

## **PUFFED UP AND PROUD**

### **TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 4:6-21**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The church in Corinth had a problem with carnality (3:1-4), and this carnality manifested itself in factions (3:4), and in pride.
2. More than once the apostle Paul has said that the divisions in the Corinthian church were the result of their vanity and pride.
3. In our text tonight, we see that Paul rebuked their pride by contrasting his own experience as an apostle with the glorying and boasting and self-satisfaction of the Corinthians.
4. "And these things, brethren" (4:6), that is, all that has been said so far regarding the foolishness of factions and divisions, "I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes" (4:6).
5. Paul wanted to teach them a lesson on humility, "that they might learn "in us," (4:6), that is that they would learn by the example of Paul and Apollos.
6. And that they would learn not to go beyond ("above") the things which are written in the Scriptures (4:6).
7. Paul was not referring to any specific Scriptures, but to the general teaching of Scripture as to the danger and foolishness of pride. Proverbs 6:17 says God hates "a proud look." Proverbs 6:16 says pride is an "abomination" to God.
8. Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to avoid the pride and partisanship connected with their preference for certain preachers, whether these preachers were Paul or Apollos or Cephas (cf. 3:22) or anyone else.
9. "That no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (4:6) means they shouldn't be taking sides. It means it is wrong to boast of one man and to disparage another.
10. Such an exaltation of their teachers was not an act of loyalty; but rather it was a gratification of their pride.
11. The Christians in Corinth were following men rather than following the Lord. Paul told them that he was using his name and Apollos' name to make a point – "that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (4:6).

1. THEIR PRIDE REVEALED
2. THEIR PRIDE REPUDIATED

### 3. THEIR PRIDE REBUKED

#### I. THEIR PRIDE REVEALED (4:6-8).

1. There is a term Paul uses three times in I Corinthians 4 to describe their pride – “puffed up” (4:6, 18, 19; cf. 5:2).
2. The first time we see the term “puffed up” is in verse 6, where Paul refers to himself and to Apollos (4:6; cf. 1:12; 3:4-6, 21, 22).
3. Paul pointed out that he was using his name and Apollos’ name to illustrate his argument – “I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes.”
4. Paul not only revealed their pride; he also ridiculed their pride (4:7, 8).
5. “And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (4:7). James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.”
6. So, if the gift came from God, why “glory” (boast)? All the glory belongs to God.
7. The songwriter put it this way: “Boasting excluded, pride I abase, I’m only a sinner saved by grace! This is my story, to God be the glory — I’m only a sinner saved by grace!” (James M. Gray).
8. The Corinthian Christians had become self-satisfied. Paul sarcastically told them they were full, they were rich, they even “reigned as kings” (4:8). They were fully satisfied with themselves. They were complacent.
9. Many Christians today have become self-satisfied. They are satisfied with their lack of Bible knowledge; they are satisfied with their weak prayer life; they are satisfied that they never win souls, etc.
10. The prophet Amos said, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1).
11. Our Lord rebuked the lukewarm church of Laodicea, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

#### II. THEIR PRIDE REPUDIATED

1. Paul contrasted their pride and self-importance with the testimony of the apostles (4:9-13). He included himself (“us” – 4:9; cf. 9:1, 2).
2. The proud Corinthians “reigned as kings without us” (4:8), but the apostles were “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (4:9).

3. Paul continues the contrast in verse 10 – “We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.”
4. While the Corinthians “reigned as kings,” the apostles both hungered, and thirsted. They were naked, and were buffeted, and they had no certain dwelling place (4:11).
5. They labored, working with their own hands: being reviled, they blessed; being persecuted, they suffered it: Being defamed, they entreated (4:12, 13).
6. They were treated “as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring (dirt) of all things unto this day” (4:13b).
7. Paul had been falsely accused, imprisoned, beaten, stoned, whipped, and shipwrecked. Paul had been mocked, maligned, misunderstood and mistreated.
8. Paul said all of this not to shame them, but to warn them (4:14). Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Paul loved them (cf. 4:21). He could see that they were heading for a fall and he wanted to warn them.
9. In verse 14, Paul referred to them as his “beloved sons.” In verse 15, he refers to himself as their spiritual father – “for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”
10. Therefore, because he had led them to Christ (cf. 4:16, 17), Paul’s words were to be taken very seriously.

### **III. THEIR PRIDE REBUKED (4:18-21)**

1. Not only was Paul sending Timothy to them, but he himself would come, “if the Lord will” (4:18, 19).
2. Paul said that when he would arrive in Corinth, he would know whether or not the “puffed up” trouble-makers had any real “power” (4:19).
3. For the Kingdom of God is not a bunch of “words” (referring to their vain and empty boasting), but of real Holy Spirit power (4:20).
4. “What will ye?” (4:21). It was for them to decide. It would depend altogether upon the Corinthians. If by their factions and divisions they would continue to behave foolishly, he would chastise them “with a rod” (4:21).
5. But if they demonstrated unity and love, he would come “in love, and in the spirit of meekness” (4:21).

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. The Greek word translated “instructor” in verse 15 is translated “schoolmaster” in Galatians 3:24 and 25. The word means “child-trainer” or “tutor.”
2. H.A. Ironside said, “There are ten thousand child-trainers but only one father. The child-trainer looked after the minor children, and he says, ‘You Corinthian babes, you have plenty of child-trainers, but only one father. I brought you to Christ, and I am your father in Christ.’ How can you tell when people are still in spiritual babyhood? One thing is they cannot enjoy the deep things of God. ‘I have fed you with milk,’ he says in another place, ‘and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able’ (I Cor. 3:2). I have known young Christians who, after being converted a number of years, say, ‘I am not interested in Bible lectures, they are too dry for me, I do not understand them. I like something simple,’ and you get the impression that they would like to lie down on a couch and have a nursing-bottle and a nipple on it, in order to suck down a little weak truth. Many of you ought to be teachers yourselves by this time and you are still just babies” (*I Corinthians*).