

1 Corinthians Chapter 4

V: 1 In the previous chapter, Paul had just been talking about himself, Peter, and Apollos.

- NKJV translates the word “servant” - KJV translates it “minister.” It’s not the word “bond-servant” as it is in many cases, this time:
- “Hyperetes” “hupe-eretes” - (G-5257) A compound word “hupo” which means under or beneath and “eretes” which means rower - together “under-rower”
- The Roman galleys of the day had captains, helmsmen, and sailors, and they had “under-rowers” - the men under the decks who used oars to row the ship, the lowest of slaves, typically condemned slaves
- Paul was saying that he, Peter, and Apollos weren’t so special, they were just under-rowers, galley slaves for Christ.
- As “stewards” he was a servant given a great responsibility concerning “the mysteries of God.”
- A steward was also typically a slave who had been given overall responsibility of running the household, keeping watch over the finances, making sure the bills were paid, groceries and supplies purchased and so on.
- Paul is describing his duty, his responsibility to dispense God’s Word, the mysteries of God, to the people - the truths of God that were then being revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Paul placed a very high priority on ministering God’s Word to people:

Acts 20:26-28 “²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. (He’s been a good steward) ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

V: 2 One of the primary qualifications of a steward was that of being faithful, trustworthy, and honest. Faithful to the master and the overseeing of His goods.

- There are various parables that describe both good and bad stewards.

1 Timothy 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”

- I’m sure glad He said “faithful” and not “successful!”

V: 3-4 As Paul traveled around planting churches, encouraging and strengthening the brethren; as soon as he would leave an area - the Judaizers and other critics would move in and seek to subvert Paul's message and ministry.

- They would come in to "correct" or "contradict" the Gospel message preached by Paul, or insinuate that Paul wasn't really an Apostle, that he was a renegade rabbi teaching heresy. They would declare that the Law was vital, and that the keeping of the law and the traditions were of the utmost importance.
- There is nothing new in this, the word of God has been under attack from the beginning.

Genesis 3:1 "... Has God indeed said...?"

- This is all a common tactic for those who want to establish themselves as the expert, by tearing down the person that people have looked up to, the one who has brought them the Truth of God.
- I'm not so worried about being judged by you or anyone else as much as I am about being judged of God. My opinion doesn't really matter either.

"I know nothing against myself..." "as far as I know I'm doing what He has called me to do..."

- Paul was resting in the forgiveness of Jesus for sins past, for sins present, and for sins yet future - his confidence was in Jesus all the way.

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

- Jesus is the final judge, He is the righteous judge, His opinion is what really counts!

John 5:27 "26For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27and has given Him authority to execute judgement also, because He is the Son of Man."

V: 5 There is a time of judgment coming. We will as believers all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the Bema seat of judgment where believer's works will be judged.

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat (Bema seat) of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

- We shouldn't judge anything, we should wait on the Lord as He will judge when the time comes - at that time all things will be revealed, the hidden things, the thoughts of men's hearts.
- Each one's praise, each one's reward will come from God for the things done for Him as opposed to the things done for the wrong reasons.

V: 6 The figures he's speaking of are the illustrations citing himself, Peter, and Apollos as ministers, servants, farmers, planters, waterers, builders, under-rowers, and stewards trying to help them understand that it's not about the person God would use, but to keep a right focus.

- There really is no cause for division or separation, especially if we're focused on Jesus and not people.

2 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

- Factions develop, people separate, churches are divided - because people get puffed up, puffed up in pride.
- Often times as an example those who hold different positions on Calvinism and Arminianism get puffed up against those that don't agree with them, they begin to accuse each other of a lack of scholarship and so on.
- If you don't see it the way they do then you are in error. We don't need to look for reasons to disagree, we should look for reasons to agree and be united as much as we can be.
- Paul is saying we shouldn't get puffed up, we shouldn't be prideful.

V: 7 We are all on an equal footing before the cross - no one is better than anyone else.

- Everything we have we've received from God:

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

- If it's all from God, then we can't boast about ourselves, we can only honestly boast about Him.

1 Corinthians 1:31 "... He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

V: 8 Paul is expressing back to them their opinion of themselves, “We’re already full and rich...” An arrogant, prideful view of themselves - no need for a deeper spirituality or closer walk with the Lord because they already have what they need.

- Paul says, I wish it was so!

V: 9 Paul begins to describe the life of an apostle, which is not an easy life - it’s not the “name it and claim it” life of wealth, riches, and ease.

- “spectacle” - “theater” - as in the colosseum where Christians were used as sport for the lions and wild dogs, and horrible, painful executions used as entertainment.
- Foxe’s book of martyrs gets a lot of it’s information from Eusibious’ Church History which describes that the call of Christ was essentially a call to die.

Galatians 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

- It’s really just living the life that we’ve all been called to:

Jesus said:

Mark 8:34 “... whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

V: 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake - whether it was simply the presumptive death sentence, or the world considering to be foolish.

- In those days it was a capital crime not to pay allegiance to Caesar by declaring that Caesar is Lord, or by offering a pinch of incense to his image.
- Christians would not compromise in this, their declaration that Jesus is Lord was an affront to the Roman empire, to the emperor.

“^{10b}*But you are wise in Christ.*”

- Contrast - We’re fools, we’ve given Him our all in all, We’ll sacrifice our lives for Him, but you’ll play it safe. You’ll compromise in order to get along with the world living in peaceful co-existence.

“^{10c}*We are weak, but you are strong!*” You look down upon us, you exalt yourselves.

“^{10d}*You are distinguished* (in your own eyes) *but we are dishonored* (in your eyes).”

- Part of the problem in Corinth was that they desired the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Galatians 1:10 “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

V: 11-13 Paul lists the things that they deal with because of their faith: Hunger - thirst - poorly clothed - beaten - homeless - labor.

- But, being reviled, we bless.

Luke 6:28 “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

- Being persecuted, we endure.
- Being defamed, we entreat - praying for those who spitefully use them.
- We’re considered - filthy, the offscouring - the scum of the earth.
- In **2 Corinthians 12** Paul gives another list of the things he personally suffered for Jesus.
- With Paul, as with Jesus - you either loved him or you hated him, there didn’t seem to be any middle ground.

V: 14 Paul isn’t writing to shame the Corinthian church, he’s writing to warn them not to compromise, not to believe what some are saying about him, about the gospel, and about Jesus.

V 15 You might have 10K instructors in Christ, a lot of people who want to instruct and guide you - but no one loves you like your parents, Paul being their spiritual father, the one who led them to Christ.

- Sometimes you’ll hear people tell you stuff as I have, and I’ll ask “how did you come up with that?” Because I know they didn’t get it from just reading the Bible. The plain reading didn’t reveal that...
- The gap theory is a good example:

Genesis 1:1-2 “¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

- The Jehovah’s witnesses claim as do the Mormons that Jesus is Michael the arch angel. Where did they get that? Not from reading the Bible!

Hebrews 1:5 “For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You?”

- People and their ideas will lead you astray, but the Bible won't, Jesus won't.

V: 16 Imitate me, follow me - as I follow Christ as I imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

KJV: “Be ye followers of Christ, even as I also am of Christ.”

1 Timothy 4:12 “Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to / of the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

V: 17 Paul was in Ephesus and couldn't be in Corinth - so he sent another of his sons in the faith, Timothy - who was trustworthy and likeminded.

Philippians 2:19-20 “¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²¹For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.”

V: 18-19 Some were apparently talking like Paul was never going to come back to Corinth, but he fully intended to return and deal with them.

- He will go back to see them “if the Lord wills.”
- Paul is leaving room for God to change his plans and guide him as He will.

James 4:13-15 “¹³Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; ¹⁴whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

V: 20 These people are puffed up and will prove to be of no consequence. We will manifest and demonstrate the power of God

V: 21 How do you want me to come to you? With a rod of correction, or in love and gentleness. “Do you want to do this the easy way or the hard way?”

- He giving them the warning in the hope that they'll deal with this before he gets there.
- This letter is corrective in nature. There were a number of things that were not right. There were wolves and charlatans all about taking advantage of the church, profiteering, and leading astray.

Proverbs 22:3 “A prudent man / wise man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.”

- This chapter sets the ground work for the next couple of chapters that deal with church discipline.
- I encourage you to read ahead and think it through some, it's some pretty serious stuff.