

### My Thoughts Exactly – 1 Cor 4:14-21

1 Cor 4:14-21; I'm going to unpack this text a little differently than I have most of the others thus far in our series

Instead of working our way through it, and applying it as we go . . .

I going to read **The Text** and comment on it, and then go back and apply it

So starting in v14, you follow along with me

- 14 – *these things* – refer to Paul's hardship, in light of their ease  
*Admonish* – noutheteo; meaning "to put in mind that which is correct" (14-15)

He calls them *beloved children* b/c he was their *father* in Christ – i.e. he led them to the Lord *through the gospel* message . . .

And then continued to lead them as their pastor and shepherd

Influencing and caring for them accordingly, much like a good father does with his kids

Which is different than the *countless guides* they have in Christ (15a) – i.e. guardians or helpers who oversee their well-being and conduct

The idea is that of a trusted slave, to whom the father of the house entrusts the care of his children, escorting them to and from school, and watching their behavior

Paul's like, you have plenty of people like that, but not many who love you like I do

- Then in v16 he says – *I urge you then, be imitators of me.*  
*Imitators*, not as people who just mimic, but who internalize the model and example set before them, and live it out naturally  
He's looking for loyal disciples, and urging them toward it (17)

So important was it in *their* walk with Christ, to follow Paul in *his*, that he enlisted the help of other pastors like Timothy, to remind them

And then told him to do the very same thing

That's 2 Tim 2:2 where he says – *What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

- There's only one problem – they weren't listening; That's v18-21 where he says . . . (18)  
*Arrogant* in that they disdain and dismiss both his authority and his theology, thinking they can easily get away with it since he's not around (19)  
I'll find out what their really made of when I get in their face about their sin  
When I question their beliefs in light of the truth; We'll see (20a)

The *Kingdom of God* – referring to the rule and reign of Christ in the hearts and lives of those who believe in him

Consisting not in talk, but *power* – as in the strength and efficacy (effectiveness) to change and transform a person and community from the inside out

That's the kind of K of G Paul's talking about it – not the feel good fuzzies of those who tickle your ears, or the raging rhetoric of charismatic demagogues

It's the real deal, with real power, to bring about real change, in real life

And then in v21 he brings them to a point of decision

What's it gonna be? The heat, or the love? It's your choice

Are you going to remain proud, or humble yourself?

- That's the text

And when you put it all together, it's an earnest plea from a pastor to his people – to hear his heart, follow his lead, and heed his warnings

And I want to take the opportunity to do the same

To talk with you, and help you understand where I'm coming from and what I'm thinking, as I preach and teach and lead you week in and week out

It's a message and outline that came very quickly as I was working through this passage – largely I think, b/c I so resonate with what Paul is saying here

I was like – "These are my thoughts *exactly*;" Hence the title

But I'm a bit concerned about preaching it b/c it's all about me, and it could very easily be taken wrong

And I *so* much don't want you to do that

Which makes this first point absolutely critical; And that is, to . . .

**Hear my heart (v14-15)**

When stand up here and preach and teach – **hear my heart**

Especially when I mix my metaphors and mess up my words

**That's the gist** of v14-15 – Paul's basically saying, "hear my heart"

You're my *beloved children* in the Lord, and I love you like a father

And when he says in v14 – *I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children* . . .

I want you to know that I feel the same way; Those are my thoughts exactly

- When I speak, **I speak not to shame you but to admonish you**  
To correct or warn or appeal to you, without provoking or embittering you  
That's my desire; That's my goal

It doesn't mean that shame is completely *out* as a means of getting through to you . . .

But for the most part, that's not my heart

My heart is to nurture you, and teach you, and shepherd you – b/c you're precious in God's sight, and precious in mine

So when you hear me pressing on issues of salvation, and sanctification, and holiness, and godliness, and obedience, and sacrifice . . .

It's not to tear you down, but build you up

It's not to condemn you, but convince you – hoping that the HS **will convict you**

**Hear my heart** – when I speak, I speak not to shame you, but admonish you

- And **I say the hard things b/c I love you**  
In fact, anything else would be *un*-loving  
Speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in love, no matter how hard it is to say or hear – is the most loving thing I can do  
To preach the authority of God's Word w/out apology is the most *caring* thing I can do  
That's why I say the hard things – b/c I love you, *beloved children* that you are

It's like when my mom told me I could take a paper route in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but only if I agreed not to cross the highway – I didn't want to hear that

That meant a loss of income – all \$2.25 of it

But she said it anyway, b/c she loved me and didn't want to see me get hurt  
And that's my heart toward you – I say the hard things b/c I love you, and don't want to see you get hurt by continuing in your sin, or walking in your complacency

- **Third, I confront the issues b/c I *have* to**

Just as Paul was doing with the Corinthians, I have to do with you  
It comes with the territory of pastoral ministry and spiritual fatherhood – to confront your issues; It's part of my God-given role

A role that was affirmed originally by the elders of HBC-Naperville, and now *confirmed* by 10+ years of fruitful ministry – the largest part of which is this *church*; you guys  
And with that role comes both the responsibility *and* authority to confront the issues I see in you, or hope to prevent in you

It's like a father's role with his children

He's not there to make them *feel* good, but to make them *be* good

And the same is true of my role

I'm not here to make you *feel* good, but to help you *be* good – to lead and guide and shepherd you in the ways of God

That's my heart in confronting the issues – I do it b/c I have to; it's **part of my role**

- **Last, I say it like it is to get through to you**

**Saying it straight** in any facet of life, is the absolute best way to ensure understanding  
Pleasantries and platitudes leave you comfortably numb at best, and blissfully ignorant at worst

And if it weren't for the fact that there's so much of that out there in pulpits these days, saying it like it is wouldn't be so shocking . . .

Or refreshing, depending on your perspective

Neither of which is my goal or heart – I don't say it like it is to shock you or refresh you  
I say it like it is to *get through* to you; To ensure your understanding; *That's* my heart

And as I express it each week, I'm well aware that I'm not the only one from whom you can learn

Just like in Paul's day, and maybe even more so in ours, it's possible that you have *many* guides in Christ – many people who teach you the word

But I also know that there's something special about the one you sit under each and every week – your pastor

The one who guides you in person, and probably influences you the most

And I just want you to know, that though I don't have a personal relationship with every one of you . . .

I *do* love you, and take your presence and partnership here very seriously, and hold you dearly in my heart (**Summary**)

Wanting nothing more than to get *through* to you, so that you *break through* for the Lord

That's *my* heart, just as Paul expressed his

And I hope you hear it – today and every day

**The second thought** I want to convey to you based on Paul's example here, is to . . .

**Follow my lead (v16-17)**

That is, follow my lead in *ministry*, and my example in *life*; Follow my lead

And again, hear my heart in this

I'm not saying this as if I'm the best leader in the world, or the best example in every respect, or that I have it all together – I don't

I struggle with some of the same things you struggle with

But here's the thing – I'm struggling

I'm fighting the good fight, and I am intent on running and finishing the race in the strength that God provides

And as I do, as I follow Christ and *only* as I follow Christ, you can and should follow my lead – that's the biblical model with pastors and churches

The sheep follow the lead of their shepherd

That's the implication of **1 Pet 5:1-3**, where speaking to the churches at large, he says . . .

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

As one of your elders, especially in my role of preaching and teaching . . .

I have the responsibility to shepherd you, and be an example to you, that's *worthy* of your **following**

- It's like **Paul said to Timothy**, who was a pastor himself in Ephesus (**1 Tim 4:12**)

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

Why? B/c people were following, and rightly so\*\*\*\*\*

The very thing Paul urges in 1 Cor 4:16 – *be imitators of me*

Which are my **thoughts exactly** – and I do not say that lightly or flippantly

In fact, I say it with much fear and trepidation – for my own soul, *and* for yours

**As I keep** a close watch on myself, follow my lead

Follow my lead in speech, and faith, and conduct, and belief, and purity

B/c there's much to be gained, and much at stake

- Having said that, I'd be a liar if I said I liked the pressure or enjoyed the scrutiny

I don't, especially when I *do* the things I *don't* want to do, and *don't* do the things I *do* want to do – like Paul said of **himself in Rom 7**

Like when I responded to a rude police officer with dripping sarcasm in Florida, over Spring Break

I was so mad, I don't even remember what I said, but it was something like – “thank you so much officer for your helpfulness and kindness; we really appreciate it”

And then stomped on the accelerator and spun my tires as I pulled away

Not good; And he could have made my life miserable at the very least

Fortunately he had better things to do

The point being – sometimes I do the things I don't want to do, and don't do the things I do want to do, and feel the pressure of that as your spiritual leader  
But having been called by God to be a pastor, and to be *your* pastor – I know that scrutiny and pressure come with the territory  
And though I may not like it at times, I'll tell you this – I *love* the fruit; I *love* the result  
The result of greater sanctification in my *own* life, and the same in yours as you follow

So as I continue to work out my salvation with fear and trembling, all the while resting in the blood of Jesus and the grace of God for my justification and standing . . .  
As I do that, as I follow *his* lead, you follow mine, will you?  
B/c that's the biblical precedent, and **that's my heart**

And then last . . .

### **Heed my warnings (v18-21)**

And once again, please hear my heart in this  
I'm not saying it with some fist-pounding, authoritarian attitude  
Like, "you better listen to me or you're going to get it;" That's not my heart  
My heart is to plead with you to heed my warnings from time to time, just like Paul did in v18-21 – warning them of confrontation and consequences if they didn't  
Did you catch that? He loved them enough to warn them of their sin and its consequences

- And I do too; I love you enough . . .  
To warn you if you're headed for a cliff; To confront you over your behavior or attitude  
To lean into your problem and help you correct it  
To tell you what you don't want to hear  
In fact, I love you so much that I'm willing to risk your absence, b/c I warned you about your sin

I'm willing to risk that you'll take your ball and bat and go home . . .  
Or find some other church and pastor who speaks to you with words of *flattery*, instead of words of warning  
The very thing Paul said he *didn't* do in 1 Thess 2:5 – *We never came with words of flattery* he said; Never  
And neither have I with you; Nor will I; B/c I love you too **much to do that**  
**I love you too** much to withhold warnings for your own good

Warnings about your failure to do what's right or best . . .  
Or the consequences of your sin in doing what's wrong or worst  
Warnings that you must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God  
Warnings that without faith it's impossible to please God as you live your life  
Warnings that hell is real and God is just  
And warnings that apart from obedience there *is* no blessing  
I love you too much to withhold warnings like that

And even if I didn't, even if I didn't love you as *beloved children* in the Lord, I couldn't withhold them  
It's not in my nature, it's not in my calling, and it's not in the Bible  
Prov 27:5 says – *Better is open rebuke than hidden love*  
*Hidden* love on my part, *silent* love on my part, gets you nowhere

Which means I *have* to speak up; If there's an issue, or even the possibility of it . . .  
I have to do everything I can to bring the full weight and force of God's kingdom and God's truth to bear on your life  
I have to, and I want to; B/c I love you too much to do otherwise . . .  
And I love this church too **much to fail in it (Summary)**

- So please, for your sake *and* for mine – heed my warnings; and follow my lead; and hear my heart  
Those are my thoughts