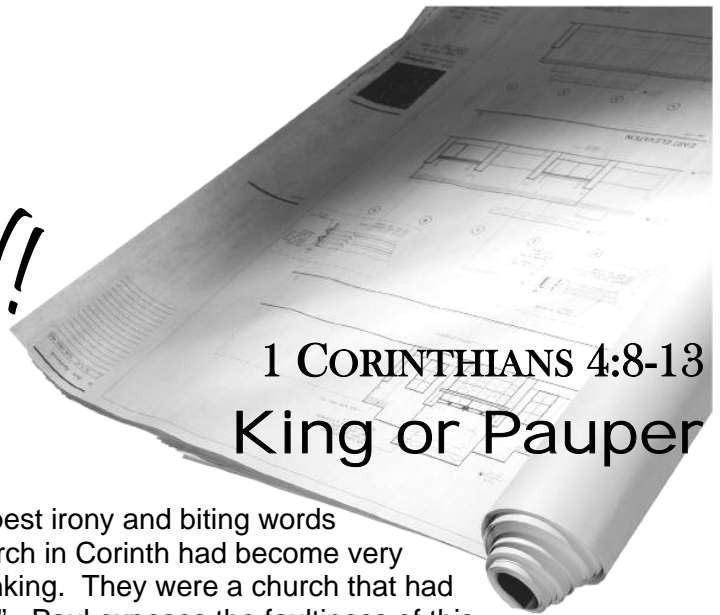




Blueprint for the Church:

Live the Gospel!

Small Group Study Guide



1 CORINTHIANS 4:8-13 King or Pauper

This section presents some of the sharpest irony and biting words of rebuke thus far in the letter. The church in Corinth had become very proud, arrogant and boastful in their thinking. They were a church that had deceived itself in thinking it had “arrived”. Paul exposes the faultiness of this thinking by contrasting the proud and boastful attitude of the Corinthian believers with the humble and meek attitude of the Apostles. The contrast is sharp and bold. It becomes clear from this passage that God’s **Blueprint for the Church** is for its members to remain humble, broken, meek, gentle and full of grace.

¹David Prior,
*The Message of
1 Corinthians*
(Downers Grove:
IVP Press, 1985), p. 65.

1. “At the heart of the boasting at Corinth was the conviction that they were really a very successful, lively, mature and effective church. The Christians were satisfied with their spirituality, their leadership, and the general quality of their life together.”¹ This could be the assessment of many churches across the land in our day as well.
 - What danger exists when a church gets to this point of thinking they have arrived?
 - In what ways would you say the church in America (as seen as a whole) is guilty of the same kind of false boasting? In what ways would you say our church is guilty of this kind of false boasting?
 - In what ways would you confess you are guilty of this kind of false boasting?
2. Paul begins his rebuke of the Corinthian church by referring to them as kings who are “already” rich and have “already” arrived in this world. Paul uses a word-play with the concepts of being a king and being a pauper.
 - In what sense are all Christians kings with overflowing riches?
In what sense are we not to see ourselves as kings?
 - In what sense are all Christians paupers in overwhelming poverty?
In what sense are we not to see ourselves as paupers?
 - How does a balanced understanding of our identity in Christ affect the way you view hardship and trial in this world? How does it affect the way you view the future hope of God’s eternal kingdom?

Don't Forget:
Discuss the Sermon Notes from this week

²John MacArthur,
*The MacArthur New
Testament Commentary:
1 Corinthians* (Chicago:
Moody Press, 1984), p. 112.

3. For all of us who are serious about being the Gospel and living the Gospel and proclaiming the Gospel to the world, we ought to expect harsh treatment from the world. John MacArthur puts it this way: "It is not hard for believers to get along in the world as long as they keep the Gospel to themselves. But if they preach, teach and live God's full Word, the world takes offense. It resents being under the light of truth."²

- This year, as an **ACTS** church, we are emphasizing our calling in **Sharing Christ**. How does this statement speak to our vision of being a God-glorifying and Christ-exalting church which is Sharing Christ?
- There is a big difference between being reviled and persecuted because the *message* we proclaim is offensive and being reviled and persecuted because the *way in which we proclaim* the message is offensive. In your own words, what is the difference?

4. Much of what Paul is saying in this paragraph communicates that the Apostles stood against the status quo of the world with its values, priorities and goals which revolved around success, reputation and wealth. It is worth noting that it seems as if the Corinthian church had embraced this very thing.

- In what ways are we much like the Corinthian believers? (Don't be quick to move beyond this question. Seriously consider where you individually, and maybe we as a church, need to repent.)
- Because of the church's contentment with their level of spirituality and pride of having "arrived", they had developed a critical spirit and took a position of superiority in judging others (4:6). Take time to allow God to examine your heart and answer this question: Do you have a spirit of pride and boasting where you are critical and judgmental or do you have more of a spirit of submissiveness and meekness where you are gentle and extending of grace to others? Explain your answer.
- Based on the question above, what would you say is the spirit or atmosphere of our church? Again, explain your answer.

5. One author raised this important question: "How does one avoid either guilt, on the one hand, because we are not like [Paul and the Apostles], or a martyr complex, on the other, in which one loves to suffer because he/she does it so well?"³

6. In your own words, summarize the central point of this passage as to what we are to take from it as we consider what it means to live the Gospel according to God's **Blueprint for the Church**.

³Gordon Fee,
*The First Epistle
to the Corinthians*
(Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans Publishing,
1987), p. 182.

For Next Week:
Prayerfully meditate and study the following: 1 Corinthians 4:14-21