

## How To Live The Life To Which You're Called – 1 Cor 4:6-13

1 Cor 4:6-13; I'm not going to read the whole passage from the start, but as we work through it, you'll see that Paul addresses several issues here  
All of which fall under the umbrella of – how to live the life to which we've been called  
Something the Corinthian believers weren't doing very well, b/c of the *affluence* of their lifestyle and the *arrogance* of their attitude  
So follow along with me, starting with an **Explanation of v6-8** (read v6-8)

- Would that you really were as high/mighty as you think – rich and satisfied that you are  
Then maybe we'd benefit too Paul says  
As it is, you're not – you're not that high and mighty; And we don't – we don't benefit  
In fact, we're considered scum of the earth, like he says in v13b – *We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.*  
We're garbage; And the reason why is lost on you – that's the issue  
The reason why Paul and Apollos are so different than the Corinthians, is lost on them

6 – **I have applied** all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers  
Servants of Christ that we are Paul says, we're walking our talk, and we're applying the very things we're telling you; And we're doing so for your benefit  
This isn't for us, it's for you – *that you may learn by us*

*That you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written* – referring to all of Paul's instructions about forsaking *worldly* wisdom, and the world's way of thinking . . .  
*That none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.* (6b)  
Paul/Apollos applied these truths to *themselves*, to address the *error* in the Corinthians

- The problem is, that was lost on them too  
7 – *For who sees anything different in you?* Who sees anything other than arrogance and conceit? Nobody  
And *what do you have that you did not receive?*  
What favor? What grace? What blessing? What gifts? What knowledge?  
What do you have that wasn't given to you? Again, nothing  
Everything you've received, you've received fr God – in many cases via *us*, your leaders

*If then you received it, why do you boast as if you didn't?* As if *you did not receive it?* (7)  
As if we were useless to you; As if we were persona non grata  
As if you were self-taught, and self-made, and self-saved  
Why do you do that? Why do act like you don't need us?  
You obviously don't see it, b/c if you did, it **wouldn't make sense**

- And then, with a touch of sarcasm, he basically says in 8a – hey, maybe you're right  
I mean, *already you have all you want!* (8a); *Already you have become rich!*  
In fact, *without us you have become kings!* Kings! Maybe you're right

In spite of our absence, or maybe even b/c of it, you've got it all – materially & spiritually  
You're so good, and you have it so together – *would that you did reign* [as kings], *so that we might share the rule with you!*  
I mean hey, if you can't benefit from us, maybe we can benefit from you; Sarcasm  
Sarcasm to say, **you have so much as a result of God's grace and our influence – and it's totally lost on you**

So here's the thing – recognize a godly leader when you see one, and follow them

### **Find and follow godly leaders (v6-8)**

Leaders like Paul and Apollos, **who first of all – lead by example** (6a)

Who walk their talk; Who believe what the Bible says, and live accordingly

### **And, who are selfless in what they do** (6a)

Again, like Paul and Apollos who applied the truths of God's word for the *benefit* of their brothers and sisters in Christ

They weren't in it for the fame, and they *certainly* weren't in it for the perks

They were in it for the sake of others

So that people would know the truth, recognize their sin, surrender to Jesus Christ, and grow up together

Find and follow godly leaders who are selfless like that

### And do so **for the purpose of learning what's important**

That's the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of this from v6 – find and follow godly leaders *to learn what's important*, referring to what's written in the Scriptures

Find and follow godly leaders who can teach you what the Bible says, what it means, and how not to go beyond it

- Don't just find them and let all they say go in one ear and out the other  
Don't just find them and let *them* do all the work  
Don't just find them to feel good that you're a part of their church, ministry, team, or SG

### **Find them and follow them;** Find them and do what they do; Find them and . . .

Listen to what they say; Learn from their mistakes

Mimic their successes; And **embrace their vision**

### **[USE THE GREEN HIGHLIGHTS ABOVE FOR THE SECTION BELOW]**

- **I gotta tell ya** – I wish I would've done that earlier in life  
I wish I would have identified the wisest, godliest man I knew, and figured out a way to get together with him; I wish I'd done that  
But I didn't b/c I didn't think I needed it – I thought I knew it all  
At least as much or more than anyone else  
So I wasted a good portion of my young adult years, surrounded with godly leaders, who were lost on me

Don't make that same mistake – no matter what your age

Find the godliest man or the godliest woman you can, and start following

It's one of the best ways to live the life to **which you're called**

Second, and this one's *critical* to living the life to which you're called, is to . . .

### **Expect difficult circumstances (v9-11,13b)**

**As a follower of Christ and a follower of godly leaders, you should expect difficult circumstances; you should expect hardship; you should expect suffering**

That's one of the implications here of Paul's example – that difficult circumstances are a fact of the Christian life

And if you're going to learn all that God *wants* you to learn from them

And live the way he wants you to live in the *midst* of them – you have to expect them  
Otherwise, you'll be caught off guard and struggle at best . . .

Or throw in the towel and curse God at worst; That's v9-11

- Where, after calling them out for their high and mighty attitude, and saying tongue-in-cheek that it sure would be nice to share in their good fortune, he says in v9 . . . Our circumstances are so bad Paul says, even *angels* look at us with astonishment and shock; and no wonder b/c we're *like men sentenced to death* We're like the worst criminals or POW's who were led into the arena last, to be fed to lions or killed by gladiators – that's the word picture here

And then, he brings it into even sharper focus by contrasting his cost in it all, with the gain of the Corinthians (read v10)

He's basically elaborating on the point he made back in v6

That Paul and Apollos do what they do for the benefit of the believers in their charge

You're the beneficiaries he says, of our foolishness

B/c we were crazy, and risky, and Spirit-led in coming to you and *proclaiming* Christ, you're the better for it – you're wise *in Christ*; you're saved

And our weakness, our depletion, in doing so, has resulted in your strength

And b/c of *our* disrepute, our *disgrace* – *you're held in honor*

- It's a thought he started way back in 1:26 where he said – not many of you were wise, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth before you came to Christ But now that you have, you are – you *are* wise, your *are* strong, you *are* honored; at least by God; and sometimes even in the eyes of men And it's all b/c of *our* heavy lifting; B/c of our labor on your behalf

Your good fortune is a direct result of our misfortune Paul says

But it's *not* for the purpose of boasting, and thinking you're all self-sufficient, and acting like you're entitled to everything you have

In that sense you've got it all wrong

And v11 is his way of saying, "Let me tell you how it really is"

Let me tell you what you can *expect* when you live the life to which you're called

When you bear the message of the cross like *we* do as apostles (read v11)

- I think it's safe to say that we know little of this in these United States In fact, we do all we can to *avoid* difficult circumstances/hardship like that, don't we? Thinking something must be *wrong* with us, if we can't Or that God's punishing us; Or Satan's attacking us

And we'd *never* think of *expending* ourselves to that extent for the cause of Christ

I mean sacrifice every now and then, ya; But homeless, hungry, and *poorly dressed*?

Come on; That's where I draw the line

If I can't go to a restaurant every evening, game over

Or my car doesn't match my purse – I'm not gettin' in it

And buy my clothes at Walmart so I can use the excess money for kingdom purposes?

I feel faint just *thinking* about it

And yet the difficult circumstances in which *Paul* found himself, *far* exceeds that

Not b/c he liked being buffeted and homeless, but b/c it came with the territory in doing what God wanted; in living the life to which he was called

And if Paul wasn't exempt, neither are we

If he wasn't exempt from hardship, *we aren't either*

**[PICK UP BLUE HIGHLIGHT ABOVE FOR THE SECTION BELOW]**

Which I realize is totally contrary to those who preach a health, wealth, and prosperity gospel – shameful as it is . . .

But if that were true, then Paul wouldn't have suffered so much

He would have prayed a little name-it claim-it mantra – and poof, the situation would have changed

But he didn't, b/c that's not how it works, and that's not the gospel life to which we're called; we're not called to a life of ease

- Having said that, the point is *not* that we should *pursue* hardship – masochism's not a biblical virtue . . .

But neither should we *flee* it; Rather, we should *expect* it

When serving th Lord, we should expect difficult *circumstances at times*

Like *it says in* . . .

**Phil 1:29** – *It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake*

**John 15:20** – *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*

So if your life in Christ is a perpetual walk in the park – with no hardship, no suffering, and no difficulties as a result of your service and sacrifice and stewardship . . .

Something's wrong

You're not giving like you should, or living like you should, or serving like you should, or witnessing like you should

Difficulty in life should not be foreign to you as a believer

And I'm not talking about the difficulties of living in a fallen world – like getting sick, or going through a natural disaster, or getting in an accident

I'm talking about being a *spectacle* in people's eyes – having them look at you like something's wrong with you b/c of what you said, or did, or how you live

I'm talking about being weak at the end of the day, b/c you spent yourself serving – and then doing it all over again the next

I'm talking about the difficulties of living simply, that *others may simply live*

- **We are so good** at rationalizing our ease in life, and even better at avoiding hardship – which is just the opposite of Paul's pattern

Does that mean our suffering will look the same as his? Not necessarily

Or the same as each other? Probably not

Some people's hardship will be internal and emotional, other's external and physical

Some short-lived, other's long-term

We will suffer differently, and to different degrees; But that's not your concern

Your concern, servant that you are – is to serve, and give, and love, and live

The life that is, to which God has called *you* – difficult *circumstances and all*

**[THE ABOVE SECTION MAY BE TOO SHORT, BUT SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO]**

**Find and follow** godly leaders; Expect difficult circumstances

And third, in order to live the life to which you're called . . .

**Respond in love when faced with hate (v12b-13a)**

In the midst of citing his difficult circumstances, Paul says in v12b-13a . . .

That's responding in love when faced with hate; And we should do the same

We should respond with the love of a blessing, when faced with the hate of verbal abuse

That's what *revile* means – verbal abuse

And our response is a common theme among the apostles

Like when Peter says in **1 Pet 3:9** – *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*

Hard to do for sure; Extremely hard

But if we're going to live the life to which we're called – **do it we must**

- **Second** – when faced with the hate of persecution, respond with the love of endurance

*When persecuted, we endure* Paul says (12b)

Like when he was stoned in Lystra and left for dead – listen to Acts 14:19-22

That's responding with the love of endurance when faced with the hate of persecution

And last, **when faced with** the hate of slander, respond with loving entreaty

*When slandered, we entreat* (13a); Not a word we use very often, but it simply means “humble appeal”

When maligned, when smeared, when insulted – we humbly make our appeal; we plead

For what? For their case? For their good name? I think not

Over and over again in the book of Acts, we find Paul ignoring what his opposition thinks of *him*, and focusing on what they think of *God*

We find him pleading for their belief and repentance, instead of his innocence and purity

We find him making a humble appeal for the *truth*, instead of a defensive appeal for *himself*

What an example

When faced with the hate of slander, respond with the love of truth – God's truth

Not for your *defense*, but more importantly, for their *belief*

That's what's going to make a difference in their lives for eternity, not the untarnished reputation **of your name**

- **Respond in love** when faced with hate

And if the example of the apostles isn't enough to compel you, consider that of Jesus

When passersby threw insults at *him* on the cross, he responded w/ a blessing – *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Lk 23:34)

And so endured the persecution, out of love for us

In fact, when you think about it, the cross, in and of itself, was his loving appeal in the face of our hateful sin

His special pleading to say – believe in me, and repent of your sins, and I'll give you the gift of eternal life

That's responding in love when faced with hate

And it's the very thing we remember at *communion*, is it not?

Christ's death on the cross was God's loving appeal for your repentance, when faced with the hate of your sin **(Summary)**