

Text: 1 Co 4.6-21

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

I. Introduction (1.1-9)**II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)****A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)**

¹ Cor 1.11 For I have been **informed** concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

Divisions Revealed (10-12)**Paul's Opening Apologetic (13-17)****The Gospel vs. Wisdom (1.18-2.5)**

Section 1: the cross vs. human wisdom (18-25)

Section 2: the world's view of believers (26-31)

Section 3: the powerful effect of Paul's preaching (2.1-5)

The Spirit and God's wisdom (2.6-16)**Fleshly Immaturity and God's Church Building Program (3.1-17)****Change of Mind and Servants of Christ (3.18-4.6)**

Today: **Conclusion**

Review:

1. Party spirit (1.10-12)
2. Apostolic humility (1.13-17)
3. Heart of confusion — a Greek mindset (1.18-2.5)
4. Superiority of God's wisdom (2.6-16)
5. The fleshly mind shows itself by the party spirit (3.1-8)
6. The value of each worker God will reveal (3.9-17)
7. The call to change their mind (3.18-23)
8. The correct viewpoint of leaders: servants of Christ (4.1-6)

Conclusion

The rebuke of arrogance (6-7)

Interpreting the term “figuratively applied” — two options

1. Paul and Apollos (and Peter and Christ) are stand-ins for the real local party leaders Paul does not name
2. The figures about the role of leaders (farmers, builders, servants, stewards) are successively applied to Apollos and Paul

Good arguments on both sides: but what does the text show is the heart of the issue in Corinth? (6)

1. They overstated the roles of apostolic leaders
2. They became arrogant against one another

What is the effect of arrogance within a church assembly? **Division, attitudes of superiority, condescension**

What makes arrogance so foolish? (7) **No one has anything except by God’s gracious gift, nothing to boast about**

The rebuke by sarcasm (8-13)

In this section, Paul opens with sarcasm to drive his points home.

What image does Paul say the Corinthians have achieved and what does it mean? (8)

They were already come to their complete stature of kings (not really) — if they had, the second coming would have occurred already

In v. 9 Paul uses language that implies a spectacle in a Roman arena or as a captive at the end of a triumphal parade. What was the destiny of the gladiator or captive in such displays? **Death**

What sarcastic contrasts does Paul make between the leaders and the Corinthians? (10)

1. **We are fools, you are prudent**
2. **We are weak, you are strong**
3. **We are without honor, you are distinguished**

In vv. 11-13 Paul describes the real experiences of these leaders whom the Corinthians were making into competing philosophers. What does Paul mean by making this description? **They saw themselves as willing to suffer any indignity for the church, while the Corinthians were arrogantly contesting over them**

The Conclusion (14-21)

Paul does not write to humiliate, but as a father rebuking wayward children. He reminds them of their special relationship: without Paul they would not be Christians, they would never have heard of Peter, Apollos, or Christ. As their spiritual father, what attitude does he want the Corinthians to adopt? (14-16) **The attitude of humility**

Why was Paul sending Timothy to them? (17) **Timothy would put them in mind of Paul's ways (and as an example of humble conduct himself)**

Some of the Corinthians were taking liberties about Paul since they assumed they would not see him again. Paul nonetheless insists that he would return to visit them again. This would be a time to examine who was the real authority among them. (19-21)

What two concepts are contrasted in this conclusion? **Words and Power**

What did Paul possess among them (and in the church at large) that they did not have? **Real authority**

“In sum, the question is not will Paul come, but how he will come to them. Paul threatens the possibility of discipline by the “whip” (NIV), which depicts reproof and correction. Will Paul have to come as a disciplining father, or can he come as he prefers, in a spirit of love and humility?”¹

As we conclude this section, what would say is God's attitude towards division over personalities in the church? **Various answers**

¹ Mark Edward Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 2014), 127.