers to a tutor. The word spoke of a slave that had been entrusted by the master with the responsibility of rearing the master's children. He escorted them to and from school, and acted as a tutor in their studies.

Paul was saying that the believers at Corinth had many that had taught and instructed them, but he was the one who had the privilege of bringing them to Christ. He was the one, as he said in **verse 15** that had - **"begotten"** them - **"through the gospel"**.

One of the honors of being a pastor is to tell the amazing story of God's saving grace and the Saviour who died that men might be saved. Perhaps the greatest joy for a pastor is to see people saved under his ministry.

Being a spiritual father is not a privilege limited to pastors. Every child of God can be a spiritual father. Just as a pastor brings people to Christ, each believer can bring people to Christ and thereby become spiritual fathers.

As I stated earlier, Paul had been very straightforward with the church members at Corinth in what he had written. His purpose had not been as he said in **verse 14** to **"shame"** them. He had to speak bluntly to them. He could not and would not ignore what was going on. His purpose was not to embarrass them but **"warn"** them.

The word **"warn"** is translated **"admonition"** in **Ephesians 6:4**. He did not want to **"shame"** them, but admonish them. The word means "to put into mind." He wanted to put certain truths into their mind that would enable them to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ and less like the world.

Just as every physical father warns and admonishes his children about certain dangers and things that are wrong and hurtful, a pastor has the duty of warning his people. There are times a pastor must confront and correct people, as well as challenge them. If members, like the Corinthian believers, are not living right, the pastor has the responsibility of admonishing and warning them. This is not something pastors enjoy, but a responsibility given by God. Each pastor will give an account to God for how he led the church. Pastor's who are slothful in this responsibility will be accountable to God for this neglect.

Some people get upset when a pastor admonishes them over certain sins and warns them of certain dangers. Often the same people would be the first to rebuke and condemn a father for not disciplining and correcting his children. One should not be upset when a pastor admonishes his people, for he is acting as a spiritual father over his people.

Behind this warning is the challenge of building and maturing people, and to make them strong in the Lord. Just like an earthly father warns his children to protect them, the pastor is doing the same to warn his spiritual children so they may

grow into good and responsible adults. The pastor's responsibility in warning is to help his people grow and mature into dedicated children of God.

When you understand that this is a God-given responsibility of the pastor, it helps you to understand him better. It helps you to realize that he is not seeking to "**shame**" his people, but "**warn**" his people. Take note of what God's Word says: - **Acts 20:28** - "**Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.**" **I Peter 5:2** - "**Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind**";

#### **VERSE 16:**

**"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."** The word "follower" speaks of one imitating another. Paul was telling them to mimic his life, to be imitators of his life. It was not just a case of telling them to do what he said, but also do what he did. **I Peter 5:3** - **Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.**

The fact their Christian life was mostly words rather than walk was what bothered Paul. Many of the Corinthian believers were living lives that were displeasing to God.

May God help us all to realize that people often times listen to what we do more than what we say. The old saying, "actions speak louder than words". I have also heard people say, "actions speak so loud they cannot hear what is being said". Paul's life was such that he did not mind the Corinthians mimicking him in his walk with God.

#### **VERSE 17:**

Paul wanted to go to Corinth to deal with the situation, but this ministry at Ephesus prevented him for doing so - **I Corinthians 16:3-9**. Therefore, he sent Timothy as his authoritative representative. Both Timothy and the believers were, "**beloved sons**" of Paul, **4:4; 4:17**; therefore, they had something in common.

In addition, Timothy was a spiritually faithful person. Just as Timothy had received instruction from his spiritual father, Paul's plan was for Timothy to remind the Corinthians of his teaching which was taught in every church. Paul did not treat them any differently than he would any other church.

Paul speaks of Timothy bringing the Corinthian believers - "**into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ.**" How did Timothy bring them into such remembrance? By preaching. Also in - **verse 17** Paul speaks of the manner of his life - "**as I teach everywhere in every church.**" How did he teach them? By preaching. The declaring of truth by a pastor, the teaching of truth by a pastor, and the warning by truth by a pastor, demands his preaching.

**VERSES 18- 20**

Within the church was an emerging group which resisted Paul's authority - **9:1-3; II Corinthians 1:17; 10:10; 12:12**. The fact that Paul chose not to come personally, just caused their egos to be puffed up - **4:8**. They thought that the sending of both Timothy and the letter demonstrated that Paul was afraid to face them personally. However, Paul planned to visit the church at a later time, if the trip was within the Lord's will.

How sad that often times an individual or a group within a church begins to think they know more than the pastor on how to lead the church. This conduct is in total defiance of God's Word and will bring consequences to the individual as well as the church. God places pastors in the church and gives them the authority to lead the church according His Word. **I Corinthians 11:1 - "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"**.

Paul then placed the attitude of his next visit directly upon the members of the church when he asked - **"what will ye?"** Their response to the letter and to Timothy's ministry would determine whether he would come in full demonstration of his apostolic authority in correction and discipline, or in the tender expression of a loving father. Disobedience would bring the rod of chastisement, but submission and repentance would produce warm embrace.

**VERSE 21:**

**"What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"** To put it simply, Paul was saying to the Corinthian believers, "It is up to you what kind of sermon I will preach when I get there." - - **Hebrews 13:17 - "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"**.

Paul asked, "do you want me to - **'come unto you with a rod?'**" The rod he spoke of was the rod of chastisement. We would say switch. Paul asked, "Do you want me to take the switch to you, or do you want me preach in love and a meek spirit?" In essence, Paul was saying that the spiritual condition of the Corinthian believers would determine what he preached and how he preached.

If a church is living like the devil a pastor ought to take the rod to them. He ought to take them to the woodshed and tan their hide. You say, "I don't like that kind of preaching." Well, it depends on you. How you live will determine what kind of message you will hear.

**CONCLUSION:**

In closing, let me say, it would be encouraging to many pastors if his people understood him better. It would be helpful if they understood his motives and ministry. A pastor wants to mature the people he ministers to and sometimes that requires him to rebuke his people. He is not out to hurt, but help them in their spiritual growth and development in their services for the Lord.

It would be helpful if the church understood the tremendous duty that is on him to live an exemplary and model life. If this were understood it would encourage members to lift their pastor up in prayer and hold his hands up to God.

It would be helpful if the church understood he has responsibilities as a pastor to God and answers to God for his ministry and the direction of the church.

It would be helpful if the church understood the struggle and burden many pastors deal with because of trying to lead a church in the way of the Lord when some in the church are bound and determined to follow the ways of the world or personal preference.

It would be helpful if they understood why he has to preach the way he does at times. There are times that he must use the rod when he preaches. If this were understood people would not be so quick to criticize and judge him for what and how he preaches.

People often say, "The pastor doesn't understand us." The question is, "Do you understand your pastor?"

***I CORINTHIANS 4:14-21***  
***Study Guide***

1. What do you believe are the responsibilities of the pastor and how do they harmonize with God's Word?
2. Why are so many pastors leaving the ministry today?
3. Why do so many ministers feel the way they do about the ministry?
4. In **verses 14-21** we are given insight into a pastor's \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Paul explains a pastor by first helping the people to understand what drives and motivates the pastor as he seeks to lead God's people in the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. In **verses 14** and **15**, what did Paul mean when he used the words - **"beloved sons"** and **"father"**.
7. What did Paul mean in **verse 15** when he said he had **"begotten them"**.
8. How had he **"begotten them"**?
9. Paul's purpose in writing this letter was not to \_\_\_\_\_ them but to \_\_\_\_\_ them.
10. What is the pastor to do when the membership of a church is not living right? Why?
11. In **verse 16** what does Paul mean by **"followers of me"**? If young Christians were to follow you how and where would they be led in their walk with God? Can your life be mimicked?
12. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?
13. How did Timothy bring the Corinthians - **"into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ."**
14. The group within the church was resisting Paul's \_\_\_\_\_.
15. What would determine how Paul preached at Corinth when he got there?