BUILT DIFFERENT

LESSON FOUR

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY NOTES

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-13

In the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, Thomas Schriener explains Paul's comparison of the humble disciples and the elevated sense of self-worth amongst the Corinthians:

1–2. Advice is given regarding the assessment of ministers. They are *servants of Christ* and managers of God's *mysteries*. They have a sacred trust and are not free to innovate or be creative with what has been given to them. The term *servants* (*hyperetai*) is used only here in Paul but it is used to designate servants elsewhere (e.g. Prov. 14:35; Add Dan. 3:46; Luke 1:2; 4:20; Acts 13:5; 26:16). The word for 'managers' (*oikonomoi*; csb) designates that one *is entrusted with* a particular task. Jesus uses it to describe the responsibility of his disciples (Luke 12:42), and the term is used for overseers (Titus 1:7). In the same way, believers must use their gifts 'as faithful stewards' (1 Pet. 4:10). In particular, ministers must steward God's *mysteries*. Paul has already used the word 'mystery' for the truth of Christ crucified and risen (1 Cor. 2:1, 7); thus here he probably has the gospel especially in mind. Verse 2 describes the role of 'managers' (csb): they are required to be *faithful*. The Corinthians must not think that ministers are responsible to no-one; they are responsible before God for their work and must fulfil the task given to them.

3. Since God is the one who assesses his 'servants' and 'managers' (csb), Paul is unconcerned about the assessment of him (*anakrino*) made by the Corinthians or *any human court*. Indeed, Paul does not even assess (*anakrino*) himself. Paul is not saying ministries must never be evaluated and assessed. Indeed, Paul evaluated and criticized Peter's ministry in Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14) and in another context he judged some to be false teachers (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:12–15). Nor is Paul eschewing any self-evaluation. The Corinthians, however, were attempting to evaluate the effectiveness before God of those like Paul and Apollos who were ministering sincerely and effectively. In other words, they were attempting to determine the final reward that should be assigned to Paul and Apollos, as if they had the capacity to discern the quality of their ministries.

4–5. Paul is not 'conscious of anything against myself' (csb), but his own subjective assessment of his ministry is not decisive, for it is the Lord who gives the definitive word, who assesses (*anakrino* again) how faithful Paul has been in his ministry. Since the Lord assesses, it follows that he is also the one who 'justifies' (*dedikaiomai*) and acquits. Paul reflects, then, on the final day, the day when the Lord will judge ministers in terms of their faithfulness to their stewardship. The Corinthians, then, should not presume to render final judgment on the effectiveness of ministers or anyone else before the time of the final judgment—the day the Lord returns. The Corinthians are engaging in an assessment of ministers, but they must desist since their knowledge of others is limited and partial. *What is hidden* in the lives of others will be exposed by *light* by the Lord on the last day. Human beings cannot make a judgment on *the motives of the heart* since we cannot unfailingly discern the motives of others, nor are we able to plumb the depths of our own hearts. Thus, the Lord will reveal on the last day the motives of each one. We see a similar conception in Romans 2:16 which refers to 'the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares'. The reward (*praise, epainos*) each one deserves will be given by the Lord on the day of judgment. God's reward will be just, since he understands the motives of the hearts and knows everything about every person.

6. Paul now pauses to explain why he has given extended reflection on his ministry and the ministry of Apollos. He engaged in such for the benefit of the Corinthians—*for your benefit*. The intention was that the Corinthians would learn from the ministries of Paul and Apollos not to *go beyond what is written*. What Paul has in mind by this last phrase is one of the most difficult questions in the letter. Usually, when Paul refers to *what is written*, a particular Old Testament text is cited, but no clear Old Testament text is being quoted here, and thus scholars explore what Paul has in mind. Perhaps the best solution is to interpret what is intended by the next line: the Corinthians go *beyond what is written* when they fall prey to pride. If this is the case, *what is written* refers generally to the Old Testament prescriptions against arrogance, and perhaps the Old Testament texts already mentioned in the letter are in view (Isa. 29:14 in 1:19; Jer. 9:23–24 lxx in 1:31; Isa. 64:4 lxx in 2:9; Job 5:13 in 3:19; Ps. 94:11 in 3:20). Whatever we make of the reference to what is written, the pride of the Corinthians

is the primary concern. The believers were becoming *puffed up* (*physiousthe*), which is a verb that Paul uses often in 1 Corinthians (4:18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4), although elsewhere it appears only in Colossians (Col. 2:18). The Corinthians were pandering to their own pride in assessing the quality of the ministries of Paul and Apollos.

7. The pride of the Corinthians continues to be the object of Paul's concern here, and rhetorical questions are used to undermine their arrogance. Paul asks what makes them *different* or 'superior' (*diakrinei*); the answer is, of course, 'nothing', but conceit blinds people to reality, and thus further rhetorical questions are posed to provide an answer. The fundamental issue is whether the Corinthians have anything they did not *receive*. The answer is obvious, revealing that there is no basis for their condescension. Augustine often appealed to this verse in his famous debate with Pelagius, emphasizing that every gift believers enjoy is from God's grace. If everything believers have received is a gift, boasting and haughtiness have no place. If conceit is present, it reveals that the Corinthians have forgotten that everything believers possess is a gift from God.

8–10. The worldliness of the Corinthians is sarcastically indicted. Some have interpreted this verse as evidence of the over-realized eschatology of the Corinthians, but it is better understood as an indication that the Corinthians have surrendered to pagan society. The problem is 'with ethics, not with eschatology'. Instead of ascribing the Corinthians' notions to over-realized eschatology, what we see here fits with Stoic—Cynic thought. For instance, we find this perspective in Epictetus: 'Who, when he lays eyes upon me, does not feel that he is seeing his king and master?' (*Diatr*. 3.22.49). The Corinthians are convinced that they are spiritually filled, abounding in riches and ruling in the world. Paul wishes that they did indeed reign, so that he might rule along with them (cf. 1 Cor. 6:2–3; 2 Tim. 2:12). The Corinthians' self-perception is radically askew, for the status of the apostles reveals the true place of believers in the world. By God's design the apostles are 'last' (csb) instead of first in the eyes of the world.

Paul likely uses the image of the triumphal procession (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:15) in which victorious generals paraded defeated captives through the streets in a victory celebration, following which the enemies of the emperor were slain. The apostles, then, have become a *spectacle* in the world—like those in the gladiatorial arena—for both angels and human beings, yet a spectacle not of triumph but of suffering and defeat. The Corinthians' prosperity and triumph indicate that they are taking the side of the persecutors of Christians. Paul sarcastically contrasts the life of the Corinthians with his own. Paul, in the eyes of the world, is foolish, but the Corinthians are respected as *wise* (cf. 1:18–19, 26). Paul is *weak* and suffering, having no status in society, but they are *strong*. In an honour–shame culture, Paul is *dishonoured*, but they are *honoured*. Paul draws us back into 1 Corinthians 1:26–28, for there we see that not many of the wise, strong or noble were called. The Corinthians were identifying with those who did not belong to God, but those whom God has called are those who, in the eyes of the world, are foolish, weak and dishonoured.

11. In this verse Paul begins a catalogue of his suffering; we find similar catalogues in 2 Corinthians (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:8–10; 6:4–10; 11:23–27; 12:10). The sufferings of Paul, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, are a corollary of Christ's sufferings. We see here a confirmation of Paul's poverty and weakness. Paul often suffered from hunger and thirst in his mission. Similarly, he was often cold, lacking adequate clothing perhaps in his travels through mountains and in other circumstances. He was also *brutally treated*, and we see in 2 Corinthians 11:23–25 that such mistreatment included imprisonments, floggings, lashings and beatings. Paul was also *homeless*, which means that as an itinerant missionary he did not have a permanent place of residence.

12–13. The nature of Paul's life as an apostle continues to be expounded. Paul emphasizes the toil and labour of his work, especially the fact that he worked with his *own hands* since manual labour was frowned upon as unsuitable for those who were of the upper class (cf. Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). Cicero says, 'Unbecoming to a gentleman, too, and vulgar are the means of livelihood of all hired workmen whom we pay for mere manual labour, not for artistic skill; for in their case the very wage they receive is a pledge of their slavery' (Cicero, Off. 1.42). Instead of being praised by the world, Paul

was *cursed*, but he responded to such curses with blessing instead of with rage and a vindictive spirit. Paul was often considered to be a danger to society and thus he was *persecuted*, but he responded to such mistreatment with endurance. Paul was also *slandered* and misrepresented as an apostle, yet he reacted with kindness and grace. The apostles are rejected as if they are the *scum* and *garbage* of the world—the offscourings that are washed down the drain or thrown on the garbage heap. Paul does not write these things to elicit pity but to show the Corinthians that they have become partisans of the world.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-21

In the *NICNT*, Gordon Fee comments on Paul's appeal and exhortation:

14 In light of the irony and sarcasm of the preceding paragraph, how can Paul now deny that he was intending to "shame" them? The very fact of this demurrer is evidence that he realized they should have been ashamed; they would seem beyond hope if they were not. But that was not the *reason* for what has preceded. A moment will come when their behavior will be so distressing to him that he will openly admit to trying to shame them into Christian sanity (6:5; cf. 15:34). But for now the purpose behind his writing "this" has been "to warn you as my dear children."596

The verb translated "to warn" is a Pauline word in the NT.597 "Admonish" probably catches the present nuance a little better. It has the primary connotation of trying to have a corrective influence on someone, an "admonition that is designed to correct while not provoking or embittering." Such correction may include warning, but it also implies counsel and appeal. It is a fitting word for the imagery "as my dear599 children." This imagery, which is especially conciliatory after what has just been said, had a long history in Judaism, where it often depicted the relationship of a teacher to his disciple(s). The term "disciples," however, never appears in Paul's letters. The people in his churches are his "children" because they are his converts (v. 15; Phlm. 10); and because they are his children in this sense, he can exhort and encourage (1 Thess. 2:11), or chide (2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14; Gal. 4:19), or appeal, as here.

15 Having called them his "dear children," Paul proceeds to make use of this imagery in two ways: first, in this first sentence, to reestablish his unique, and therefore authoritative, relationship to them as their founder; second, in the follow-up sentence (vv. 16–17), to urge them to conform their behavior to the "father's" example. In this first instance, he not only reminds them that he is their father—because he gave them birth "in Christ Jesus … through the gospel"—but also emphasizes that his relationship to them is unique in this regard, for he is their *only* father. This latter point is made first, in unusually hyperbolic language: "Even though you *may end up* having *countless thousands*604 of guardians in Christ, *at least* you do not have many fathers." The "guardian,"606 to be distinguished from a "teacher," was ordinarily a trusted slave to whom a father turned over his children (usually sons), whom the guardian was to conduct to and from school and whose conduct in general he was to oversee. This is not intended to be a putdown of their other teachers, of whom Paul has thus far spoken favorably. Rather, the metaphor intends simply to distinguish his own relationship to them from that of all others, including of course Apollos and Peter.608 But it also includes those within their community who are currently exercising influence, not to mention all others who ever would. Paul's unique relationship to them was that of a "father," and that gave him a special authority over and responsibility toward them. With this language, therefore, he is both reasserting his authority and appealing to their loyalty, which had obviously eroded in this church.

To explain this point, Paul adds: "for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." This first of all elaborates on the words "not many fathers." But the emphasis lies on the more significant relationship brought about by their "birth," namely that they are "in Christ Jesus." Paul's concern from beginning to end is the gospel. That is why he can move so easily from the conclusion of the preceding paragraph (vv. 11–13) to this passage, without losing stride. Everything has been said and done for Christ Jesus. He has "fathered" them so that they might be *in Christ Jesus*. He has sent Timothy, who is also his son in the Lord, so that they might learn to walk *in Christ Jesus* (v. 17). This

is the point of everything for Paul, and the other details of the argument must never obscure for the later reader that singular passion of his. The means of their birth "into Christ Jesus," as always, is "through the gospel." This is how the whole argument began (1:17); with these words it is being brought full circle. The content of the gospel, of course, is what was argued at the beginning against their worldly wisdom (1:18–31).

16 This clause now takes the father-child imagery a step further, and in so doing enunciates the point of the entire paragraph. Since they have but one father, Paul, who gave them birth in Christ Jesus through the gospel, "therefore I urge611 you to imitate me." The picture is one of a father who has instructed his children in proper behavior by his own example. They are to be "like father, like children." The immediate context for this exhortation is the tribulation list that has just preceded (vv. 11–13), in which Paul describes his own life and ministry in terms consonant with the gospel of a crucified Messiah. It therefore functions as one more item in the long argument that has preceded (1:10–4:13), which again appeals to the servant nature of discipleship over against their "boasting" and worldly wisdom. However, by implication, especially from what is said further in the next sentences (v. 17), the concern is now also being raised to the much broader level of their behavior in general, as it is reflected throughout the rest of the letter.

The language "imitate me" has considerable significance also for the larger question of Pauline ethical instruction. The lack of specific references to the teaching of Jesus in the Pauline letters has been an ongoing puzzle for NT scholarship,615 the best solution to which lies with this concept. That Paul was long on behavioral concerns (ethics is the proper theological category) is writ large in his letters. He is never satisfied simply to change people's thinking. That is obviously important because the one (right behavior) flows out of the other (correct theology); but in his letters he never leaves them with a "theological" argument that does not have its corresponding parenesis (ethical instruction). It is therefore impossible to imagine that he did not do the same when he was present with the young converts in these newly formed Christian communities. Indeed, a straightforward sentence in his earliest preserved letter (1 Thess. 4:1) makes it clear that he did. But what shape did that instruction take? Here is where the teaching of Jesus and the example of the missionary coalesce. Later in the present letter (11:1) Paul says as much: They are to follow him as he follows Christ, which in that case most likely refers both to the example and the teaching of Christ. Thus Paul's actual ethical instruction as it appears in his Epistles rarely uses the *language* of Jesus as it is recorded in the Gospels, but on every page it reflects his example and his teaching, as we shall have occasion to note throughout (cf. 4:12). It may seem somewhat prosaic to add that such an exhortation probably tells us far more about the apostle's own ethical life than we could have ever picked up from a biographer.

17 This passionate concern over their behavior, and especially that they follow his example, is now posited as the reason for Paul's having sent Timothy to them. The reason for this visit is easier to determine than the event itself, which receives its first mention here. "For this reason619 I have sent to you Timothy." Although the verb could be an epistolary aorist, and therefore have a present sense, as in the original NIV,620 this is much more likely an event that had already taken place, and Paul simply cannot be sure which event will occur first at the Corinthians' end of things. Two items support this supposition: (1) the fact that Timothy is not mentioned in the salutation (1:1), which makes it improbable in the highest degree that he was still with Paul while he was writing the letter; and (2) the suppositional nature of the reference at the end of the letter (16:10, q.v.), which makes it unlikely that Timothy is the bearer of our letter. Nothing more is known of this mission by Timothy apart from these two somewhat oblique references.

The description of Timothy is especially remarkable, since he would have been so well known to the Corinthians. He was with Paul during at least some of the mission to that city; and they would also have known that he had been something of a "trouble-shooter" for Paul. Why then this description? The implication of what is said at the end of the letter (16:10–11) is that Paul is not certain about the kind of reception Timothy might have. If the Corinthians have been "examining" and rejecting Paul, what might they do to his younger companion? The present sentence implies that Timothy is going in Paul's stead, and therefore that he is to be regarded by them as though Paul himself were present among them. Thus Paul reminds them that Timothy, as they are (v. 14), is "my son whom I love." As

such he bears family resemblance "in the Lord," that is, he can be counted on to walk in the ways of his spiritual father. This is especially brought out in the word "faithful," the one requirement of the Lord's servants (v. 2). Paul's point, then, is not to inform the Corinthians about someone they already know, but to reinforce Timothy's own relationship to Paul so that they will pay attention to what Timothy says.

Timothy's singular task is to "remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus," so that they might "imitate" Paul in his own discipleship. The word translated "way of life" is literally "ways" (pl.) and implies both behavior and teaching, which in Paul are intimately bound together. The sending of Timothy for such a task indicates the significance Paul placed on his own presence to guide or correct the community, as the need may be. In light of his inability to be present at the moment, he did the next best thing; he sent Timothy to be there in his place. But now that the Corinthians have written to him and Chloe's people have filled out the picture for him as to the real situation in Corinth, he in turn writes to them—and expects the letter also to take the place of his presence. Given the nature of the aberrations in Corinth, it is important, as he does regularly in this letter,627 to remind them that what he and Timothy have taught them is in keeping with what is taught in the church universally, at least in all the Pauline churches. This is another gentle nudge to remind them that they, not he, are embarking on a maverick course.

18 In the context of his own anticipated "coming," Paul concludes629 the long section (begun in 1:10) by sounding a warning directly toward the troublemakers in the community. The words "some of you have become arrogant" indicate at least two things: First, the trouble that Paul has been having comes from within the community itself, not from outside agitators. The verb is identical to that used earlier (v. 6), where some are "puffed up" for Apollos over against Paul. This sentence verifies what we have argued right along, that the problem is not simply internal division because they are "playing favorites" with their leaders. Some in the community are decidedly anti-Paul.

Second, although the entire community has been infected, probably in varying degrees, the instigators of the trouble are a smaller group among them. It is noteworthy that at the end of this long argument, carried on against the entire community indiscriminately, Paul should finally zero in on these people in particular. As noted earlier, they were probably in view in several references throughout the argument (2:15; 3:12–15, 17, 18; 4:3, 6–7). The problem, of course, is that they have had considerable influence on the entire community, so that the majority, it seems likely from the tenor of the argument throughout, are on the side of these malcontents, or at least are being influenced by them. But at the end of the argument Paul singles out the ringleaders and threatens them with his own coming. These are the people who have disdained both Paul's authority and his theology. To the degree that the community as a whole has tolerated (or adopted) so much unchristian behavior as the result of this sub-Christian theology, they too are at fault. Hence the letter is addressed to the church; but continually, as here, it evidences tension between the "some" and the whole (see on 1:26). This tension is especially important for the understanding of the three matters that follow immediately (chaps. 5 and 6), not to mention the rest of the letter.

The precise nuance of the qualifying clause "as if I were not coming to you" lacks certainty. It could mean that he had previously communicated that he would come, but was delayed for some reason (cf. 1 Thess. 2:17–3:5), and this is now being held against him. More likely, his failure to return after some years634 had caused some of them to treat him with disdain, "as if I were not coming [back] to you [at all]." His failure to return had perhaps increased in their minds the comparison with the itinerant philosopher; his own lack of wisdom and eloquence (from their perspective) and failure to return combine to give both him and his gospel a poor showing.

19–20 Because the sending of Timothy and this letter might have the force of playing right into the hands of the "arrogant," Paul quickly affirms his own plans to return to Corinth. The details of this plan are given at the end of the letter (16:5–9). That passage also indicates that "very soon" is a relative term. He does intend to come, and it will be "without delay," which here must mean as soon as it is possible for him to do so. The emphasis is on the *certainty* of the visit, not its immediacy. In

any case, all such plans are contingent on "if the Lord is willing" (cf. 16:7; Jas. 4:15). Paul's previous experiences of promising a return but having "Satan hinder" him (1 Thess. 2:18), plus his own untoward circumstances in Ephesus (15:31–32; 16:9b), have made him properly cautious. He plans to come; but his plans are always subject to the divine will.

The reason for the emphasis on the certainty (from his present perspective) of his coming is expressed in the last clause: "And then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have." Hidden in this translation are two expressions that tie this final section to everything that has preceded. First, "how these arrogant people are talking" is probably a bit too free a rendering of "the logos of those who are puffed up." *Logos* might have referred simply to "how they are talking," if it were not contrasted to *dynamis* ("power") and qualified by "those who are puffed up." They are "puffed up" against Paul (v. 6) partly because he lacks significant *logos* ("word, speech"; see esp. 1:17 and 2:1–5). But in contrast to the *logos* characterized by wisdom that they demand of him, he has already reminded them of his real *logos* ("preaching"), which was not "with persuasion of wisdom" but was accompanied by the *dynamis* of God, i.e., by the powerful work of the Spirit (cf. 2:4–5). Now he threatens the arrogant. When he returns, will they have merely logos, or will they also be able to demonstrate the *dynamis* of God in their worldly wisdom? They claim to have the Spirit; will they evidence what for Paul is the crucial matter, namely the powerful, dynamic presence of the Spirit among them to save and to sanctify (cf. 5:1–5)? Obviously he has little fear of the outcome of such a confrontation!

Some have expressed concern that Paul appears to be undoing what he has been arguing earlier (esp. 1:18–2:5 and 3:5–4:13), about the servant nature of his gospel and his own ministry. But that is a false fear, and misses the point of this text. The gospel of Christ crucified in all of its apparent weakness is nonetheless the power of God unto salvation for those who believe. Paul is not challenging the arrogant, therefore, on their grounds, but on his own. What their present stance lacks is the true power of the Spirit, which gives people birth to new life in Christ (v. 15), which can change people's lives—can "take the poor lost sinner, lift him from the miry clay and set him free," as the gospel song has it.

That this is the nature of the challenge he sets before the "puffed up" is confirmed by the explanatory word that follows (v. 20): "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of *logos* but of *dynamis*." The real action is not where they are currently trying to place it, in what is only human wisdom that "boasts" in lowly humans. What Paul is concerned about is "the kingdom of God." This is one of the rare occurrences in Paul of this term that dominates the ministry and teaching of Jesus. But the very casual way in which it here appears indicates that it was a regular part of his own understanding of the gospel. In most instances in Paul the term refers to the consummation of the kingdom at the coming of Christ (cf., e.g., 6:9–10; 15:50); but this passage, along with one in Romans (14:17), makes it certain that for him the kingdom was "now" as well as "not yet." The kingdom that has already been inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit is characterized by the *power* of the Spirit. Here is the line of ultimate demarcation between their view of spirituality and Paul's. They were living in the Spirit as though the future had dawned in some measure of fullness; hence they were above the weaknesses that characterized Paul's life and ministry. Paul, in contrast, lived in the kinds of weaknesses that characterized his Lord, but through those weaknesses the power and grace of God were still at work in the world bringing people to a salvation that put them currently in God's kingdom (cf. Col. 1:13) and assured them of that same kingdom as their inheritance (6:9–10).

21 With one further use of the father-child metaphor, Paul ties the preceding challenge (vv. 18–20) to its preceding appeal (vv. 14–17). But the tone is now less conciliatory. Being reminded by what he has just said about the opposition of "some" to him, he concludes with the threat of discipline—which the church is in no danger of exercising among themselves, as what immediately follows attests! It is arguable that this threat is directed especially against the "arrogant" (vv. 18–20). But that would miss the function of this final sentence as a lead-in to the arguments that follow, especially the two that follow immediately (5:1–13 and 6:1–11). What is remarkable about both of these next passages, as we shall see, is that the heavy guns are aimed in each case at the community itself, not at the wrongdoers. That seems to be sure evidence of the pervasive influence of the "some who are

arrogant" in their midst (v. 18). It probably also indicates—as we have argued concerning this section in general and this final paragraph in particular—that Paul's own apostleship, his capacity to speak prophetically among them, comprises a key point of tension between him and the Corinthians, both the ringleaders and the community as a whole that has been influenced by them.

"What do you prefer?" he asks. "Shall I come to you with a *rod*?" Must I come as a father who has to mete out discipline? Or will you allow this letter and Timothy's coming to serve as the proper inducement to correcting your behavior? In that case, then, he may come the way a father would prefer, "in love and with a gentle spirit." Love, of course, is what must control all Christian conduct. One should not make too much of the fact that it seems to be set in contrast to coming with a rod of discipline. Paul is simply continuing the father-child metaphor; his contrasts relate to the *manner* of his coming, not the motive, which would express love in either case. The "gentle spirit" (lit. "spirit of gentleness")641 reflects the picture given in the list that concludes the present paragraph (vv. 11–13). The word "gentleness" also echoes the teaching of Jesus, who described himself as "gentle [and humble] in heart" (Matt. 11:29; cf. 2 Cor. 10:1) and pronounced God's congratulatory blessing on those who are likewise (Matt. 5:5). As such it stands again in stark contrast to the arrogance of the Corinthian malcontents. The phrase could mean "the Spirit who brings gentleness," but here that would seem to ask the word *pneuma* to carry too much weight. In Paul, however, "the thought of [the Spirit] is latent in every reference to the 'spirit' of a Christian [person]" (cf. 5:3–4 and 14:14–15). Thus, although the phrase in one sense is simply a further expression of the metaphor, it is so as a reflection of our Lord himself, whose earthly life of "gentleness" was lived out in the power of the Spirit.

With these words the long argument that began in 1:10 is concluded. Even though at times Paul seems to be weaving in and out of several topics, the concern throughout is singular: to stop a current fascination with "wisdom" on the part of the Corinthians, which has allowed them not only to "boast," but to stand over against Paul and his gospel, and thus to miss out on what God was doing—redemption through a crucified Messiah. With a variety of turns to the argument, he sets forth his gospel over against their "wisdom" and tries to reshape their understanding of ministry and church. At the end he has finally also reasserted his authority over them, but even here he concludes by using paternal imagery, not apostolic authority—a father correcting recalcitrant children, not an apostle wielding divine authority. The clear implication is that they have no choice but to give heed to what he is saying. Their behavior, as well as their theology, needs both correction and redirection. From here he will address some other items that have been made known to him before he turns at last to respond to their letter to him (7:1).[1]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mark A. Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary
Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (NICNT)
Anthony Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary
Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary
David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today
William Baker, *1 Corinthians*, Cornerstone Bible Commentary
Paul Ellingwroth and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on 1 Corinthians*, UBSH

[1]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 163–169.