

1 Corinthians 4:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Analysis

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers. Myrioi paidagōgoi (μυρίοι παιδαγωγοί, "ten thousand guardians/tutors") uses hyperbole. Paidagōgos referred to the household slave who supervised children, escorted them to school, and enforced discipline—a custodian, not primarily a teacher (Gal 3:24-25). Paul contrasts numerous such functionaries with pateras (πατέρας, "fathers")—one has many tutors but few fathers.

For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. The aorist egennēsa (ἐγέννησα, "I begat/fathered") describes Paul's evangelistic ministry that birthed the Corinthian church (Acts 18:1-11). Dia tou euangeliiou (διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, "through the gospel") identifies the means—spiritual paternity occurs through gospel proclamation. This unique relationship grounds Paul's authority: he's not merely a teacher among many but their founding apostle. While others build on his foundation (3:10), none can claim the same generative role.

Historical Context

In Corinth's philosophical marketplace, itinerant teachers competed for students. The Corinthians treated Christian leaders like rival philosophers, forgetting that Paul uniquely brought them the gospel that saved them. His paternal claim isn't arrogant but factual—he planted the church (3:6). This father-child metaphor

appears elsewhere (1 Thess 2:11; Phlm 10; 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4) for those Paul evangelized or mentored.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Who served as your spiritual father or mother—the person who first brought you the gospel or disciplined you in early faith?
2. How do you honor those who spiritually 'begot' you, versus more recent teachers who have instructed your established faith?
3. Are you actively seeking to 'beget' spiritual children through evangelism and discipleship, or merely consuming teaching from others?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	γὰρ	μυρίους	παιδαγωγούς	ἔχετε	ἐν	Χριστῷ	ἀλλ'
though	For	ten thousand	instructors	ye have	in	Christ	yet
G1437	G1063	G3463	G3807	G2192	G1722	G5547	G235
οὐ	πολλοὺς	πατέρας·	ἐν	γὰρ	Χριστῷ	Ἰησοῦ	διὰ
have ye not	many	fathers	in	For	Christ	Jesus	through
G3756	G4183	G3962	G1722	G1063	G5547	G2424	G1223
τοῦ	εὐαγγελίου	ἐγὼ	ὑμᾶς	ἐγέννησα			
the gospel	I	you	have begotten				
G3588	G2098	G1473	G5209	G1080			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:10 (Parallel theme): According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Galatians 4:19 (References Christ): My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

1 Corinthians 9:23 (Parallel theme): And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

1 Corinthians 9:14 (Parallel theme): Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

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