

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

The Need for a Biblical Self-Image

1 Corinthians 4:6-13

1. An Example (vs.6-7)

Paul's use of himself and Apollos in his argument has not been because they were up any way related to the ongoing problem of factionalism in Corinth. They had neither initiated or encouraged the schisms that had formed. His desire was that the church would take this chastisement to heart in order to again be committed to live and act within the parameters God has given (cf. Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:2-3). Maintaining an attitude of understanding the sovereignty of God, (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29), a reliance upon the grace of God (1 Cor. 1:4-9, 30-31), and behavior that is in accordance with the Scriptures will also result in the elimination of sinful boasting (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:18, 19; 5:2).

2. An Exaggeration (v.8)

The present leaders of the Corinthian church had a prevailing perspective of their own spiritual maturity which was vastly out of touch reality, and Paul uses sarcasm in order to bring that to light. This abrasive scolding sets the stage for Paul's contrast between himself and the Corinthians (vs.9-10).

3. An Examination (vs.9-13)

Paul compares the reality of his experience as a Christian leader to the Corinthians' perception of what that ought to be. He transitions from the scathingly sarcastic comments (v.8) to give a vividly brutal description of just how the culture regards faithful Christian apostles (v.9; cf. 2 Cor 11:16-28). He then contrasts how their present philosophical understanding puts them at odds with the apostles themselves by returning to his prior admonitions (v.10) and then concludes with a sober-minded description of the work and experience of the apostles (vs.11-13).