

## “Tough and Tender” (1 Corinthians 4:6-21)

Do you remember the last time you were spanked? It was probably more years ago than you care to recall, but try. Perhaps you were discovered in a lie, or caught stealing candy from a neighborhood drugstore, or sent home from school for fighting. Whatever the reason, you found yourself face-to-face with an angry parent whose look of disappointment or rage let you know that your behavior was unacceptable. Still pleading for amnesty, you turned your back—or, more likely, were firmly turned until your backside was in a vulnerable position—and winced as you felt the sting of the first stroke. Other swats followed, until your bottom throbbed like it had just been attacked by a swarm of bees. But you know, despite your anger and excuses, that your mother or father had done the right thing.

If you're a Christian you realize that correction doesn't stop with your earthly parents. Your heavenly Father disciplines you so that you can “share in His holiness” (Heb 12:10b). But unlike your parents—who may have punished you wrongly at times—the Lord always chastens you for the right reason, in the right way, at the right time, and to the right degree (Heb 12:10-11). He never makes mistakes. And He disciplines you to show His love for you (Heb 12:6).<sup>1</sup>

In 1 Cor 4:6-21, God is going to lovingly spank our spiritual bottoms through the pen of the apostle Paul.<sup>2</sup> Paul lives by the principle *spare the rod; spoil the church*.<sup>3</sup> In the passage that follows Paul will unpack two challenging truths about spiritual maturity.

**1. Spiritual maturity requires humility and suffering (4:6-13).**<sup>4</sup> In this section, Paul explains that for the Corinthians to make spiritual headway they must learn to humble themselves before God and others. Additionally, they must prepare themselves to suffer like the apostles. In 4:6, Paul writes, “**Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.**” Paul informs the Corinthians that they have an arrogant attitude because they have a theological misunderstanding.<sup>5</sup> As always, our attitudes and actions stem from what we believe or perceive. In this case, the Corinthians are playing games of spiritual “one-upmanship.”<sup>6</sup> The phrase “what is written” (4:6) refers to the five Old Testament Scriptures that Paul has quoted in the previous three chapters.<sup>7</sup> These passages place a strict limit on human pride and call for trusting God alone.<sup>8</sup> The Corinthians were arrogant against each other because they were not obeying the Scriptures. Paul's point is: Scripture is meant to form the boundary for the conduct of the Christian life. If we humble ourselves and depend upon God we will experience greater unity in our body.<sup>9</sup>

This ought to motivate us to study the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament is full of stories and principles that will humble us before God and man, which will lead to maintaining unity in the church. When we ignore reading the Scriptures or listening to God's Word preached, we can become proud. Therefore, we need to increase our familiarity with the Old Testament in all of our children's, youth, and adult ministries.<sup>10</sup> We must know and apply the Old Testament. We must make sure to run ethical issues through the grid of the Old Testament. We then must make a commitment to not “exceed what is written.” We must keep it between the lines.

In 4:7, Paul explains why the Corinthians should not be arrogant: “**For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**” Paul paddles the Corinthians by asking three convicting rhetorical questions, designed to damage their egos. He reminds the Corinthians that they are not intrinsically superior to anyone else. Three times Paul uses the word “receive” to remind the Corinthians that God is the one who gave them everything they have. Consequently, they should be grateful, not boastful.

What explanation is there for your conversation, for your growth, and for your ministry? Who made you different, and why? It is God who revealed the gospel to you and drew you in. He is the sole explanation. This is to have a humbling affect on the heart of the Christian. These questions are an invitation to reflect on God's grace. "What do you have that you did not receive?" This is a life-transforming question; and the answer is "absolutely nothing." The gifts of God are everywhere in our lives, and we are not only undeserving, but ill-deserving recipients.

In 4:8, Paul shifts tone abruptly and unleashes a bitter diatribe, dripping with irony and sarcasm. He does not *spare the rod; spoil the church*. Listen to his words: **"You are already filled<sup>11</sup> [with spiritual wisdom and perfection], you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you."** The first couple of clauses speak of the illusion that they need nothing more. The word "filled" means satiated or engorged. It has to do with eating a huge meal. They are so full they couldn't eat another bite. The second phrase speaks of material wealth. They have everything they need. The Corinthians believe that they have it all. This describes their spiritual self-appraisal. They have a strong sense of having arrived in their Christian lives.<sup>12</sup>

We face the danger of religious arrogance—believing ourselves to be spiritually filled and rich because we attend a Bible-teaching church, listen to Christian radio, spend money on a lot of resources at Christian book stores, and watch Christian television. Individually, we can pride ourselves on knowing a lot about the Bible. As fat, well-fed Christians, we can become puffed up with our own knowledge. That will evidence itself in argumentativeness when it comes to biblical or spiritual issues; that is, the love of theological debate for its own sake. Watch out for those signs of self-satisfied spirituality and impenetrable smugness.

This past year we took a church health survey. One of the findings of the survey was that 98.5% of us think we know what we believe and why. Now that can be a wonderful thing, if it is really true. But the disturbing thing is: We believe that only 75% of the church knows what they believe and why. This finding can suggest that as a church we are a bit judgmental and smug. We need to be aware of this so that we can humble our hearts before God and others. We must learn to be humble, broken, transparent, and vulnerable people.

In 4:9-13, Paul now begins to outline what his life is really like. It is a resume of suffering.<sup>13</sup> If anything characterizes how he lives, it is suffering. Paul writes, **"For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate;<sup>14</sup> we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now."** In these five verses, Paul contrasts the apostles and the Corinthians. He explains that the apostles are a public spectacle to everyone. Furthermore, their lives will result in death.<sup>15</sup> From the world's perspective the apostles are "fools," "weak," and "without honor." To make matters worse, they are hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated,<sup>16</sup> homeless,<sup>17</sup> and hard working.<sup>18</sup> Who would ever sign up for this job? Very few! Paul also informs the Corinthians that the apostles understood how to respond when they were persecuted. They blessed, persevered, and encouraged. Regardless, they were still considered the "scum<sup>19</sup> of the world, the dregs of all things." The word "scum" means filth or rubbish. It's what you sweep or scrape off of something that you're cleaning. The word "dregs" means the scrapings-off of a plate after a meal. Paul says we're garbage in the eyes of the world. That term has become common among young people; for instance, when they watch a highly-paid professional athlete make a mistake, they yell, "You're a piece of garbage!"

This is what a person gets for following Christ in this life. It is not glamorous and there are few promises of prosperity, despite the teachings of Christian television. Yet, despite this seemingly discouraging resume of suffering, we need to be reminded that “prosperity has often been fatal to Christianity, but persecution never.”<sup>20</sup>

Are you willing to follow the apostles in their suffering? Will you take on ridicule and rejection for Christ? How will you respond when your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances persecute you? Will you be gracious? Will you be respectful?

Paul concludes this first major section of the epistle (1:10-4:21) by reasserting his apostolic authority, which had led to his correcting the Corinthians’ shameful conduct and carnal theology. He changed the metaphor again, and now appealed to them as a father to his children. He ended by warning them that if they did not respond to his gentle approach he would have to be more severe.<sup>21</sup>

[We have seen that spiritual maturity requires humility and suffering. But what else does spiritual maturity require?]

**2. Spiritual maturity requires mimicking and mentoring (4:14-21).** Paul informs us that if we are to grow spiritually we must follow an example and be an example. He writes, **“I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”** Paul wants to communicate that it is their values and behavior, not their personhoods that are unacceptable.<sup>22</sup> By using the term “beloved” Paul is expressing respect as much as affection. He wants to instill in them a sense of self-worth that comes from God’s grace and power in their lives. The word in 4:14 that is translated “admonish” can also be translated “warn.”<sup>23</sup> It’s what a father<sup>24</sup> does in hopes that his children will see the error of their ways and change.<sup>25</sup> It implies counsel and appeal. His desire isn’t to criticize and punish but to admonish and encourage. In this appeal to follow his corrective instruction he conveys a wonderful confidence that they can change and that they will want to.

The reason that Paul writes the way he does is because he is their spiritual father. In 4:15, Paul writes, **“For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”** Paul states that the Corinthians have “countless tutors” but only one father. In Paul’s day a “tutor” (*paidagogos*) was the personal attendant who accompanied the child, took him to school and home again, heard him recite his lines, taught him good manners, and generally looked after him. The tutor was entitled to respect and normally received it, but there was no comparison between his relation to the boy and that of the boy’s father.<sup>26</sup> Paul is saying, “I’m not your tutor, I’m your father! I have a personal, relational, familial interest in you.” Paul could make this claim because God used him to lead many of the Corinthians to faith in Christ.

In our church, we need some spiritual fathers and mothers who will step up and help others grow in Christ. What if I telephoned this week and said, “I have a baby Christian who needs to grow. Can you help?” What would you say? Paul would say, “There’s only one right answer: be a father or mother.” Today, will you begin to look for one person who you can help in his or her spiritual walk?

Paul informs the Corinthians and us that he is still willing to be an example. In 4:16, Paul writes some surprising words: **“Therefore I exhort you,<sup>27</sup> be imitators of me.”<sup>28</sup>** Again, there is gentleness here. He is not laying down apostolic orders. He uses the word “exhort.” Exhortation doesn’t mean using a raised voice, with a finger wagging in someone’s face, saying, “You’d better shape up or else!” It literally means to call to one’s side. Exhortation means putting your arm around someone’s shoulder, walking along with them, saying, “Would you consider this? Can we talk about this?” That’s the appeal that Paul is making. He’s not boxing these people in; he’s giving them choice in the matter. He respects them.

However, Paul is confident in the Holy Spirit's work in his life so he can declare, "Imitate me." If you were to perform a word study, you would discover that the word translated "imitate" actually comes from the Greek word *mimetai*, from which we get the words mimic and mimeograph. Paul is urging people to mimic his life because he practices the things that he presses upon the Corinthians. If they watch him they will see that he does not glory in Greek wisdom. He does not live for human praise.<sup>29</sup> Rather, he calls the Corinthians to a radically Christlike life. They are to give up their hankering for high status and accept the lowliness that Paul models. They are to welcome being regarded as fools for Christ, and as weak and dishonored. They are to return abuse with blessing, slander with conciliation, and to endure persecution (4:10-13). They are to recognize that all that they are and have comes to them as a grace-gift from God (3:10), and that they are not inherently extraordinary (4:7). They are to think of themselves as no better than menial field hands (3:5) and servants (4:1), awaiting God's judgment to determine if they were faithful (4:5). They are to rid themselves of all resentments and rivalries with coworkers so that they can toil together in God's field (3:5-9). They are to resist passing themselves off as wise or elite by using lofty words of wisdom or aligning themselves with those who do, and to rely instead on the power of God that works through weakness, fear, and trembling (2:1-4). The ultimate aim is not to be Paul-like, but Christlike (11:1).<sup>30</sup>

Be careful to not perform a "spiritual skip" and blow right over this verse. God expects you and me to be worthy of imitation. In our marriage, family, work, school, and church, God wants us to be able to say, "Mimic me." I recently saw a bumper sticker that said: "Dear Lord, save me from your followers." Isn't this sad? We should set out to change this bumper sticker to read: "Dear Lord, help me to mimic your followers."

A young boy looked up at his grandfather and wondered aloud, "Grandpa, how do you live for Jesus?" The respected grandfather stooped down and quietly told the boy, "Just watch." As the years went by the grandfather was an example to the boy of how to follow Jesus. He stayed rock-steady in living for Him. Yet the grandson often lived in a way that was not pleasing to God. One day the young man visited his grandfather for what both knew would be the last time. As the older man lay dying, his grandson leaned over the bed and heard his grandpa whisper, "Did you watch?" That was the turning point in the boy's life. He understood that when his grandpa had said, "Just watch," he meant, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." He vowed that from then on he would live as his grandfather did—striving to please Jesus. He had watched, and now he knew how to live.

Is somebody watching you? When people watch your life what do they see? What are your priorities? What are your views? Are there younger Christians who need to see that it is possible to live for Jesus every day and in every way? Challenge them—and yourself. Challenge them to "just watch." Then show them the way.<sup>31</sup>

One of Paul's disciples, Timothy, exemplifies what the Corinthians are called to be. Therefore, Paul writes, "**For this reason I have sent to you Timothy,<sup>32</sup> who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord,<sup>33</sup> and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church**" (4:17). The Christian life is spoken of as a "way" or "ways." It is a manner of life or pattern of life, and is characterized as "the ways that are in Christ" (4:17). It is not a mere list of doctrines that we nod our heads to. It is a revolutionary way of life, or one that is intended to transform us. In order to pull off this kind of supernatural life we need mentors. Mentors are not optional, they are critical. Typically, those who are making great strides for God have mentors. To presume that you can become a mature Christian apart from learning from someone else is arrogant. Today, will you commit yourself to being a mentor and to being mentored? These are two commitments that will change your life forever. You will never look back on these decisions and say, "I wish I had not done this." You will be changed from the inside out by investing in someone else and by being invested in.

In 4:18-20, Paul hunkers down and talks some good old-fashioned trash! Take a look at these words: **“Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon,<sup>34</sup> if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.”** The arrogance of the Corinthians is not in open rebellion against Paul’s authority. Their arrogant self-importance is like that of little children who have the house to themselves when the parents have slipped out for a minute. Paul warns them that the father will be coming home soon, and he had better find everything in order.<sup>35</sup> Some, supposing Paul would not come himself, have become inflated with self-importance. Paul warns them, “I’m on my way...you better be ready. Talk is cheap! You had better be able to back up your mouth!” Paul is saying, “Show me your power, not your talk.”

Arrogance will always misrepresent the truth, and arrogance will always fail in the end. Hot air will not avail much when action is required. Helium balloons are fun to play with the first day they are inflated. They rise effortlessly to the ceiling and remain there, colorful and out of reach. But after a few hours the helium begins to leak out and they descend to the floor. Paul is writing to a body of believers who are on a high. They are “balloon Christians.” But the time has come when they must either put up or shut up.<sup>36</sup>

You may be thinking this is just too much. Paul is realizing a lot of pent-up anger and frustration. While it may seem like that, nothing could be further from the truth. Again, he is a spiritual father who loves the Corinthians. He simply wants what’s best for them. He knows that if he *saves the rod, he will spoil the church*. Pastor Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Ballard, WA likes to say, “Hard words make soft people and soft words make hard people.” This is the honest to goodness truth! If we love our church we will speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

Paul closes this section in 4:21 with these challenging words: **“What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod,<sup>37</sup> or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”<sup>38</sup>** Paul may be small but he carries a big stick. He leaves the Corinthians with two options: the road or a spirit of gentleness. Which would you prefer? Why do you do what you do?

...“The board of education.” Those words still strike fear into my heart. When I was 12 years old, my parents took my brother and me on a six-week vacation around the United States. Contrary to popular belief, I wasn’t always the perfect child. In fact, I remember one particular episode when I rashly let fly a four letter word directed to my dad. Now my dad is 6’2 ½,” and he used to love playing baseball. Well, he pulled over on the side of the freeway and laid me down on the backseat and hit a home run on my bottom. After this ordeal was over and I could finally sit down, I couldn’t help but think, “I know my dad loves me.” He risked getting himself in trouble to teach me a lesson in respect.

God wants us to respect Him because He is our Father. He loves us and wants what’s best for us. That’s why He will not spare the rod. Instead, He will teach us to humble ourselves before Him and depend upon Him for everything. May we follow in God’s footsteps and refuse to *spare the rod and spoil the church*.

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 4:6-21  
2 Corinthians 10:4-6  
Amos 6:1-7  
Matthew 5:6  
Philippians 2:1-11  
Revelation 3:17-18  
1 Peter 3:8-12

**Study Questions**

1. How well do I understand the Old Testament (4:6a)? In what specific ways does God's Word form the boundary for the conduct of my Christian life?
2. When have I recently exhibited arrogance with a brother or sister in Christ (4:6b-8)? How do I deal with arrogant people? Where do I need to grow in my own conduct and treatment of others?
3. What grips me the most about Paul's suffering (4:9-13)? Read Romans 12:17-21. How does this section of Scripture parallel 1 Corinthians 4:9-13? How have I suffered in the past as a Christian? How am I presently suffering for the cause of Christ? Am I being poorly treated or slandered by others because of my commitment to Jesus Christ? What have people said about me? Am I suffering because others have seen evidence of Christ in my life, or rather is their criticism of me deserved?
4. How do I respond when someone confronts a wrong in my life (4:14-21)? How do I confront someone else about their wrongdoing? Would others say that I am a balance of "tough and tender?"
5. Do I feel comfortable encouraging other Christians to "imitate me" (4:16)? Why or why not? In what areas of my life am I weak? Do I keep short accounts with God and others when I sin (1 John 1:9)? Who am I currently mentoring (4:17)? Who am I being mentored by?
6. Where is the power of God evident in my life (4:20)? Where is God's power lacking? How can I ensure that the expression of the kingdom of God in my life is more than mere talk?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See also Charles R. Swindoll, *Strong Reproofs for a Scandalous Church: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1:1-6:11* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1988), 68.

<sup>2</sup> Fee observes, “The changes of tone in this passage reveal some of the real tensions that continue to exist in Christian ministry. How to be prophetic without being harsh or implying that one is above the sins of others. How to get people to change their behavior to conform to the gospel when they think too highly of themselves. There is no easy answer, as this passage reveals. But one called to minister in the church must ever strive to do it; calling people to repentance is part of the task.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 193-194.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase is adopted from “Spare the rod; spoil the child.” The biblical basis for this cliché is Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; and 29:15.

<sup>4</sup> Fee writes, “The irony is devastating: How they perceive themselves, masterfully overstated in vv. 8 and 10, is undoubtedly the way they think *he* ought to be. But the way he actually is, set forth in the rhetoric of vv. 11-13, is the way *they* all ought to be.” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 165.

<sup>5</sup> See also Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2005 ed.

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 40.

<sup>6</sup> One-upmanship is the systematic and conscious practice of making one’s associates feel inferior and thereby gaining the status of being “one-up” on them. The term originated as the title of a book by Stephen Potter, a follow-up to the *Gamesmanship* and *Lifemanship* titles in his series of tongue-in-cheek, self-help books, and film and television derivatives that teach various “ploys” to achieve this. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-upmanship>.

<sup>7</sup> This phrase is hotly disputed in the commentaries. Yet, it seems clear the view that takes this to mean the OT Scriptures is correct. This verbal form is the perfect passive indicative of *grapho*, a form that Paul frequently uses to introduce OT quotations. (This same form is found, e.g., in 1 Cor 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19). Paul uses the verb *gegraptai* (“it is written”) 30 times, excluding, 1 Cor 4:6, to introduce citations from Scripture and never anything else. Insofar as Paul constantly drew the attention of his audience to the Scriptures, and since he has been using several Scriptures in his discussion of the problem of divisions in the church (in sequence, Isa 29:14; Jer 9:24; Isa 64:4; 40:13; Job 5:13; Ps 94:11), he is calling on his readers here to reflect on all of these Scriptures. If they do nothing more than keep these texts in mind, they will not choose favorites—Paul, Apollos, Peter, and so forth. See Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, awaiting publication, 94-95 and David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 135

<sup>8</sup> Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 69.

<sup>9</sup> The verb Paul uses here for “become arrogant” (*phusioom*) is a favorite in this letter (see 1 Cor 4:18-19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; cf. 2 Cor 2:18, the only other occurrence in the NT).

<sup>10</sup> See also Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 98.

<sup>11</sup> Thiselton writes, “Normally meaning satiated, fed-to-the-full, glutted, applying to the ‘bloated’ self-important ‘people of the Spirit’ the farmyard metaphor of overfed animals.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). The only other occurrence of this word in the NT occurs in Acts 27:38.

<sup>12</sup> The Corinthians aren’t hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt 5:6). Nor are they willing to share their spiritual father’s self-assessment, “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect...” (Phil 3:12).

<sup>13</sup> We should note here that in his second letter to the Corinthians Paul dwells at great length on the topic of his suffering. It becomes a critical part in his argument for the genuineness of his apostleship in contrast to the opponents in Corinth, who were apparently arguing that Paul’s suffering proved that he could *not* be a chosen servant of God. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 101.

<sup>14</sup> The word *parakaleo* (“conciliate”) has a wide variety of meanings in the NT. It can mean “to urge or exhort” (1 Cor 16:15), “to appeal” (1 Cor 1:10), “to encourage” (1 Thess 2:12; 4:18), or “to plead” (Phil 4:2). Rather than simply meaning “to answer kindly” (NIV), the verb perhaps suggests that when Paul was defamed, he would appeal to his slanderers to cease and desist and to follow Christ instead. From what we read and know about Paul, he never lost an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus (cf. Acts 16:25-34; Phil 1:12-14). Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,”

<sup>15</sup> Paul may have had the Roman games in mind here, specifically the battles between condemned criminals and wild beasts in the amphitheaters. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971), 50.

Another view is that Paul was thinking of the Roman triumph, a figure that he developed more fully elsewhere (2 Cor 2:14). At the end of that procession came the captives of war who would die in the arena. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 174-75.

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<sup>16</sup> May refer to beatings at the hands of the mob or by the authorities or to various harassments physical or spiritual (cf. 2 Cor 12:7).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jesus words in Matt 8:28; Luke 9:58.

<sup>18</sup> The Greeks despised people who did manual labor, as Paul had done in Corinth (cf. 9:4-18; Acts 18:3, 5; 2 Cor. 11:9; 12:13-17); they regarded it as the work of slaves. Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 81.

<sup>19</sup> Thiselton says that the meaning is “scum,” filthy residue which clings to the surface of a vessel. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*,

<sup>20</sup> This quote likely arose from an Amish church leader who was quoted in *Christianity Today*.

<sup>21</sup> Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 2005 ed., 42.

<sup>22</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 145.

<sup>23</sup> The word for “warn” or “admonish” (*noutheteom*) is found in the NT only on the lips of (Acts 20:31) or from the pen of Paul (he uses the verb seven times and the noun *nouthesia*, three times).

<sup>24</sup> Blomberg writes, “The paternal imagery of verses 14-21 reappears in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 but is balanced in that context by corresponding maternal imagery (v. 7). So the point of Paul’s ‘fathering’ the Corinthians has little to do with his gender but much to do with the authority and love exercised over their children by godly *parents* of either gender.” Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 96.

<sup>25</sup> One of the main tasks of a father with his children is to bring them up in the “instruction” (*nouthesia*) of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

<sup>26</sup> See Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> The phrase “I exhort you” (*parakalo...humas*) repeats the beginning exhortation in 1 Cor 1:10 and bundles 1:10-4:21 into a unit. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 146.

<sup>28</sup> What pastor today would dare to stand in front of his congregation and suggest that they use him as a model for how to live a godly Christian life? Yet Paul does not hesitate to do precisely that, both here and elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7, 9). In a sense, of course, this is to be expected. Many of these Corinthians had just come out of paganism, and the Christian way of life is more caught than taught. So it was inevitable that these people would look to Paul, their father, as an example. Moreover, since the NT had not yet been written, believers did not have written guidelines by which to conduct their new life in Christ. Even more important, Paul felt convinced that his own life was modeled on Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:1), so that by imitating him they were ultimately using Christ as their model and example. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 104.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 1-9* (Kent, England, 1998), 62.

<sup>30</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 147.

<sup>31</sup> Dave Branon, Our Daily Bread: <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-07-11-05.shtml>.

<sup>32</sup> Constable writes, “Several factors point to the probability that Timothy had already departed from Ephesus but had not yet arrived in Corinth when Paul wrote this epistle (cf. Acts 19:22). One of these is Paul’s lack of reference to Timothy in this epistle’s salutation. A second is the tense of the verb translated ‘have sent’ (NASB) or ‘am sending’ (NIV; *epemsa*, aorist tense). A third is Paul’s later reference to Timothy (16:10-11). Timothy was, of course, one of Paul’s closest and most trusted fellow workers.” Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy was someone whom Paul had apparently personally led to the Lord (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2) while he was in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-18; 16:1-3).

<sup>34</sup> Paul did plan to return to Corinth if God allowed him to do so. Evidently he was not able to return for some time. In 2 Corinthians he responded to criticism from within the church to the effect that he had promised to come but did not (2 Cor 1:15-18).

<sup>35</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 148.

<sup>36</sup> Steve Zeisler, “The Peril of Puffed-Up Christianity”: <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4063.html>.

<sup>37</sup> The word “rod” (*rabdos*) occurs in Prov 22:15 as the “rod” a parent might use to correct a recalcitrant child.

<sup>38</sup> The last word of the sentence in 4:21 is “gentleness” (*praütemis*). Paul seems to do this for emphasis.