

1 Corinthians 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Analysis

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. The verb *parakaleō* (παρακαλῶ, "I urge/exhort") is intense but respectful—a fatherly appeal, not harsh command. *Mimētai mou ginesthe* (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, "become imitators of me") is the practical application. *Mimētēs* (μιμητής, "imitator") was used in Greek philosophy for students emulating teachers. Paul boldly presents himself as an exemplar, not from arrogance but because he faithfully imitates Christ (11:1).

This call to imitation counters Corinthian factionalism. Instead of debating which teacher to follow, they should imitate Paul's Christ-conforming pattern—his embrace of weakness, sacrificial love, and cross-centered ministry (vv. 9-13). True spiritual maturity isn't mastering esoteric knowledge or displaying spectacular gifts but Christlikeness, modeled by suffering apostles. Paul's confidence in offering himself as example stems from his relentless pursuit of Christ (Phil 3:12-17).

Historical Context

Greco-Roman education emphasized imitation (*mimesis*)—students observed and copied teachers' lives, not just doctrines. Philosophers served as moral exemplars. Paul Christianizes this pedagogy: believers imitate Christ-imitating leaders. His boldness in self-presentation as model (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:7-9) reflects confidence not in his perfection but in his faithful reproduction of Christ's character.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Whose life are you imitating—whose faith, love, endurance, and gospel priorities are you consciously patterning your life after?
2. Could you boldly say to others, 'Imitate me,' or would your life produce confusion or compromise if closely copied?
3. How specifically does imitating Paul's embrace of suffering, manual labor, and non-retaliation (vv. 11-13) challenge your current lifestyle?

Interlinear Text

παρακαλῶ	οὖν	ὑμᾶς	μιμηταί	μου	γίνεσθε
I beseech	Wherefore	you	followers	of me	be ye
G3870	G3767	G5209	G3402	G3450	G1096

Additional Cross-References

2 Thessalonians 3:9 (Parallel theme): Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (Parallel theme): Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Philippians 3:17 (Parallel theme): Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (Parallel theme): And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

Hebrews 13:7 (Parallel theme): Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Philippians 4:9 (Parallel theme): Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

1 Peter 5:3 (Parallel theme): Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

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