

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Entrusted with a Treasure

Who is your favorite Pastor or Bible teacher?

A) Funny question – to even think that way- but in this day and especially – radio internet – easy to have “Favorites”

B) That is ok – as long as our preferences don't mean that we can't receive from someone –

1) Reality you can receive from anyone as long as your heart is right

C) My lesson - Conference analogy – Oh no not him again – Skip – sit there tune out

D) God called me on it – Attitude stinks –

1) Changed – receptive heart – guess what every single time God spoke to me.

So it is ok that we have our preferences as long as we don't tune out to someone else –

A) And that we don't start to undermine someone else in their ministry.

B) That guy shouldn't even be a Pastor – that is exactly what the People in Corinth were doing

1) I am of Apollos, Peter – We are of Paul

C) So Paul spends four chapters dealing with the issue – God hates Division

He Reminds the Corinthians of 4 things

- #1 The power is in the message of the gospel – not the messenger 1:18-2:5 – Heart is right receive from anyone
- #2 We need the mindset of Christ not the mindset of the world 2:6-3:4

D) They were following the mindset of the world – in how they divided over their philosophies and Philosophers

E) **Different mindset – New mind** – The mystery of the gospel – God brings together all men – Jew and Gentile in Jesus

We also noted something very interesting that Paul brought in our study last time – Beginning of Ch.3

A) Division strife and envy are actually marks of Carnality – fleshly mindset

B) Acting and thinking like natural men – rather than people who have been born of the spirit

C) We often masquerade our carnality is cloak of spirituality by using spiritual terms to describe our differences

Noted the 3rd thing that Paul reminded them of – is this: **We are all working on the same team – same goals 3:5-18**

A) See people come to Christ – grow in Christ – we want to impact our city for Jesus.

B) Tonight we come to his 4th and final point on this discussion –

- #4 We are all to be faithful stewards and servants of what the Lord has entrusted to us. Ch 4:1-18

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

A) We saw in Chapter 3 where Paul used some humble ordinary descriptions to describe himself and Apollos

B) Day Laborers Migrant workers – farmers working in the same field – Builders working on the same building

C) Here is chapter 4 he continues in that same tone

1) Servants = under-rowers -

2) Slave Galley ships – underneath – goal is to get the people to their destination

D) We are slaves of Jesus – Goal get people to Jesus – see grow in Jesus – discover who they are in Christ

Stewards of the mysteries of God

A) Once hidden now revealed – the Mystery that is revealed in Jesus – the gospel

B) Apostles are like household managers, whose job is to look after the rich storehouse of treasures, to be used appropriately.

C) Apostles and teachers don't own the treasure, they merely have to do what they're told with it.

D) As faithful stewards in ministry, we're to be able to know the location of the riches of Scripture.

⁵² Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things new and old.*" Matthew 13:52

E) Jesus is talking about the ability to relocate the illustrations, types, and stories of the Old Testament to His own life—

1) Show how they apply in the NT

F) Stewards of the treasure

² Moreover it is required in stewards that one be **found faithful.**

A) I'm not required to be successful—only faithful.

B) Our world judges pastors on "success" how big your church is – how many ministries –

1) How many are you Running?

C) God judges success by faithfulness – being faithful with what God has entrusted you with.

D) That is what I am accountable for - One pastor to Spurgeon – only 100

1) Plenty to give account for on the day of judgment

The most successful minister in the OT by men's standards was a prophet who caused people to get saved everywhere he went.

A) Anyone guess who I am talking about? Jonah

B) Not only did the entire crew of the boat in which he traveled get saved, but the entire population of Nineveh—

1) perhaps numbering two million—got saved as well (Jonah 3:5).

C) Contrast Jonah with another prophet who preached for thirty years without seeing a single conversion. Jeremiah

Here is what is interesting. If Jonah were alive today, books would be written about him.

Conferences would feature him.

A) Videos would be made of him.

B) Jeremiah? He'd be sitting in the back row of one of Jonah's seminars.

C) But here is what is interesting – when Jesus came on the scene – no one thought he reminded them of Jonah

1) But many mistook him for Jeremiah –

Here is my point for you and for me

A) BE FAITHFUL – being faithful is realizing that I am serving for an audience of one – Jesus is my judge

B) He is able to take what I bring him and do with it what he wants to like he took 5 loaves and 2 fish multiplied it to feed a multitude

C) Like the widow with her two mites – I bring what I have and give it to Jesus –

1) I give him the best of my time – efforts – gifts

D) They are his to with exactly what he wants to do with it

That is the point that Paul is going to make in this chapter

A) All stewards be faithful

³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. **for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority**

In fact, I do not even judge myself. **I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.** ⁴ For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

A) The Corinthian Christians were judging Paul and his ministry.

B) Rather than defend himself in a way that would only fuel the fire he elevates the conversation.

C) Great example: When someone is coming against you maybe the mud isn't the place to conduct the conversation.

1) Paul elevates the issue. They tried to minimize him and he took it a step further. I am a slave to Jesus!

D) They were judging him and he writes- I don't let any of your judgements stick to me.

1) **In fact, I don't even judge myself.** WHY NOT PAUL? Because I don't trust my own judgment of myself.

E) David prayed - SEARCH ME OH GOD

This is a principle that I believe changes everything.

A) What if we lived this way??? Think about it.

B) Have you ever been judged and the person was absolutely wrong?

1) I have and I feel so vindicated and you know what I do- I rub it in their face-

C) well not literally but in my heart and among my friends and family.

1) And then I judge them so hard.

Think again Have you ever been judged and they were right?

A) I have and it hurts and it creates all kinds of emotions in me both good and bad.

B) Think again - Have you ever judged yourself and been wrong? (Every Sunday

1) Some of us can be our own worse critic -

C) Sometimes someone else points out what I am missing - wow - PTL

D) Sort of a relief - ok that wasn't as bad as I thought

1) Ice Cream habit

Have you ever judged yourself and been right?

A) Yep that hurts and takes you into a deeper pit of discouragement.

B) Last one: have you ever decided that God's opinion is the only one that matters???

C) Great - God knows my heart - he knows - if I did my best - he knows my intentions

D) That'll change your life and guard your heart and emotions from the roller coaster of judgement.

AUDIENCE OF ONE

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

A) Each one of us will stand before the Bema seat of the Lord -

B) Reveal the council of our hearts -

C) Today people pat us on the back - not know our motives behind what we are doing -

1) Then - True praise will come from God

⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

A) Paul takes this back to the issue that they were dealing with which was their judgement of church leaders.

B) Paul says something here so important- he says to not think beyond what is written.

C) What does that mean?

1) It means that we must get our cues, our standards, our vision, our clarity from the Bible.

D) We are NOT to go beyond what is written.

E) Fruit inspectors - Courson - don't tear down a tree that is bearing fruit.

⁷ For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

A young preacher once said to a older pastor, "Please pray that I will stay humble."

A) Why do we get puffed up in our giftings or the giftings of others -

B) We elevate the gifted rather than the giver of the gift.

C)Great singer – who gave them that voice?

The best commentary on 1 Corinthians 4:7 is the witness of John the Baptist,

A) “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven ...

B)He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:27, 30).

C)Less of me and more of you – Self is UGLY

⁸ You are already full! You are already rich!

A) If you ever wondered if there is sarcasm in the Bible this is your text. Oh yes there is!

B)GOD HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR – LOOK AROUND

C)Paul uses strong sarcastic language- not to mock them

1)but to help them to see how off their thinking was.

You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! ⁹ For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

NOW When Paul called himself and other apostles “a spectacle unto the world” (v9), he was using an image familiar to people in the Roman Empire.

A)The government kept the people pacified by presenting entertainments in the different cities.

B)The amphitheaters would be filled with citizens, eager to see men compete in the games

1) prisoners fight with the beasts.

C)(In fact, the Greek word translated spectacle gives us our English word “theater.”)

1)The Colosseum at Rome became the center for these “entertainments.”

UNDER GUARD AFTER THE MAIN EVENT

A)the poorest and weakest prisoners were brought in to fight with the beasts.

B)Nobody expected too much from their performance.

C)That is the picture Paul is using of the Apostles – not gladiators – but those poor spectacles

This picture forms the background for a series of contrasts that Paul presents for the purpose of trying to humble the Corinthians.

¹⁰ *We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! Fools vs wise -We are weak, but you are strong!*

A)The Corinthians were proud of their spiritual achievements.

B)The factions in the church were proud of their human leaders and favorite preachers.

C)But all of this was only weakness.

D)There is strength only when God gets the glory. **“My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).**

You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!

A)This was the crux of the whole matter:

B)the Christians in Corinth wanted the honor that comes from men, not the honor that comes from God.

C)They were trying to “borrow” glory by associating themselves with “great men.”

Paul answered, “If you associate with us, you had better be ready for suffering.

A)We apostles are not held in honor—we are despised!

B)Oh how times have changed – IG Followers

C)Paul then described the sufferings that he had to endure as a servant of God

¹¹ To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.

¹² And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;

¹³ being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now

A)How many would want to be in ministry today if this was the criteria –

B)I Fear not many - Paul and Apollos and Peter and the rest of the apostles were not serving for the praise of men

D)But to bring honor and glory to Jesus

As Paul wraps up – really personal here

¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

Because so many of them had come to Christ through Paul's preaching – he saw himself as a Father to them

Spiritual fathers often endure what physical fathers do

A)Kids love you – think you can do no wrong

B)Kids go through spiritual adolescence, they will think you can do no right.

C)Then, finally, they will come into maturity when they will say, “Right or wrong, you are my spiritual father, and I appreciate you.”

¹⁷ For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸ Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you So disrespected Paul they were not even taking him seriously. ¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God *is* not in word but in power. ²¹ What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

“I’m coming shortly,” Paul says. “Will that day be a RENIUON of love, or a day of discipline?”

So, too, Jesus said, “Surely I come quickly” (Revelation 22:20).

And when He does, will we hear Him say, “Depart from Me” or, “Well done, good and faithful servant”?