

Sizing up a preacher

A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under [Bible Studies](#) in the Bible Study Aids section. A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file connected to the internet. Just use your web browser's back arrow or the taskbar to return to the lesson material.

Quick Links to the Study

I. [Context](#)

- a. [Historical](#)
- b. [Literary](#)

II. [Message](#)

- a. [Sizing up preachers, vv. 1-5](#)
- b. [How to size them up right, vv. 6-13](#)
- c. [Preacher's rights, vv. 14-21](#)

Do you like preachers? In our day, some people do, but others despise them. Why do you like them? Or despise them? What criteria do you use to size them up as good or bad ministers? Do they come on too strong? Or, too weak? Do they have a right to "preach" at you?

American culture these days has a love / hate attitude toward Christian ministers. Comedians love to caricature them as hypocritical fools. And yet a former Baptist pastor is a leading presidential candidate for the GOP. The megachurch pastor is often guilty of living off multi-million dollar salaries, while small rural church pastor works a "secular" job forty or more hours each week just to be able to pastor a small group of people that he cares for deeply. TV preachers are notorious for being scam artists bulking people out of their money with phoney promises of material wealth and "miraculous" healings.

The relationship of a pastor to his congregation is a complex one. In some ways it is like a marriage. In other ways it's like running a large corporation with a few paid workers and with most of the work force as volunteers the preacher must keep motivated. In small churches, he / she is a "jack of all trades" including janitor, pastor, preacher, musician, education expert, counselor et als. This in addition to trying to be a good parent and spouse.

At Corinth in the early 50s, newly formed house churches under the leadership of numerous individuals were often squabbling over their "favorite" preacher, and the one whom they thought best represented the gospel. Opinions such as "I like Paul best"; "No, I think Apollos is a better preacher"; "Well I think we should just all hold up Christ and forget the others" -- these opinions were circulating among the house church groups and causing division and tension in the larger Christian community. 1 Corinthians 1-4 was written largely to address such nonsense and to insist that the believers come to see who ministers are under God, and then to judge them according to their faithfulness in God's calling to ministry. Personality, preaching style, approachability etc. are rejected as legitimate criteria for sizing up a preacher.



I. Context

[Previous studies](#) in 1 Corinthians that are posted at Cranfordville will provide much of the information for the background analysis. New material will supplement this as it is relevant to our passage.

a. Historical

External History.

Paul's letter to the Christian community at the ancient city of Corinth represents a significant part of his writing ministry. Some irony exists concerning this community, and Paul's correspondence and personal ministry to them. First Corinthians reveals a community riveted by factions, extreme moral problems and theological assertions that border on the bizarre. Yet, for many Christian groups today, Corinth represents the model church, primarily because of the practice of speaking in tongues. Paul's writing ministry was intended as a substitute for his personal presence. And it was intended to answer questions and address some of these problems that had arisen in the various house church groups over this Greek seaport city.

The ongoing history of Christianity in this Greek city reflects a tradition of problems that continued for a long, long time after Paul led in the establishment of Christianity there during the middle 50s of the first century. A fascinating letter to the church at Corinth came almost half a century after Paul's ministry from the spiritual leader in Rome. [First Clement](#) helps one see some of this problematic history decades after Paul. By AD 96, when 1 Clement was written, the tone of Christian experience had profoundly changed. Political language carried the day along with an intense demand for absolute obedience to those in authority. But through all this smoke screen from Clement of Rome, one can trace out a community at Corinth still plagued with problems and struggles. In some ways this is helpful to us, in that it led to Paul putting in writing his thoughts on a number of important issues in the Christian experience, even though not all the problems would be solved.

The external history of first Corinthians focuses upon the "reporter" questions about the composition



of First Corinthians. Who wrote it? When was it written? Where was it written? To whom was it written? Why was it written? et al. In my reconstruction of [Paul's ministry to the Corinthians](#) at cranfordville.com, this letter comes as the third point of contact with the Corinthians. The first letter is tentative and less certain. This has important bearing on the relevancy of 4:1-21. The implication of the reference in 5:9, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons...", alerts us to the existence of some serious problems in the Christian community there.

Paul most likely dictated the contents of the letter to a writing secretary and then added the final Conclusio in his own hand writing as a verification of the contents to the Corinthian readers, as is implied in 16:21 where he says, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand." Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of this person, as we do regarding Romans where Tertius identifies himself in 16:22 with the statement, "I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord."

The first readers of this letter were in the ancient seaport town of Corinth, as is described in the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*:

An important city controlling the isthmus connecting mainland Greece and the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Although its "golden age" was five centuries before Paul's visit, Corinth had enjoyed a return to prominence and a resurgence of building during the 1st century

A.D.

Corinth had a leading role in the uniting of the Greek city-states into the world-wide empire of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander. Two centuries later Corinth was a leader in the failed Achaean League's attempt to stop Roman expansion in Greece. Severely damaged and punished in 146 B.C. in the war with Rome, Corinth was restored in 44 to economic and political prominence by Julius Caesar and in 27 became the provincial capital. New colonists from many areas joined locals seeking their fortune in this commercial center.

An important city for Roman government as the capital of Achaia, Corinth was the residence of the Roman governor (before whom Paul appeared in A.D. 51 when Lucius Junius Gallio was governor). In Roman Corinth, old temples were restored and enlarged, new shops and markets built, new water supplies developed, and many public buildings added (including three governmental buildings and an amphitheater seating perhaps 14 thousand). In the 1st century Corinth's public marketplace (forum) was larger than any in Rome. All these improvements suggest that when Paul visited Corinth ca. 50 it was the most beautiful, modern, and industrious city of its size in Greece. The well-traveled Aristides commented that if beauty contests were held among cities, as reportedly was done among goddesses, Corinth would rank with Aphrodite (i.e., first).

This flourishing economic life also contained a mixture of religious corruption, generated largely by the fertility based worship of the goddess Aphrodite. S.J. Hafemann ("Corinthians, Letters to the," *Dictionary of Paul and His letters*) summarizes:

As a wealthy hub for commerce and seafarers, Greek Corinth was evidently renowned for its vice, especially its sexual corruption, and for its many religious temples and rites. Aristophanes (c. 450–385 B.C.) even coined the term *korinthiazesthai* ("to act like a Corinthian," i.e., "to commit fornication") in view of the city's reputation. Plato used the term "Corinthian girl" as an euphemism for a prostitute (Murphy-O'Connor, 56). And although its historical accuracy is disputed, Strabo's account of 1,000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite does reflect the city's image, in which the many temples played their own role in the immoral tenor of its life (cf. Strabo *Geog.* 8.6.20, first written in 7 B.C. and revised slightly in A.D. 18).

Thus into the mixture and immoral atmosphere came the gospel message, preached by Paul and others. The blossoming community of faith in the various house churches struggled to cope with both coming out of and at the same time trying to live within such an atmosphere as faithful Christians.

1 Corinthians contains many fascinating aspects.

Even though our text comes from the document titled 1 Corinthians, this was not the first letter that Paul wrote to the Christian community at Corinth. It was his second letter. All together Paul dictated at least four separate letters to this group of believers and we have only two of them preserved in our New Testament. Thus it becomes helpful to survey Paul's relationship with the believers in the ancient city of Corinth. At [Cranfordville](#) I have an outline summary of the points of that relationship, which is reproduced here:

1. Initial Ministry

established the church on the second missionary journey

AD 50-51

Sources: Acts 18:1-17; 1 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1:13-17; 2 Thess. 3:1-5; 1 Cor. 3:5-10; 11:2, 23, 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:7-9

2. Prior Letter

written before 1 Corinthians, now lost

may be partially contained in 2 Cor. 6:14-71

AD 52 (?)

Sources: 1 Cor. 5:9

3. 1 Corinthians

written from Ephesus while on third missionary journey & carried to Corinth by Timothy

to respond to questions from the household of Chloe (chaps 1-6) and the Corinthian delegation (chaps 7-16)

AD 54-55 (spring time)

4. Painful Visit

purpose: to try to correct ongoing problems in the church

AD 55

Sources: 2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1,2

5. Sorrowful Letter

written from Ephesus after return from Corinth

possibly contained partially in 2 Cor. 10-13, but most likely lost

AD 55

Sources: 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8

6. 2 Corinthians

written from Macedonia after leaving Ephesus on third missionary journey

prompted by joyous report from Titus regarding the relief offering etc.

AD 56 (?) possibly only containing chaps 1-9, if 10-13 are a part of the 'sorrowful letter'

7. Third Visit to Corinth

AD 57

Sources: Acts 20:1-3

From just a quick glance at the above outline, one can easily tell that Paul's relationship with the believers at Corinth is complex and quite involved. Also evident from this is the very summary nature of



Lechaion Road

Luke's depiction in the book of Acts. If our only source of information was Acts, we would have just points 1 and 7. If Paul's writings were our only source, point 7 would not show up. Plus, an overview perspective to serve as a conceptual framework would be much more difficult to construct. Our letter, called 1 Corinthians, comes then after Paul's initial ministry on the second missionary journey in the early 50s. When he arrives at Ephesus on the third missionary journey in the mid-50s for the lengthy two plus year stay there, he is forced by troubles in the Corinthian church to spend time and energy trying to help the Corinthians get on top of numerous problems. During that Ephesian ministry, he wrote three letters and made one trip to Corinth (Luke doesn't mention this one in Acts). Two dynamics emerge. (1) The Corinthian believers, although growing in number, especially in house-church groups, developed a host of serious problems, both morally and theologically. This demanded increasing amounts of time and energy from Paul. (2) Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church became increasingly strained, at one point, so bad that he had to send Titus to try to work out the strained relationships, instead of going himself. The nature of that strained relationship is not entirely clear, but from 2 Corinthians (cf. chaps 10-13) it centered on a serious questioning by the Corinthians of Paul's claim to being an apostle. From all indications this was not based on the Judaizing challenge to his apostleship, like at Galatia (cf., Gal. 1-2). The net impact was that the Corinthian church became one of those "troubling making" congregations that had some kind of internal conflict going on constantly. Ironically, when Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians at the close of the first century ([1 Clement](#)) the church was still a source of ongoing problems, some 50 years later.

1 Corinthians comes in the early stages of Paul's lengthy ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey and was prompted by two things: (1) a report by members of the household of Chloe about problems [chaps 1-6, cf. [1:11](#)], and (2) a list of questions sent to Paul by the Corinthians wanting his feedback [chaps 7-16, cf. [7:1](#)]. When these two things are added together, one has a long list of serious matters plaguing the Corinthian church. These range from divisions centered over a "favorite preacher" (chap. 1) to a member living in an incestuous relationship with his birth mother (chap. 5) to some members questioning the resurrection of Christ (chap. 15). Thus, since Paul could not at that time make another trip from Ephesus to Corinth to address these issues personally, he did the next best thing -- he wrote them a letter giving his perspective. This is not a church that a young, inexperienced pastor should want to tackle! What I find even more curious is that this church, probably the most problem plagued church in all of Paul's ministry, is most often held up as the example for modern churches to emulate! As a pastor, I prayed that God would never call me to pastor a church like the one at Corinth!

That this letter called 1 Corinthians was the product of the apostle Paul is not questioned by virtually any biblical scholar, even by the most radical ones over the past 200 years. That this letter was dictated by Paul to a writing secretary is confirmed by his statement in 16:21, "[I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand](#)" (NRSV). From a previous study we learned that a statement like this, very typical in ancient formal letters, indicated that the official sender of the letter, as indicated in the Adscriptio of the letter (cf. 1:1), has taken pen in hand to write in his own handwriting at least a part of, if not the entire, Conclusio of the letter as a verification that the contents of the letter represent his thoughts, even though written in another's handwriting. Unfortunately, that person is not named here, like in Romans and 1 Peter.

Internal History. The time and place markers inside chapter four are limited. Since chapter four is largely a continuation of the issues in chapters two and three, the historical situation identified there also applies to chapter four. The division over preferred preachers was causing serious trouble in the Christian community and Paul attempted to address it in a lengthy presentation. At the very end of chapter four he mentions the likelihood of coming to Corinth very quickly. Once Timothy had carried the letter to Corinth and had time to report back to him at Ephesus.

sus, Paul anticipated that he would make a trip to Corinth. Although this trip is not mentioned in either Acts or the existing Corinthian correspondence, it can be gleaned from a reconstruction of Paul's contacts with the Corinthians through personal visits and

letters by careful analysis of the data inside Acts and 1-2 Corinthians. See my [Reconstruction of Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians](#) at Cranfordville for details.

b. Literary

Genre. The literary form, that is, the **genre**, is obviously an ancient letter, and is written in the style of ancient, not modern, letters. [1 Corinthians](#) has the traditional

Praescriptio (1:1-3),
Proem (1:4-9),
Body (1:10-16:18), and
Conclusio (16:19-24).

The Body of the letter revolves around two parts. The report of the situation at the church that the household of Chloe brought to Paul in Ephesus is found in chapters 1-6. Then Paul's response to a letter from the church itself with several questions occupies chapters 7-16. The specific questions posed to Paul by the church can be identified with considerable certainty through Paul introducing his responses with the phrase "now concerning the" (**peri; de;....**) beginning in 7:1. His response to the report from Chloe's servants in chapters one through six centers on two key issues: 1) divisions within the Christian community which Paul describes as **ejri de~ ejn uhi n** (cf. 1:11, 1:10-4:21), and 2) various kinds of immoral actions taking place among members of the church (5:1-6:20), which Paul labeled **ejn uhi n pornei a**.

Literary Context. The immediate literary setting of our passage comes in the first segment of the letter Body. It stands as an important part of the first major part dealing with matters of unity and division (1:10-4:21). The divisiveness in the community centered in difference of opinion about the preference for one leader over another in terms of those missionaries who had passed through the city giving instruction to the members of the Christian community, such as Paul, Peter, Apollos etc. No indication points to a division over local leadership. Nothing seems to indicate that this preference emphasized doctrinal differences, at least, that gained from the teaching

of these leaders. But there may have been some difference of belief developed inside these groups and then attributed back to these leaders. Instead, it appears to have mostly been a preference over the style of teaching of these leaders, and perhaps their different personalities.

What ever the precise nature of the problem, it was causing what Paul labeled as **ejri de~** in the Christian community (1:11). By implication they were **ejneri zon** [splitting into] Christ (cf. 1:13). The basic label that Paul uses, **ejri ~**, goes beyond difference of opinion that can be discussed and respected. The Louw-Nida Greek-English Lexicon (#39.22) defines it at the most intense level of meaning as **"conflict resulting from rivalry and discord."** At a milder



level of intensity (#33.447) both the noun *ejri* ~ and the verb *ejri zw* “express differences of opinion, with at least some measure of antagonism or hostility.” Paul’s subsequent depiction of the situation in Corinth, 1:10-2:16, favors the more intense level of meaning. The Corinthians’ problems centered on the mistake of focusing on personalities and preaching styles of individuals, and thus losing sight of the more profound spiritual dynamics present in the presentation of the gospel message. In chapters three and four of Paul’s discussing this issue, he seeks to point the Corinthians away from the “personality cult” tendency and to these deeper spiritual realities. Hearing and responding to the gospel must not

rest on who the messenger is, and how persuasive he is in presenting the message. For Paul, such an attitude merited one of his infamous *mh; genoio* to responses; “Hell no!,” as Clarence Jordan translates them in his Cotton Patch translation. This captures the tone better than even the King James Version’s rendering of it as “Heaven forbid!”

To size up a preacher on such a basis reflects spiritual carnality and profound lack of insight about who the gospel messenger is in God’s eyes. In chapter four, Paul seeks to lay down the deeper spiritual truths about who God’s messenger is, and how believers can legitimately size up a preacher using the same guidelines that God uses.

II. Message

Literary Structure. The very different nature of the syntax of the Greek text in chapter four from everything before and after it sets off the material in distinctive ways. The organizing of the foundational thoughts can be seen in the use of a lead-in statement that is then followed by justification and / or amplification. Three of these can be identified in verses 1, 6, and 14. In the larger internet version of this study, the [Block](#) and [Semantic](#) Diagrams along with the [Summary of the Rhetorical Structure](#) of the Greek text make this very clear. Paul begins by laying down a basic criteria of evaluation: faithfulness as a servant and as a steward (vv. 1-5). He then moves to underscoring a new perspective of evaluation: how much they have benefited from the ministry of preachers (vv. 6-13). He concludes with an emphasis upon the rights of preachers to admonish and critique believers as legitimate ministry (vv. 14-21).

a. Sizing up preachers, vv. 1-5



Greek NT	NASB	NRSV	NLT
<p>40l Outw- hfm~ logizesqw ahqrwpw- w~ uphreta- Cristou` kai; oikononou~ musthriwn qeou. 402 wpe loipon zhteitai ej toi~ oikon- onoi~, iha pistov ti- eufeqh~ 403 ejmoi; de; eij ejlaviston ejtin, iha ufjuhwn ajakriqwh~ upo; ajqrwpinh~ htera~: aj l jouje; ejnauton aja- krinw. 404 oujlengar ej nautw/sunoida, aj l jouk ej toutw/dedikaiwnai, oj</p>	<p>1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. 3 But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. 4 For I am conscious of nothing against my-</p>	<p>1 Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. 4 I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who</p>	<p>1 So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s secrets. 2 Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. 3 What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone else thinks. I don’t even trust my own judgment on this point. 4 My conscience is clear, but that</p>

de;ajakriwn me kuriov
ejstin. 4ō wste nh;pro;
kairou ti krinete efw a]
n e[qh/okurio~, o[kai;
fwtisei ta; krupta; tou
skotou~ kai;fanerwsei
ta; boula; twñkardiwn:
kai;tote oJepaino~ gen-
hsetai ekastw apo; tou
geou.

Notes:

As illustrated in the [Semantic Diagram of the Greek text](#), verses 1-5 begins with a lead statement that sets the tone for the subsequent set of statements. Paul admonishes his Corinthian readers to “think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.” In the context of chapter three, “us” refers to Paul, Peter, and Apollos, as 3:22 makes clear. These were the traveling missionaries who had passed through Corinth to minister to the believers and to help them understand the Christian faith and how to live pleasingly before God. It was from

self, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. 5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.

judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.



isn’t what matters. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide. 5 So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether or not someone is faithful. When the Lord comes, he will bring our deepest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. And then God will give to everyone whatever praise is due.

now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4 For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human?

Their taking what each of the Christian leaders had taught them and using it to claim superior spiritual understanding reflected how little they actually understood from the men. Their focus was on the preacher and not his message. Paul saw this as severely misplaced values.

Paul insisted that these leaders be viewed in two ways: servants of Christ (**uphreta~ Cristou**) and stewards of God’s mysteries (**oikonou~ musthriwn geou**).

The terms translated as servants and stewards have a wide range of meanings in different non-religious uses. His use of court room language with the verb **logizomai** suggests a judicial proceeding in which a slave was being judged on how well he had managed the affairs of his master, **okurio~**. Additionally, his reference to being judged “by a human court” (**upo; ajqrwpinh~ htera~**) in verse 3 lends further support for this understanding.

In the ancient Roman world, bright slaves were often given superior education and training. They would then be placed in managerial positions with the responsibility of running the estate of the master. It was a special position of honor, but more than that it was a huge responsibility with very exacting terms of accountability. In some of the large aristocratic estates in the first century world this responsibility included numerous such positions -- managing the fields, supervising the operation of the home etc. -- and entailed supervision of hundreds of other slaves.



this group of preachers that the Corinthians were splitting themselves into pockets of loyalists over. In the name of their favorite preacher for this group, they were becoming spiritual elitists and claiming superior knowledge of the gospel to the other groups. In so doing they reflected an appalling spiritual immaturity that

Paul soundly condemns ([1 Cor. 3:1-5](#)):

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even

These administrators did the financial planning and accounting, the personnel supervision, oversaw the daily operations of the estate, among other duties.

Against this backdrop, the Corinthians had focused on the honor side and had neglected the obligation side of such positions, as these terms were applied religiously to Paul, Peter, Apollos et als. Paul called the Corinthians back to the obligation side, and later in vv. 8-13 will burst the falsely conceived honor perspective.

As servants these men answered to only one person, their master. In the spiritual application of the term, these missionaries were accountable only to Christ, since they stood as **uphreta~ Cristou**. Their "estate" as missionary servants was the mysteries of God (**oikonomou~ musthriwn qeou**). They were commissioned to manage the mysteries of God. C.D.F. Moule ("Mystery," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) provides this very helpful overview of the concept of mystery as it is used in the NT:

That closely connected (by a strange paradox) with REVELATION--viz., a divine plan, concealed from all except the recipients of revelation, or concealed until God's good time; or, in other words, a divine secret indeed, but one designed by God to be revealed: an "open secret" in some sense. The word used thus is almost equivalent to the Christian gospel. The following passages may be classed here:

Mark 4:11 (= Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10). Those who have come to Jesus to ask the meaning of the parables are told that, whereas for those who are outside, everything is done "in parables," they, by contrast, have been "given the secret of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11). Matthew and Luke have: "given to know the secrets." (For the difference [the latter perhaps an accommodation to ecclesiastical interests], see the commentaries.) In Mark the meaning would appear to be that the secret being revealed to this inner circle is that, in some sense, Jesus himself in his ministry is to be identified with the kingdom of God. A revelation is in process of being given: the **μυστήριον** is being divulged.

Rom. 11:25: "Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in." Here the mystery is a special aspect of the divine evangelic plan, as Paul sees it--the partial eclipse of Israel until the Gentiles are won. (Possibly this passage should be included in b below.)

Rom. 16:25-26: "the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations." The Pauline authorship and the meaning of the "pro-

phetic writings" are disputed; but in general, this is a perfect example of the sense of the word "mystery" now being illustrated.

I Cor. 2:1, a variant reading for **μαρτυριον**, "testimony" (see RSV mg.). If "mystery" is here read, it must mean simply the gospel, the subject of the apostle's proclamation. This, at any rate, is clear in 2:7: "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God [**θεου σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ**], which God decreed before the ages for our glorification." So in 4:1, the apostles are "stewards of the mysteries of God."

In Ephesians the mystery is, in particular, that aspect of God's evangelic plan which consists of the unification of the universe, including Jew and Gentile: "the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10); "the mystery was made known to me by revelation, ... the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (3:3 [cf. vs. 4], 9-10). In Eph. 6:19 (cf. Col. 4:3) it is again simply the gospel.

In Col. 1:26-27; 2:2, the divine secret, long hidden but now divulged, seems to be boldly identified with Christ himself. But in 1:26-27 the expression seems, in fact, to be very close to the Ephesians idea: the mystery is "Christ in you" (i.e., the Gentiles), the "hope of glory"; i.e., it is that Christ is among the Gentiles no less than the Jews.

Once again, in I Tim. 3:9, 16, the "mystery of the faith" or "of our religion" seems to be simply the gospel.

So, too, in Rev. 10:7, the "mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets," is to be fulfilled. It is the divine plan which is ultimately to be completed.

Finally, perhaps it is right to include here also the "mystery of lawlessness" II Thess. 2:7), if this means a kind of satanic parody of God's mystery, a sort of demonic gospel. This is Satan's "plan," which has to be worked out before it can be ultimately destroyed and dispatched by Jesus at his coming (vs. 8).

In most of these instances, it is noticeable that "mystery" is coupled with words of manifesting and divulging. See REVELATION.

Thus preachers of the gospel need to be viewed as slaves of God through Christ who have been given tremendous responsibility for the gospel. This is a far cry from the way the Corinthians were regarding them. Unfortunately it is a far cry from how many preachers in our day regard themselves.

In the amplification that follows, Paul lays out the central criterion for evaluating preachers as servants and stewards: **pistov ti~ eufeqh** ("one should be found

faithful"). Simple enough! Not particularly good looking. Not a charmer personality. Not a wower from the pulpit. None of the "human" qualities matter in God's eyes. As 3:4 had indicated, they had mattered to the Corinthians, and Paul condemned them as purely human, unspiritual ways of thinking. To assess preachers this way, Paul declares, reflects not spiritual persons, but people of the flesh (3:1). It's no wonder that the Christian community at Corinth was the most troubled group of believers in all of Paul's ministry.

Being a faithful servant and steward is the measuring stick for sizing up any preacher. Against the estate backdrop in the passage, this meant that the slave would be judged on how well he carried out the demands of the master. Did he do exactly as told? Or did he cut corners? Did he do good planning and consistent implementation? Or not? Did he manage the slaves of the household fairly and justly? Or not?

In the application of the metaphor to these missionaries, the principle is clear. Did they consistently follow Christ's commission to preach the gospel? Or did they cut corners in their obedience? Did they manage the precious truths of the gospel correctly? Or did they distort the gospel for their own gain?

Paul then moves on to distance himself from being impacted one way or the other by their fleshy way of evaluating him and the others: "3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. 4 I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me." Building on the estate management background metaphor, he indicates that he cares little about what they think



of him. He doesn't even take time to do self-evaluations. He knows that his accountability is solely to the Lord himself. And that is all that matters. God's definition of success -- faithfulness -- is the only thing that matters. In that regard, Paul feels that he has a clear conscience, but acknowledges that God will be the final judge of that, not him.

Given these basic spiritual principles, Paul concludes this section with a demand to the Corinthians: "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will

disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God" (v. 5). We believers don't have the insight that the Lord possesses. We can't see the full picture. Therefore we need to hold off making the snap judgments that the Corinthians were making. Any praise we heap on a preacher with our limited perspective is shallow and ultimately worthless. The only commendation (olepaino~) that is meaningful will come from God on judgement day.

Wow! Paul's word to the Corinthians runs counter to so much thinking in our day about preachers. By both the folks in the pew and by preachers themselves. I wonder whether our way of thinking may reflect deeper spiritual problems just like it did for the Corinthians. If we were to come back to the principles that Paul lays out here, could it trigger a spiritual renewal among our churches? I suspect it could. Were preachers to forget about worldly success and concentrate solely on being faithful to their calling from God, what a difference that would make in our churches as well.

b. How to size them up right, vv. 6-13

Greek NT

406 Tauta dey
ajlelfoiy meteschma-
tisa ejj ejnauton kai;
Apollwn di juln~, ifa
ejj hlin naqhte to; Mh;

NASB

6 Now these things,
brethren, I have figura-
tively applied to myself
and Apollos for your
sakes, so that in us you
may learn not to exceed

NRSV

6 I have applied all
this to Apollos and my-
self for your benefit,
brothers and sisters,
so that you may learn
through us the meaning

NLT

6 Dear brothers and
sisters, I have used
Apollos and myself to il-
lustrate what I've been
saying. If you pay atten-
tion to the Scriptures,

uþer a)gegraptai, iþa
nh; eiþ uþer tou eþo;
fusiousqe kata; tou
eþerou. 4ð7 tiv gar se
diakrineiÉ tivde;eþei-
oþouk eþabe~É eijde;kai;
eþabe~, tiv kaucašai
wþ nh;laba~É 4ð8 hþlh
kekoresmenoi eþtey
hþlh eþlouthsate,
cwriþ hþwn eþasileu-
sate: kai; ofelon ge
eþasileusate iþa kai;
hþei~ uþin sunbasile-
uswnen 4ð9 dokw`gar,
oþ qeoþ; hþn~ touþ; aj
postou~ eþcatou~
apedeixen wþ eþiqana-
tiou~, ofi qeatron ej
genhþhnen tw/ kosmw/
kai; ajgeþoi~ kai; aj-
qrwpoi~. 4ð10 hþei~
nwroi; dia; Cristou,
uþei~ de; fromoi ej
Cristw/ hþei~ ajqe-
nei~, uþei~ de; iþscuroiv
uþei~ eþdoxoi, hþei~ de;
aþimoi. 4ð11 aþri th~
aþti wþa~ kai;peinwnen
kai; diywnen kai; gum-
niteuomen kai; kolafi-
zoneqa kai;ajstatoumen
4ð12 kai; kopiwnen
ejgazomenoi tai~ ijli-
ai~ cersin: loidorou-
menoi euþlogoumen, di-
wkoumenoi ajpeconeqa,
4ð13 dusþhmoumenoi
parakaloumen wþ
perikaqarmata tou
kosmou ejgenhþhnen,
pantwn periyhna eþw-
aþti.

Notes:

The lead sentence here comes in verse 6: "I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written,' so that none of you will

what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 7 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? 8 You are already filled, 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. 9 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. 10 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. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

of the saying, "Nothing beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another. 7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift? 8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you! 9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. 10 We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. 11 To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, 12 and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

you won't brag about one of your leaders at the expense of another. 7 What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own? 8 You think you already have everything you need! You are already rich! Without us you have become kings! I wish you really were on your thrones already, for then we would be reigning with you! 9 But sometimes I think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world – to people and angels alike. 10 Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you are so wise! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are well thought of, but we are laughed at. 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, without enough clothes to keep us warm. We have endured many beatings, and we have no homes of our own. 12 We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. 13 We respond gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated

be puffed up in favor of one against another" (**Tauta dey ajel foiy neteschnatisa ei j ejnauton kai; Apollwn di juln~, ifa ej hlin naqhte to; Mh; ufer a}gegraptai, ifa nh; ei- ufer tou eho; fusiousqe kata; tou eferou**). Here Paul lays out his intentions in saying what he has to the Corinthians in two purpose declarations (**ifa**-clauses).

1) "so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written.'" The first objective in Paul's mind is to help the Corinthians learn basic a spiritual principle about scripture interpretation. The interpretive paraphrase of the NLT seems to capture the essence of what Paul is getting at here: "If you pay attention to the Scriptures, you won't brag about one of your leaders at the expense of another." The phrase **to; Mh; ufer a}gegraptai** is so abbreviated in form that its precise meaning remains unclear. Literally, it is "the Not, beyond what stands written." Evidently it alludes to a well known maxim that Paul's initial readers would have understood. The thrust of it is fairly clear, however. He wanted the Corinthians to learn not to go beyond the boundaries set by the six OT scriptures that he had cited in the discussion in 1:10-4:5. See 1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20 for these references. Thus one important lesson for the Corinthians is that they should remain "biblical" in their sizing up of preachers, and not step beyond the boundaries of scripture into "fleshly" criteria. Perhaps it has even broader implications of staying within the boundaries of scripture for everything we believe and do as believers.

2) "so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another." This second objective is closely linked to the first. By stepping beyond scriptural boundaries in forming their opinions about preachers, the Corinthians fell prey to arrogant elitism that generated unholy tension and fussing with one another. Paul wisely understood that when God lays down boundaries through scripture, staying inside them produces spiritual health and growth. Stepping outside them creates the opposite effect. It stifles spiritual growth and reduces religious experience down to purely human levels with no authenticity from God what so ever.

Finally, concerning the lead sentence, the core verb that Paul used here, **neteschnatisa**, can never be adequately translated by a single English verb. The various expressions -- "applied all this to" (NRSV), "figuratively applied" (NASB), "illustrated" (NLT) -- fall miserably short of saying what Paul actually said in Greek. Richard Hayes (*Interpretation Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides helpful insight into the complex meaning of this verb:

The verb translated as "applied" (*metaschēmatizein*:

like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash – right up to the present moment.

its root meaning is "transformed," as in Phil. 3:21) is a technical term used in rhetoric to describe the device of making covert allusion through the use of figurative language to disguise the writer's meaning. (Note the use of this same verb, meaning "to disguise," in 2 Cor. 11:13–15.) In other words, by speaking about himself and Apollos, Paul has been speaking metaphorically; in truth, he is driving at something else entirely. This is a critical point. It means that we will utterly misunderstand Paul's argument if we think that the real problem at Corinth was a power struggle between Apollos and Paul. Everything Paul has said indicates in fact that the relationship between Apollos and himself is harmonious. Nor is there the slightest evidence in the context that Paul perceives any conflict with Cephas or his adherents. What Paul has in mind is explained quite straightforwardly in the rest of the paragraph.

Paul subtly alludes to some of the house church leaders as being the primary source of the problem. Neither he nor Apollos contributed to this factionalism that had developed. The Corinthians wrongly bought into it because of their lack of spiritual maturity. The local leaders had done them a great disservice at this point.

The amplification in vv. 7-13 stresses two essential points. The Corinthians were the beneficiaries of the servanthood approach to ministry by Apollos, Peter and Paul, who considered themselves as slaves serving the congregation. Second, Paul denigrates any perception of "status" by these leaders that would justify the Corinthians rallying around one or the other. Paul's way of communicating this stylistically is classic Greek persuasive speech. Richard Hayes again provides important insight in what Paul is doing here:

Just in case his readers have not been sufficiently chastened by the questions of verse 7, Paul now turns to withering sarcasm in verse 8 and begins an extended comparison between himself and the "wise" at Corinth (vv. 8–13). In contrast to the lowly apostle and apart from him, they "already" are filled and rich and have become "kings." On the basis of the adverb "already," many interpreters have argued that the Corinthian error was based on "overrealized eschatology," a belief that the kingdom of God had already arrived in all its fullness and that they were living already in a state of eschatological blessedness, like angels in heaven. It is by no means clear, however, that the present passage provides evidence

for such a view. Certainly the Corinthians (or at least some of them) were suffering from an excess of pride and self-satisfaction, but there are other ways to arrive at such a state besides having an accelerated apocalyptic timetable. Indeed, most of the evidence of the letter suggests that the Corinthian problem was almost exactly the reverse: They lacked any definite eschatology, with the result that they were heedless of God's future judgment of their actions. It is far more likely that their "boasting" was caused not by an excess of eschatological enthusiasm but by their infatuation with popular philosophical notions of how the wise person can transcend the ordinary limitations of human existence. After all, throughout the letter up to this point Paul has chided them for inappropriate understandings of "wisdom," which, as we have seen, is linked with philosophy and rhetoric.

Let us consider Paul's derisive description of the Corinthians in verse 8. Where would they get the idea that they are already rich and that they reign as kings? Many ancient sources indicate that precisely these claims were made by Cynic and Stoic philosophers. Their wisdom sets them free from attachment to things and therefore makes them in effect rulers of all things. According to Epictetus, the true Cynic can say, "Who, when he lays eyes upon me, does not feel that he is seeing his king and master?" (*Diss.*

3.22.49). Plutarch takes a somewhat more skeptical view of such claims: "But some think the Stoics are jesting when they hear that in their sect the wise man (*sophos*) is termed not only prudent and just and brave, but also an orator, a poet, a general, a rich man, and a king; and then they count themselves worthy of all these titles, and if they fail to get them, are vexed" (*De Tranq. An.* 472A). This comment reveals that the Stoics were commonly understood to make about themselves precisely the claims that Paul imputes to the Corinthian *sophoi*. Thus, the most natural inference is that Paul is scolding the Corinthians for adopting an inflated self-understanding based on a philosophy alien to the gospel. This certainly does not mean that the Corinthians had consciously rejected the gospel in favor of Stoicism; more likely they were creating an uncritical mixture of ideas, or even arguing that Christianity was the

true wisdom that enabled them to attain the aims of the philosophers—just as Philo of Alexandria was arguing in this same era that the law of Moses was the epitome of philosophical truth.

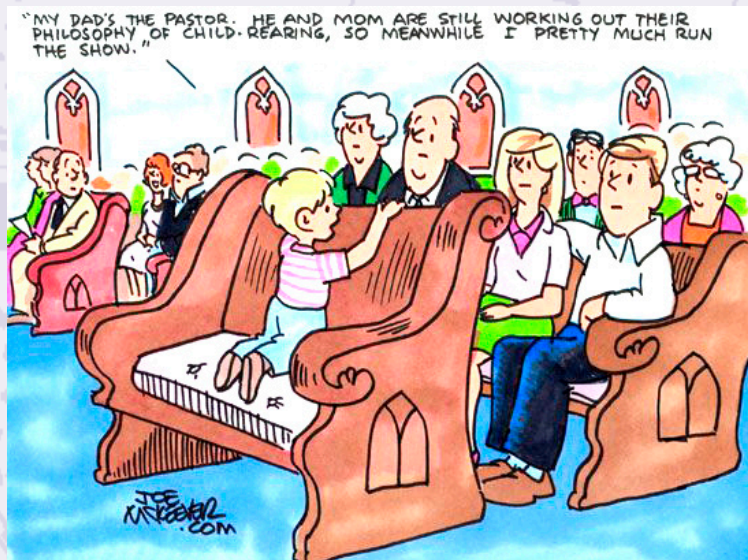
If that is correct, then the Corinthian errors are less consciously "theological" than we often suppose. Rather, their difficulty is that they are uncritically perpetuating the norms and values of the pagan culture around them. It is Paul who diagnoses the situation and redescribes it in theological categories. It is Paul who keeps introducing apocalyptic language into the argument. The eschatological framework is his way of getting critical leverage on the Corinthian boasting, as he tries to encourage them to understand themselves in terms of an apocalyptic narrative that locates present existence in between the cross and the parousia.

This rather lengthy explanation is necessary in order to make a simple but crucial point: Pastors and teachers in our time have the same task that

Paul had. We must analyze the ways in which our congregations are linking the gospel with the beliefs and aspirations of the surrounding culture and—where this is being done in inappropriate ways—provide sharply focused critiques and alternatives. Paul models what every pastor must do; he encounters people in a given cultural situation and tries to get them to reshape their lives in light of the gospel by reframing the story

within which they live and move. (See "Reflections for Teachers and Preachers," below, for further comment.)

The alternative that Paul offers the Corinthians is his own way of life, set in antithesis to theirs. In contrast to the Corinthian self-designation as conquering kings, Paul offers the image of himself and the other apostles as prisoners sentenced to death. The image is taken from the well-known practice of the Roman "triumph," in which the victorious general would parade through the streets in a chariot, with the leaders of the defeated army trailing along in the rear of the procession, to be "exhibited" and humiliated as a public "spectacle" (4:9) on their way to imprisonment or execution (cf. also 2 Cor. 2:14). One could hardly imagine an image more antithetical to the Stoic conception of the philosopher as strong, free, and self-sufficient. It is a stunning image, not least because Paul suggests that it is God who has



won the victory and made a spectacle of the apostolic prisoners. The Corinthians, by contrast, fancy themselves as leaders of the procession, victorious kings who therefore, Paul suggests, are not subject to the authority of God.

The Corinthians are wise, strong, and held in honor, whereas the apostles are fools, weak, and held in disrepute. The echoes of 1:26–31 are clearly audible here. Paul is saying that his manner of life is consonant with the cross, while the Corinthians aspire to a lifestyle that is a *de facto* repudiation of the cross.

The Corinthians, although considering themselves “sages” (**sofoi**) by using the “cutting edge” thinking of their day, instead made fools of themselves. They bought into their own world rather than into the gospel rooted in scriptural promise in the OT. By stepping outside the divinely mandated boundaries, they reflected ignorance rather than wisdom. And it was the very phoney wisdom that **James** condemns in 3:14–15.

14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in

your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

James describes as spiritual principle what Paul depicted as happening among the Corinthians.

How relevant all this is to our day! It seems as though Paul had modern American Christianity in mind with these words as much as first century Corinthian Christianity. Our “feel good” culture so often leads us into the same dumb self-deception as that of the Corinthians. Biblical principle is old fashion; we must get new, more creative ways of thinking, if we’re going to be fresh and relevant to the people of our day. By buying into contemporary “philosophies” that have inherent contradiction to the apostolic gospel, we make the same mistakes as the Corinthians. The result: divisiveness and self-centered arrogance in the name of being “spiritually wise.” Just a few minutes of TV preaching will more than convince of this.

c. Preacher's rights, vv. 14-21

Greek NT	NASB	NRSV	NLT
<p>4014 Ouk ejtrepwn uha~ grafw tauta ajll jw tekna nou ajaphta; nouqetwn1/4 4015 ejn gar muriou~ paidagwou~ ehte ejn Cristw/ajll jouj pollou~ patera~: ejn gar Cristw/jhsou dia; tou euaggeliou ejw; uha~ ejen nhsa. 4016 parakalw ouh uha~, ninhtaiv nou ginesqe. 4017 dia; touto epenya uhin Timotheon, of ejstin mou teknon ajaphton kai; piston ejn kuriw/ of uha~ ajamhiv sei ta; oduv nou ta; ejn Cristw » jhsou1/4 kaqw~ pantacou ejn pash/ ejklhsia/ didaskw. 4018 wj nh; ejconenou devnou pro; uha~ efusiwnhsan tine~: 4019 ejjeusomai de; tacew~ pro; uha~, ejn ojkurio~ qelhsj/ kai; gnwsomai oujton logon twj pefusiwnewn ajlla; thj dunamin: 4020 oujgar ejn</p>	<p>14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 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. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the</p>	<p>14 I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 18 But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out</p>	<p>14 I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. 15 For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. 16 So I ask you to follow my example and do as I do. 17 That is the very reason I am sending Timothy – to help you do this. For he is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach about Christ Jesus in all the churches wherever I go. 18 I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. 19 But I will come</p>

logw/hbasileia tou'geou`
ajl jej dunamei. 4021 tiv
qeleteÉ ej rābdw/ elqw
pro; uha~ h] ej agaph/
pneumatike prauhto~É



Notes:

In this final section, the lead sentence again reminds the Corinthian readers of an important goal of Paul in these words: "I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children" (*Ouk ejtrepwn uha~ grafw tauta ajl jw tekna nou ajaphta; nouqetwn*). What lay behind these strong words of Paul to the Corinthians? We might be tempted to think that he was just dumping on them in order to work off his frustrations about their stupidity.

The very different way in Greek that Paul expressed his intentions here from the somewhat similar lead sentence in verse 6 make it impossible to bring his idea to the surface in English translation. With a pair of telic participles Paul declares his genuine pastoral concern for the Corinthians. The roots of that concern will validate this declaration as expressed in the statements that follow in vv. 15-21. These are introduced by the causal conjunction *gar*.

One technical observation. In the United Bible Societies 4th revised edition Greek text the second participle is printed as follows: *nouqetwn*. The brackets [] enclosing the last letter of the word reflect textual uncertainty over the spelling of the word. As spelled, it stands as a telic participle with the simple idea, I write "in order to admonish..." But without the last letter *n* on the spelling, the word turns into *nouqetw*, a first person verb with the meaning, "I don't write to shame you, but I do admonish you." There is no shift in meaning; instead, it's a question of how much emphasis is placed on the admonishing declaration. The participle spelling has the greater mss support and is the preferred reading.

The Greek verb *ejtrepw* means to cause shame or embarrassment. It is one of a whole hosts of Greek words in this category of meaning; cf. Louw-Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* topics 25.189-25.202 for the full range of words. Paul wasn't using the Corinthians as a punching bag. He had no interest in "getting even" with them, or in humiliating them.

The Greek verb *nouqetw* means to instruct with the intent of correcting wrong belief and / or behavior. It frequently shades off into the intense

words of those who are arrogant but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. 21 What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

– and soon – if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. 20 For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power. 21 Which do you choose? Should I come with punishment and scolding, or should I come with quiet love and gentleness?



expression of issuing a warning to someone. In the amplification that follows in vv. 15-21, we sense that range of meaning from instruction to warning. It is not a commonly used expression either in Paul nor in the NT with just eight occurrences, and seven of them are in Paul. Simple instruction would have been expressed by a variety of other Greek verbs. Thus Paul reflects the intensity of his concern by the use of this verb.

In the amplification that follows his concern is reflected in his claim to have "birthed" them spiritually (vv. 15-16); to be sending Timothy to Corinth with this letter to help them work through these problems (v. 17); and to be planning on making a personal visit

just as soon as possible (vv. 18-21). In this he looks to the past, the present, and the future as confirmations of his deep, intense desire to help them correct these problems existing in the congregation.

By being reminded of who was largely responsible for establishing the Christian congregation at Corinth on the second missionary journey (cf. Acts 18:1-17 for details), the Corinthians should recognize that Paul was not only on target of his assessment of their problem, but had the correct solution to it. As their spiritual “father,” Paul then enjoined them to “imitate him” in following the spiritual principles laid down by God.

In sending Timothy to Corinth with the letter, he would amplify the ways of Paul to the Corinthians (v. 17). Timothy was the trusted associate who had joined the group of missionaries in Lystra on the second missionary journey in the early 50s (cf. Acts 16:1). Paul characterizes him to the Corinthians in two ways: 1) “who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” [oʃ ejʃtin mou teknon agaphton kai; piston ejh kuriw] and 2) who will “remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church” [oʃ uʃha~ ajiamhʃei ta; odouʃ mou ta; ejh Cristw~ jhsouʃ/kaqʃ; pantacou ejh pash ejklhsia/didaskw]. Paul could depend on this young man to faithfully represent Paul’s ideas to the Corinthians. Timothy knew Paul well enough to be able to anticipate Paul’s answers to questions the Corinthians might have about the contents of the letter.

Finally, Paul looks to the anticipated future personal visit to Corinth. It is prompted in part by the skepticism of some at Corinth about Paul’s own ministry. They were saying that Corinth was of no concern to Paul; he had bigger and better peas to pick in other fields: “But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant.” When looking at the long history of the church at Corinth, one is tempted to think that maybe Paul should have taken this position toward the Corinthians. They caused him more grief than all the other churches combined. But Paul had a passionate heart for the Corinthians and deeply wanted

to do whatever possible to help them work through their problems.

As he describes the anticipated visit, he doesn’t mince words about it. He gives them a choice. Do they want to see Paul as a stern spiritual parent coming to rebuke them? Or, would they rather see him come as a loving spiritual parent to show gentleness? Note verse 21: “What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?”

The foundation of his coming rests upon the power of God, rather than verbal blasting as Paul declares in verse 20: “For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power” [ougar ejh logw/hbasileia tou qeou ajl jeh dunamei]. Paul knew that the advancing of God’s rule in this world could never rest of the power of persuasive words. He saw these arrogant local leaders who were causing the problems as filled with “hot air.” His visit would expose just how worthless their words were. He had personally disavowed

that approach in his ministry as he earlier reminded the Corinthians in 2:1-5. Instead, God’s power was the only way to change lives and overcome problems.

What can we say about preachers today? Paul lays out a “preachers’ bill of rights” somewhat like the “passengers’ bill of rights” debated today by those traveling in commercial airplanes. Contained in that Preacher’s Bill of Rights” is at least the following: 1) Every minister must adopt a true servant approach to ministry; 2) Every preacher must base his ministry on faithfulness to his calling and nothing else; 3) Every preacher must be free to expose the failures of his congregation

to properly interpret scripture and the gospel; 4) Every preacher must so invest himself into the life of his congregation that he becomes their “spiritual father”; 5) Every preacher must be prepared to face his congregation’s rejection of his biblical oriented ministry.

We as church members must give our pastor these rights as a minimum. Otherwise, we cripple his ministry to us. We must judge him by God’s stan-



Greek NT

4d1 Oufw~ hñ~ lo-
gizewq~ ahrwpo~ wJ
uþhreta~ Cristou~ kai;
oikononou~ musthriwn
qeou. 4d2 wle loipon
zhteitai ej~ toi~ oikonov
moi~, ifa pistov ti~ eu-
feqh! 4d3 ejmi; de; eij-
ejlaviston ejstin, ifa uf
juhwn ajakriqw hJ uþo;
ajqrwpinh~ hñera~: ajl
jouje; ejnauton ajnakrinw.
4d4 oujlen gar ejnautw/su-
noida, ajl! ouk ej~ toutw/
dedikaiwnmai, oJde; aja-
krinwn ne kuriov ejstin.
4d5 wste nh; pro; kairou
ti krinete efw~ ah elqh/
oJkurio~, oJ kai; fwtisei
ta; krupta; tou skotou~
kai; fanerwsei ta; bou-
la; twñ kardiwn: kai;
tote oJepaino~ genhsetai
ekastw apo; tou qeou.

4d6 Tauta deyajlel-
foiy meteschmatisa eij-
ejnauton kai; Ajpol lwn di
juh~; ifa ej~ hñin naqhte
to; Mh; uþer ajgegraptai,
ifa nh; ei~ uþer tou eño;
fusiouqe kata; tou efe-
rou. 4d7 tiv gar se di-
akrineiE tides; ej~ oJouk
elabe~E eijde; kai; elabe~,
tikaucasai wJ nh; labwnE
4d8 hñh kekoresmenoi
ejstey hñh eplouthwate,
cwri; hñwn ebasileu-
wate: kai; ofelon ge
ebasileuwate ifa kai;
hñei~ uñin sunbasileu-
swmen 4d9 dokw gar, oJ
qeou~ hñ~ tou; apostov
lou~ ejscatou~ apedeix-
en wJ epiqanatiou~, ofi
qeatron ejgenhynen tw/
kosmw/ kai; ajgetoi~ kai;
ajqrwpoi~. 4d10 hñei~
mwroi; dia; Criston, uñei~
de; fromimoi ej~ Cristw/
hñei~ ajsqenei~, uñei~ de;

NASB

1 Let a man regard
us in this manner, as
servants of Christ and
stewards of the mys-
teries of God. 2 In this
case, moreover, it is re-
quired of stewards that
one be found trustwor-
thy. 3 But to me it is a
very small thing that I
may be examined by
you, or by any human
court; in fact, I do not
even examine myself.
4 For I am conscious
of nothing against my-
self, yet I am not by this
acquitted; but the one
who examines me is the
Lord. 5 Therefore do not
go on passing judgment
before the time, but wait
until the Lord comes
who will both bring to
light the things hidden
in the darkness and
disclose the motives of
men's hearts; and then
each man's praise will
come to him from God.

6 Now these things,
brethren, I have figura-
tively 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 be-
come arrogant in behalf
of one against the other.
7 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? 8 You
are already filled, you
have already become
rich, you have become
kings without us; and

NRSV

1 Think of us in this
way, as servants of
Christ and stewards
of God's mysteries. 2
Moreover, it is required
of stewards that they
be found trustworthy. 3
But with me it is a very
small thing that I should
be judged by you or by
any human court. I do
not even judge myself.
4 I am not aware of any-
thing against myself, but
I am not thereby acquit-
ted. It is the Lord who
judges me. 5 Therefore
do not pronounce judg-
ment before the time,
before the Lord comes,
who will bring to light
the things now hidden
in darkness and will
disclose the purposes
of the heart. Then each
one will receive com-
mendation from God.

6 I have applied all
this to Apollos and my-
self for your benefit,
brothers and sisters,
so that you may learn
through us the meaning
of the saying, "Nothing
beyond what is written,"
so that none of you will
be puffed up in favor of
one against another. 7
For who sees anything
different in you? What
do you have that you
did not receive? And if
you received it, why do
you boast as if it were
not a gift? 8 Already you
have all you want! Al-
ready you have become
rich! Quite apart from us
you have become kings!
Indeed, I wish that you
had become kings, so

NLT

1 So look at Apol-
los and me as mere
servants of Christ who
have been put in charge
of explaining God's se-
crets. 2 Now, a person
who is put in charge
as a manager must be
faithful. 3 What about
me? Have I been faith-
ful? Well, it matters very
little what you or anyone
else thinks. I don't even
trust my own judgment
on this point. 4 My con-
science is clear, but that
isn't what matters. It is
the Lord himself who
will examine me and
decide. 5 So be careful
not to jump to conclu-
sions before the Lord
returns as to whether or
not someone is faithful.
When the Lord comes,
he will bring our deepest
secrets to light and will
reveal our private mo-
tives. And then God will
give to everyone what-
ever praise is due.

6 Dear brothers and
sisters, I have used
Apollos and myself to il-
lustrate what I've been
saying. If you pay atten-
tion to the Scriptures,
you won't brag about
one of your leaders at
the expense of another.
7 What makes you bet-
ter than anyone else?
What do you have that
God hasn't given you?
And if all you have is
from God, why boast as
though you have accom-
plished something on
your own? 8 You think
you already have every-
thing you need! You are

iṣcuroiv uḥei~ eḥdōxoi,
hḥei~ de; aṭimi. 4ḏ1
aṭri th~ aṭti wṭa~ kai;
peinwēn kai; diywēn kai;
gumiteuōnen kai; kolafi-
zoneqa kai; aṣtatounen
4ḏ2 kai; kopiwēn ej-
gazomenoi tai~ ijliwē-
cersin: loidoroumenoi
eulogoumen, diwkouenoi
ajecomeqa, 4ḏ3 dusfh-
noumenoi parakalounen
wḷ perikaqarmata tou
kowmou egenhḡhmen,
pantwn periyhma eḥw-
aṭti.

4ḏ4 Ouk ejtrepwn
uḥa~ grafw tauta ajl
jwḷ tekna mou agapha;
nouqetwōn 4ḏ5 ejn
gar muriou~ paidagwou~
eḥte ejn Cristw/ajl jouj
pollou~; patera~: ejn gar
Cristw/ Jhsou` dia; tou
euḡgeliou eḡw; uḥa~ ej
gemhsa. 4ḏ6 parakalw
ouh uḥa~, ninhtaivmou
ginesqe. 4ḏ7 dia; touto
epēnya uḥin Timotheon,
oṭ ejstin mou teknon
agaphton kai; piston ejn
kuriw, oṭ uḥa~ ajamhvw
sei ta~ oḡlouvw mou ta~ ejn
Cristw/ » Jhsou` ¼ kaqw~
pantacou ejn pash/ ejk-
klhsia/ didaskw. 4ḏ8
wḷ nh; ej; conenou devmou
pro~ uḥa~ efusiwwhsan
tine~: 4ḏ9 ej; eusomai
de; tacew~ pro~ uḥa~, ejn
oḷkurio~ qelhsḥ/ kai; gn-
wsomai oujton logon twin
pefusiwmēwn ajlla; thn
dunamin: 4ḏ20 oujgar ejn
logw/ hbasileia tou qeou`
ajl jej dunamei. 4ḏ21 tiv
qelēteÉ ejn rḥbdw/ elqw
pro~ uḥa~ h| ejn agaph/
pneumatike prauḥto~É

indeed, I wish that you
had become kings so
that we also might reign
with you. 9 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. 10 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. 11 To
this present hour we are
both hungry and thirsty,
and are poorly clothed,
and are roughly treat-
ed, and are homeless;
12 and we toil, working
with our own hands;
when we are reviled, we
bless; when we are per-
secuted, we endure; 13
when we are slandered,
we try to conciliate; we
have become as the
scum of the world, the
dregs of all things, even
until now.

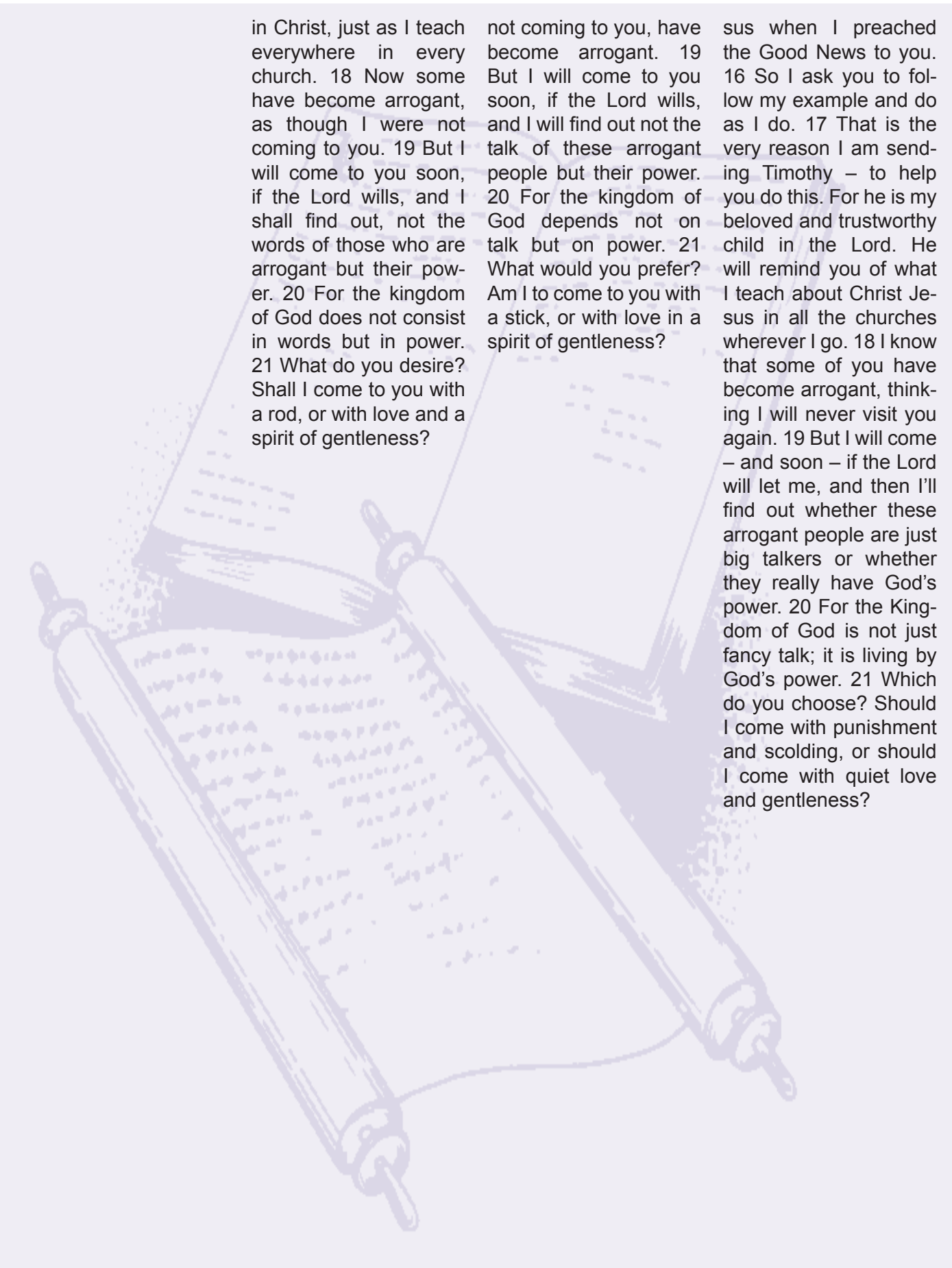
14 I do not write
these things to shame
you, but to admonish
you as my beloved chil-
dren. 15 For if you were
to have countless tutors
in Christ, yet you would
not have many fathers,
for in Christ Jesus I
became your father
through the gospel. 16
Therefore I exhort you,
be imitators of me. 17
For this reason I have
sent to you Timothy,
who is my beloved and
faithful child in the Lord,
and he will remind you
of my ways which are

that we might be kings
with you! 9 For I think
that God has exhibited
us apostles as last of all,
as though sentenced to
death, because we have
become a spectacle
to the world, to angels
and to mortals. 10 We
are fools for the sake of
Christ, but you are wise
in Christ. We are weak,
but you are strong. You
are held in honor, but
we in disrepute. 11 To
the present hour we
are hungry and thirsty,
we are poorly clothed
and beaten and home-
less, 12 and we grow
weary from the work of
our own hands. When
reviled, we bless; when
persecuted, we endure;
13 when slandered, we
speak kindly. We have
become like the rubbish
of the world, the dregs
of all things, to this very
day.

14 I am not writ-
ing this to make you
ashamed, but to admon-
ish you as my beloved
children. 15 For though
you might have ten
thousand guardians in
Christ, you do not have
many fathers. Indeed, in
Christ Jesus I became
your father through the
gospel. 16 I appeal to
you, then, be imitators of
me. 17 For this reason I
sent you Timothy, who is
my beloved and faithful
child in the Lord, to re-
mind you of my ways in
Christ Jesus, as I teach
them everywhere in ev-
ery church. 18 But some
of you, thinking that I am

already rich! Without
us you have become
kings! I wish you really
were on your thrones
already, for then we
would be reigning with
you! 9 But sometimes
I think God has put us
apostles on display, like
prisoners of war at the
end of a victor's parade,
condemned to die. We
have become a spec-
tacle to the entire world
– to people and angels
alike. 10 Our dedication
to Christ makes us look
like fools, but you are so
wise! We are weak, but
you are so powerful! You
are well thought of, but
we are laughed at. 11
To this very hour we go
hungry and thirsty, with-
out enough clothes to
keep us warm. We have
endured many beatings,
and we have no homes
of our own. 12 We have
worked wearily with our
own hands to earn our
living. We bless those
who curse us. We are
patient with those who
abuse us. 13 We re-
spond gently when evil
things are said about
us. Yet we are treated
like the world's garbage,
like everybody's trash
– right up to the present
moment.

14 I am not writing
these things to shame
you, but to warn you as
my beloved children.
15 For even if you had
ten thousand others to
teach you about Christ,
you have only one spiri-
tual father. For I became
your father in Christ Je-



in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

not coming to you, have become arrogant. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. 21 What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

16 So I ask you to follow my example and do as I do. 17 That is the very reason I am sending Timothy – to help you do this. For he is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach about Christ Jesus in all the churches wherever I go. 18 I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. 19 But I will come – and soon – if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. 20 For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power. 21 Which do you choose? Should I come with punishment and scolding, or should I come with quiet love and gentleness?

Greek NT Diagram

4.1
1 Οὕτως
ἡμᾶς λογιζέσθω ἄνθρωπος
ὡς ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ
καὶ
οἰκονόμου μυστηρίων θεοῦ.

4.2
2 ὣδε
λοιπὸν
ζητεῖται
ἐν τοῖς οἰκονόμοις,
ἵνα πιστός τις εὑρεθῇ.

4.3
3 δὲ
εἰς ἐλάχιστόν
ἐμοὶ...ἐστίν,
ὕφ' ὑμῶν
ἵνα...ἀνακριθῶ
ἢ
ὕπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας

4
οὐδὲ ἐμαυτὸν ἀνακρίνω.
4.4
5 γὰρ
οὐδὲν ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα,
ἀλλ'
6 οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι,
δὲ
7 οἱ ἀνακρινῶν με
kurios estin.

4.5
8 ὥστε
pro; kai rou`
mh; ..ti kринete
eἰ~ aἱ eἰ qh/ oἱ kuri o~,
oἱ...fwtisei ta; krupta;
tou` skotou~
kai; .. kai;
-- fanerwsei ta~ boula~
twn kardi wn:

kai;
9 tote
oἱ epai no~ genhsetai ekastw/
apo; tou` qeou`.

4.6
10 de;
ajdel foi v
Tauta...meteschmatisa
eij~ ejnauton
kai;
ajpollwn
di j uḡa~,
iḡa ejn hmi n maqhete to; Mh;
uper aḡ gegraptai,
iḡa mh; ei~ uper tou` eḡo~ fusi ou`sqe

407

gar

11 ti v se diakrinei É

de;

12 tivepei ~

o} ouk elabe~É

de;

eij kai; elabe~,

13 ti v kaucaasai

wJ mh; labwnÉ

408

hflh

14 kekoresmenoi ejtey

hflh

15 eplouthsate,

cwri;~ hJwn

16 ebasileusate:

kai;

ofelon ge

17 ebasileusate

i}a kai; hJei~ uJni n sumbasileuswmen

409

gar

18 dokw

oJ qeo;~ hJna~... apelei xen

tou;~ apostolou~ ejscatou~

wJ epiqanatiou~,

oti qentron egenhqhmen

tw/ kosmw/

kai;

ajgetoi~

kai;

ajqrwpoi~.

19 4010 hJei~ mwroi; (egenhqhmen)

dia; Criston,

de;

20 uJei~ fromi moi (ejte)

ejn CristwJ

21 hJei~ ajsgenei~ (egenhqhmen)

de;

22 uJei~ ijscuroi v (ejte):

23 uJei~ ehdoxoi (ejte),

de;

24 hJei~ a}ti moi (egenhqhmen).

4011

a}ri th~ a}ti w}a~ kai;

25 pei nwmen

kai;

26 di ywînen
 kai;
 27 gumni teuomen
 kai;
 28 kol afi zomeqa
 kai;
 29 aştatouînen
 4012 kai;
 30 kopi wînen
 ergazomenoi tai~ ijlî ai~ cersin;
 loi doroumenoi
 31 euj ogouînen,
 di wkomenoi
 32 ajnecomeqa,
 4013 dusfhmoumenoi
 33 parakal ouînen:
 wJ perikaqarmata tou` kosmou egenhwhmen,
 34 pantwn periyhma (ejsmen)
 ew~ arti.
 ejntrepwn uha~
 35 4014 Ouk... grafw tauta
 ajl j
 wJ tekna mou agaphta;
 nouqetw»n¼.
 4015 gar
 ejan muriou~ paidagwou~ eçhte
 ejn Cristw/
 ajl j
 36 ouj pollou~ patera~ (eçete):
 gar
 ejn Cristw/ Jhsou`
 dia; tou` eujaggeliou
 37 egw; uha~ ejennhsa.
 4016 ouh
 38 parakal w` uha~,
 39 mi mhtai v mou gi nesqe.
 4017 dia; touto
 40 epemya uhi n Timoneon,
 of ejtin mou teknon agaphton
 kai;
 piston
 ejn kuri w/
 of uha~ apamnhsei ta~ oflou v mou ta~ ejn Cristw/ Jhsou`¼
 kaqw~ pantacou ejn pash/ ejklhsi a/ di daskw.

4018

de;

wJ mh; ejrcomenou mou pro~ uha~

41 efusiwhsan tine~:

4019

de;

42 ej eusomai

tacew~

pro~ uha~,

ejan oJ kurio~ qel hsh/

kai;

43 gnwsomai ouj ton logon twh pefusiwnenwn

aj l a;

44 ----- thn dunami n:

4020

gar

45 ouj ej logw/ hJ basileia tou` geou` (ejtin)

aj l j

46 ej dunamei (ejtin).

47 4021 tivqeteE

ej r hbdw/

48 ej qw pro~ uha~

h]

49 -----

ej agaph/

te

pneumativ prauhtto~E

Semantic Diagram

				Outw~							
A -----				1	Pres	Act	Imp+	3	S	αἰσχροπο~	

				i -----	2	Pres	Pass	Ind	3	S	ἴθα -clause
				a --							
				ii -----	3	Pres	---	Ind	3	S	ἴθα -clause
1 --				αλλ'							
				b -----	4	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(εἰ)w
I--B --				γὰρ							
				i -----	5	Perf	Act	Ind	1	S	(εἰ)w
				a --							
				ii -----	6	Perf	Pass	Ind	1	S	(εἰ)w
2 --				de;							
				b -----	7	Pres	---	Ind	3	S	Ptc Ph
				wste							
1 -----				8	Pres	Act	Imp-	2	P	(u)hei ~	
C --				καὶ							
2 -----				9	Fut	Dep	Ind	3	S	ὁ ἔπαινος	
				de;							
A -----				10	1 Aor	Act	Ind	1	S	(εἰ)w meteschnatisa	
				γὰρ							
				a) -----	11	Pres	Act	Ind?	3	S	ti~
				i ---							
				a -- b) -----	12	Pres	Act	Ind?	2	S	(su)
				de;							
				ii -----	13	Pres	Dep	Ind?	2	S	(su)
1 --				---							
II-				i -----	14	Pres	---	Ind	2	P	(u)hei ~ Perf Perip

				b -- ii -----	15	1 Aor	Act	Ind	2	P	(u)hei ~

				a) -----	16	1 Aor	Act	Ind	2	P	(u)hei ~
				iii							
				b) -----	17	1 Aor	Act	Ind	2	P	(u)hei ~
B --				gar							
				a -----	18	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(εἰ)w

				1) -----	19	(2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	h)hei ~
				a) --							
				2) -----	20	(Pres	---	Ind	2	P	u)hei ~

				1) -----	21	(2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	h)hei ~
				i -- b) --							
				2) -----	22	(Pres	---	Ind	2	P	u)hei ~

				1) -----	23	(Pres	---	Ind	2	P	u)hei ~
2 --				c) --							
				2) -----	24	(2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	h)hei ~

		a)	-----	25	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)
					καὶ					
		b)	-----	26	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)
					καὶ					
		c)	-----	27	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)
		ii-			καὶ					
		d)	-----	28	Pres	Dep	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)
					καὶ					
		e)	-----	29	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)
	b--				καὶ					
		f)	-----	30	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)

		a)	-----	31	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)

		iiib)	-----	32	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)

		c)	-----	33	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(h)nei ~)

		iv-	-----	34	Pres	Act	Ind	1	p	(h)nei ~)

	A--		-----	35	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(e)gw γράφω
					gar					
		i-	-----	36	(Pres	---	Ind	2	P	u)nei ~)
	a--				gar					
III	1--	ii-	-----	37	1 Aor	Act	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
					ouh					
		i-	-----	38	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
	b--				---					
		ii-	-----	39	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2	P	(u)nei ~)
					διὰ τοῦτο					
	B--2		-----	40	1 Aor	Act	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
					δὲ					
		i-	-----	41	1 Aor	Act	Ind	3	P	ti ne~
	a--				de;					
		ii-	-----	42	Fut	Dep	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
					καὶ					
		a)	-----	43	Fut	Dep	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
		i--			αἰ ἰ α;					
		b)	-----	44	(Fut	Dep	Ind	1	S	(e)gw)
	3--b--				gar					
		a)	-----	45	(Pres	---	Ind	3	S)	h)basileia tou`qeou`
		ii-			αἰ ἰ ;					
		b)	-----	46	(Pres	---	Ind	3	S	h)basileia tou`qeou)

		i-	-----	47	Pres	Act	Ind?	2	P	(u)nei ~)
	c--				---					
		a)	-----	48	2 Aor	Act	Subj?1	S	(e)gw)	
		ii-			h]					
		b)	-----	49	(2 Aor	Act	Subj?1	S	e)gw)	

Summary of Rhetorical Structure

In chapter four, Paul presents a passionate set of arguments of persuasion intended to elicit support from the Corinthians of his ministry and gospel message. It stands as a defense of ministry. Rhetorically, the passage is comprised of a long series of short, rapid fire declarations, questions, admonitions. They tend to come in bunches of similar form and style.

The chapter divides naturally into three segments, each with a lead declaration (4:1, 6, 14). Following this topic sentence the ideas are typically developed as a rationale or justification for the concept in the lead sentence.

The first segment, statements #1-9 (vv. 1-5), should be closely understood with the preceding pericope in 3:18-23, as is signaled by the correlative adverb of manner **οὕτως**. Paul desires to be judged on the basis of whether he measures up as a servant of Christ and as a steward of the mysteries of God. The key criteria of this measurement should be faithfulness to these assignments. The Corinthians are measuring him by other standards -- physical appearance, rhetorical skill in preaching etc. -- and he considers these to be irrelevant. When he examines himself, he finds nothing to fault himself about with the legitimate criteria. Ultimately, Christ will be the examiner who makes the real difference. So he admonishes the Corinthians to not rush into a judgment of him.

The second segment, statements #10-34 (vv. 6-13), indicates that he has applied these standards of judgment to himself and Apollos so that the Corinthians could learn to “the No beyond the things that are written” (**μηδὲν πέρα τοῦ γεγραπτοῦ**). The precise meaning of this difficult expression is not certain, but it seems to imply either a proverb along the lines of “don’t go beyond what God has put down in scripture,” or some similar idea. Contextually, it makes a strong point that the Corinthians should follow legitimate guidelines in judging him and Apollos. Their approach pits Paul against Apollos. But Paul argues from the servant and steward motifs for both he and Apollos, that the Corinthians are the ones who have been blessed by both these men. Both have paid dearly in order to be faithful, and the Corinthians have been the beneficiaries of that sacrifice.

The final segment, statements #35-49 (vv. 14-21), affirms Paul’s intent in writing to not embarrass the Corinthians (**οὐκ ἐπηρεάσω ὑμᾶς**), but rather to admonish them as his child (**ὡς τέκνα μου ἀγαπῶ; νοουgetwñ**). In expanding this core idea, he sets out three areas of justification for his words to them: 1) he has “birthed” them in Christ (#s 36-39); 2) he is sending Timothy to them as his representative (#40); and 3) he warns them that his anticipated coming to them very soon can go either into confrontation or sweet reunion (#s 41-49). It’s up to them to decide which Paul they want to see.