

Actions Speak Louder – 1Corinthians 4:14-21

Bible Study ~ 1/11/17
Grace Church of Lockeford

From the beginning of the letter Paul has been addressing an issue in the Corinthians church. There is a root issue that has evidenced itself in a host of symptoms. The root issue is one of pride. That is what Paul addresses in these verses. He wants them to understand that their actions are revealing this sin issue. In contrast to the Corinthian's behavior, God's purpose is that our actions would point others to Christ. Our actions are the loudest proclamation of our most deeply held beliefs and those actions should be about Christ and His glory. With that goal in mind Paul desires the Corinthians to make two decisions. First, he wants them to...

1. Choose To Imitate Godly Examples vv. 14-17

In v. 16 Paul calls them to imitate him. This is a common exhortation of the apostle Paul. This call for the Corinthians to imitate him is based on the role he had in leading them to Christ. Look at v. 14. The "these things" Paul is speaking of is the sarcastically direct section in vv. 6-13. Paul wants them to understand the utter absurdity of their pride and so he writes as though they are exalted and knowledgeable above Paul and Apollos. Paul wants to get their attention. Here in v. 14 he lets them know that what he has just written is not out of a desire to shame them, but to warn them. The overinflated ideas he just stated are where the Corinthians are headed if they don't shape up. He refers to them as his beloved children stating in v. 15 that though they have a multitude of instructors, they only have one Spiritual father and that is Paul. In Christ they are His spiritual children through the gospel. Based on this relationship Paul asks that they choose to imitate him. Lest they think Paul would have them follow him blindly he lets them know in v. 17 that the reason he sent Timothy (also his child in the faith) is to remind them of Paul's ways in Christ! He teaches the same everywhere and in every church (what does he teach? Romans). Paul's urging here is repeated in *11:1* with a very important addition. "*as I also imitate Christ.*" Paul's goal is to make them more like Christ, not more like Himself. He sees them headed down a dangerous path of pride that leads to the destruction of your testimony for Christ. He wants to bring them up short and have them change direction, so he appeals to them based on his spiritual fatherhood. He sends Timothy to them so that he can remind them of what Paul taught. His desire is that they would choose to follow godly examples and stop their struggle for preeminence. The danger Paul warns them of is a danger we all face. The danger of selfish pride growing unchecked and choking our gospel witness. We need continual reminders of Christ that we might imitate Him and those who are following Him. But we have blessing here because we have godly men and women we can go to and imitate! The second decision Paul wants the Corinthians to make is to...

2. Choose To Walk In The Power Of God vv. 18-21

Some in the Corinthian church think they can live however they want and get away with it because they think Paul will never come there to face them. They are puffed up. This is the Greek word φυσιώω physio, which means *make proud; puff up. To be or become proud, pictured as being puffed up with air.* They are arrogant enough to think that Paul won't come to correct them! The picture that comes to my mind is that of a puffer fish. A puffer fish makes itself appear bigger than it really is. That is what these people are like. They think they are bigger than they are. Paul says, "*If the Lord wills, I am coming.*" When he comes, he want to know their power, not their words. "Power" is the Greek word δύναμις dynamis which means *power. Possession of controlling influence; often understood as manifesting influence over reality in a supernatural power.* Paul states in v. 20 that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. These people talk a good talk, but Paul believes the power of God is absent from their lives. He will come and correct them. Therefore, he asks in v. 21 how the believers in Corinth would have him come. To discipline? Or to fellowship? Again, this warning applies to us. We must guard carefully against pride. If we don't it can make us think that we are above correction. Thinking that way cuts us off from the power of God that is available to us through the Holy Spirit. Power in the Christian life is found through being yielded to the Holy Spirit. As we yield to Him He teaches us to fear the Lord and seek God's kingdom first. How blessed we are to have this ability!

Finish this sentence for me, “Actions speak louder... than words.” There was a song we used to sing as kids that went like this. “Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks. You cannot hide what’s inside, it’s sure to come out. Your words may whisper but your actions shout.” That is what Paul is getting at here. The blessing here is that we have the opportunity to walk louder than we talk. If we heed Paul’s advice here, if we imitate him and walk in the power of God, we can be examples for Christ that will point others to Him.

CHALLENGE: Since actions speak louder than words, use them to shout to others of Christ!