**“Not a Just Talk”**

*Being the Church –* 1st Corinthians 4

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Raphael Giglio 1-26-22

Paul wrote the letter while he was in Ephesus to “the Church” he planted in Corinth, addressing some of the problems reported to him about what was happening back in Corinth.

This is an authoritative letter to “The Church”. “Church” is a translation of the Greek word “*ekklesia”*, which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.” In our study of “Being the Church” we can learn from this letter and address the same issues we see in our church.

**Last week;**

Paul continued his encouragement, *but also admonishment* to the Church in Corinth.

Noting that the Corinthians were still very immature, and Paul was directly making that known,

**“1a**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly…, **3b**are you not worldly? Are you not acting like *mere humans*?

“Mere Humans” means that they were acting like people who did not live by the Spirit. They were merely operating in the resources of their soul and flesh, NOT their Heart and spirit.

The Corinthians were doing this because they were not living by the Spirit.

Their jealousy, their quarrelling, their divisiveness was not of the spirit, it was of the flesh, and was destroying the church.

**1 Cor. 4**This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. **2**Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. **3**I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. **4**My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. **5**Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

**6**Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. **7**For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

**8**Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! **9**For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. **10**We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! **11**To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. **12**We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; **13**when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

**[ break ]**

**14**I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. **15**Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16**Therefore I urge you to imitate me. **17**For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

**18**Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. **19**But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. **20**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. **21**What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

***(Review parts in NLT****, good for reading the general message and intent of the epistle, not necessarily for word study);*

**4**So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries. **2**Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. **3**As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don’t even trust my own judgment on this point. **4**My conscience is clear, but that doesn’t prove I’m right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

**>> 6**Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I’ve been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won’t be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. **7**For what gives you the right to make such a judgment?

V 1-7: Don’t compare and make judgments,

1. We can’t respond to constant criticisms and answer every one of our critics, we must answer to God.

Some people will love what you say, others will hate it.

* 1. Flattery and criticism can both be false indicators.

*(Trip advisor reviews, try the 2-star and 4-star review for most accurate comments, the one star or 5-star are usually more extreme.)*

* 1. Ministry is not an “approval ratings game”, texts, emails, pats on the back, “likes” on face book, book sales twitter posts. That’s not the goal.
  2. We must be true to what we believe is God’s intention for us and those we are trying to reach, *regardless* of how popular our choices are.
  3. Paul says: V3*“as for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don’t even trust my own judgment on this point.****4****My conscience is clear, but that doesn’t prove I’m right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.”*
  4. You’ll know if you accomplished what He’s asked you to do, and if you’ve done it well. It’s nice to have compliments from those who’ve examined your work, but they are not the judge*. “It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.”*

1. *“Don’t be proud of your leaders at the expense of another*” v6

Preaching rotation should never be like *American Idol* or a “popularity contest”.

*[ Example: Story of God and His People – different pastor every other week”]*

* 1. Paul did not “put down” Apollos he but praised him *even though* others were exalting him above Paul.
     + ***Apollos*** - an Alexandrian Jew who became a Christian missionary, described as eloquent and knowledgeable of Scripture; he preached and interacted with some of Paul's associates in Corinth. Paul calls him a "brother" and refers to himself, Apollos, and Cephas/Peter collectively as "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.
  2. *6“Do not go beyond what is written.”* Paul explains that we can only know God's mind to the extent He's revealed it in His word (1 Cor. 4:6). Anything added, particularly that which is different than God’s Word is of little or no value.

*(I was asked to evaluate some of the new speakers being considered for a large ministry. I was blessed by those who carefully and powerfully handled and taught the word of God, but was very unimpressed with those who use little pieces of scripture to try to propagate their own opinion about something or push an agenda of some sort.)*

Paul and Apollos were simply teaching, explaining and sometimes interpreting what was written in the Tanakh, (the OT) not adding anything peripheral or contrary.

* 1. Everything we as Pastors offer you *that is of any value*, is a GIFT from God *(not invented by us)* (v7) so there is no reason for you *(or us)* to boast in it.

*IF* it speaks to your heart or impacts you powerfully, it’s simply God’s word to you, delivered or carried by us.

* + - *Example: (Bringing a fancy cake to a Potluck…)*

*Verse 15-17*

**15**“For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. **16**So I urge you to imitate me.

**17**That’s why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.”

Paul is not being proud or arrogant when he says (V16) *“So I urge you to imitate me.”,* *(He also opens Chapter 11 with the same message. 1st Cor. 11:1 “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” ),* it is actually a very sacrificial thing to offer yourself in this way, He invites them to watch him, evaluate him and follow him as he lives for Christ. He is laying down his life as an example to follow.

He was demonstrating for them that the *life in Christ CAN be done*. He sent them Timothy, who was an excellent example of a Student who learned from Paul. If Timothy can do it, they can too.

*V. 19-20*

19 “But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I’ll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God’s power. 20For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power.”  <end>

Apparently some in the church have made themselves out to be teachers, assuming some level of authority, giving “*pretentious speeches”.* Likely those who want to cultivate a following of their own from within the church.

In the ancient Greek world, people followed Philosophers. They were equivalent to the modern-day pop stars or Social-Media influencers. Much like their ancient philosophers; *Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle* who lived centuries before, people within the church of Corinth were trying to promote themselves and get as many “likes”, “followers”, and “subscribers” as they could. They would talk about God and Jesus and Apollos and Paul and try to cultivate their own following, even if it meant criticizing the leaders and dividing the church.

Paul warns that he will find out who these people are, and discipline them when he comes.

His final statement is:

***“20For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power!”***

***Not just talk…***

***It’s LIVING by God’s Power!***

* Anyone can quote the Bible.
* Anyone can give a sermon.
* Anyone can talk about God and Jesus.
* But it is not always representative of the Kingdom of God.
* The Kingdom of God is LIVING by GOD’S POWER.

*[example: Ted Talks. These are 20-minute online lectures, or “sermonettes” by famous wealthy or Highly Educated Secular people (Bill Gates, Cameron Russel, Sir Ken Robinson, etc.), where they preach about a topic or issue to an enthusiastic adoring crowd. Usually the talks are about Technology, Entertainment, or Design (T.E.D.) but they almost always touch on Social issues as well.*

*Some of them are inspiring, some are educational, most are cringe-worthy. They are usually very well-articulated and entertaining but they “just a lot of talk” (i.e. Ted Talk).]*

***But “the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power!”***

There is a difference.

When we speak the word from a heart that is submitted to God’s authority and operating through the power of His Holy Spirit and not our own will, we are living in God’s power.

When we’re living in God’s power we see it bring about God’s blessings in every area of our life, our relationships, our work, our ministry and especially our devotion to Him. It’s much more than just the words that come out of our mouths.

“*The Word of God will never return void”* (Is. 55:11), even from the most unlikely or unworthy sources. *However,* the power of God only rests upon those who operate in the Spirit of God.

This was made very evident in a dramatic way in the town of Ephesus (the place Paul was writing this letter from). Some unbelievers were trying to use “*Jesus-Talk*” to drive out evil spirits on their own, and because it was all talk and no power – it backfired.

**Acts 19:11-16 “**God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, **12**so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

**13**Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”

**14**Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. **15**One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” **16**Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”

When we say or do anything “In Jesus Name”, it does not mean simply using the word J-E-S-U-S for *our own* purposes. (This is what the 3rd commandment describes as “*taking the Lord’s name in vain*”).

When we speak or pray “in Jesus’ name”, it means we are aligned and submitted with His will, His purposes and His Spirit.

The Kingdom of God is the same thing. It’s not just talk. It’s living lives that are aligned and submitted to His will, seeking His purposes and operating in His Spirit.

So when we speak His word, it’s not just “Talk”, it’s life-changing power that results in spiritual transformation to others, and righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit for us!

**Romans 14:17**  “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, [or talk] but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,”

* + Righteousness – not by our works but by Jesus’ blood.
  + Peace – not by the *absence* of trouble, but by the *presence* of the Prince of Peace in our lives.
  + Joy in the Holy Spirit – just one aspect of the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

The Church is the representation of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

**“Being the Church” means more than just “talk”:**

**It means; Living by the *Spirit of God,***

**walking in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,**

**and experiencing the *Kingdom of God,***

**here on earth just as it is in heaven.**

***“Let’s make it our priority to Live in His Spirit and experience His Kingdom.”***