

1 Corinthians 4:21

21) Paul is coming to Corinth? How do the Corinthians want him to come? **What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of mildness?** They may have their choice. Paul is ready to come in either way... “Rod” is figurative for severe chastisement as a father may chastise “children,” v. 14...

The alternatives which Paul places before the Corinthians are “the rod” and “love and a spirit of mildness.” Do they want severity or loving mildness? The latter is possible only in the event that they repent. But is it right ever to use the rod of severity? Paul certainly implies that it is. In fact, this phrase, “coming with a rod,” intends to meet every challenge that “some” in Corinth may have in mind to offer Paul. The degree of severity with which Paul may strike, depends, of course, on the kind and the degree of the opposition to the truth which he may meet. If this opposition proves incorrigible, he will use the rod even to the extent of expulsion from the congregation. Thus “rod” is intended as a warning.

(R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963 [1937], 202-203)