

From Sinners to Saints

1 Corinthian 4:1-21

- Paul encouraged the saints at Corinth to avoid relying on worldly wisdom as their guidance, but to lean on the wisdom of God's Word, which stabilizes and roots us in Christ Jesus. Ch 3 presented three pictures of the local Church > **1. It's a Family**- we start out as babes in Christ and grow into Mature believers for Christ, **2. It's a field**- how we both labor for the work of God, and help people to grow in their faith toward God, **3. It's a Foundation**- we are the Temple of God that gather for public worship.

V1-21

- **V1-2** now Paul is going to give three pictures of the minister in this chapter and he begins by telling us that he is a steward. **1. Steward**- is someone who takes care of someone else's estate. In **3:5** Paul said that Apollos and he were no one that the Corinthian Church should be putting their trust in, but that they were simply "**ministers of Christ**". That word means "**under- rowers**" these were the slaves who were in the bottom of the ship rowing the oars, they were the least of any on the ship
- This shows that Paul didn't see himself as the captain of the ship but only one of the galley slaves who were under orders to keep the ship moving. But not only a slave but also a steward, a servant who manages everything for his master, but who himself owns nothing. In Genesis 39 Joseph was a chief steward in Potiphar's household, in **Gal 6:10** "**the Church is the household of faith**", and the ministers its stewards, Paul called what a spiritual steward manages "**the mysteries of God**".
- So this is who all who claim to be a follower of Jesus is "**a steward**" and after telling us our vocation Paul also shares with us God's expectation > "**be faithful**". Notice I am not required to be successful, or to be popular, or even liked, my sole requirement according to this verse as a steward is that I'm faithful.
- Webster's describes faithful as "reliable, consistent, steadfast, worthy of trust, this is someone who is dependable, solid, and steady. Just as **stewardship** is one of the **pictures of ministry**, **faithfulness** is one of the **characteristics of a minister**.

- **V3-5** on being one of God's servants and stewards we need to know that we only answer to Him, others in this world will give their opinions of you, but Paul says he doesn't seem to get upset when people criticized him. Also he doesn't even give much thought of what he thinks of himself, a sure fire way of getting down on oneself is to constantly keep assessing myself, questioning what I said or did, don't get me wrong I'm all for self-examination, but too much of it leads to condemnation.
- In the end the only judgment that really matters is what scripture calls "The Bema Seat of Christ" where all is going to be tried by fire, for only God can look beyond a seemingly good deed and see into the motive behind it, so we leave it to Him to judge whether its pleasing in His sight or displeasing.
- **V6-7** so now that you know that we all are servants and stewards of God's estate we should never put anyone above another, including those who we admire and look up to. In protecting ourselves from this kind of thinking Paul poses three questions to remember > **1.** Who makes you different from another?- **2.** What do you have that you did not receive? **3.** If you received it, then why do you boast as if you hadn't received it? The answer to all these is everything you have has been a gift from God.
- **Jam 1:17**- if everything that is good in our lives comes from Our Father and has nothing to do with us being good, or deserving it, then how can we brag on ourselves, or think that we are somehow more special than anyone else, reading verses like this puts everything in perspective as we should be giving God all the credit for any good in our lives instead of trying to take pride in ourselves for it.
- **V8-13** to show the cost of properly representing Christ and that it is nothing to aspire to if you want praise, accolades, or respect from the world, Paul gives a little insight to the Corinthian Church of what a minister and Apostle have to endure for their sakes. Right now while you're a babe in Christ you have it good, for others are suffering in order for you to be blessed, no one expects a young believer to prepare a sermon, or conduct a bible study, or disciple and hold people accountable right!
- **V9** the Apostles we are condemned to death, all of them died a martyrs death, except John, they are a "**spectacle**" to the world, the Greek word for this is where we get our English word "theatre" from. It means they are a public show for all to see, so there goes their privacy, as your life is now an open book for all to read. So you want to go into the ministry do you, well here is some insight straight from the Apostle Paul, this explains some of why **Jam 3:1**- says let not many of you become teachers.

- James says you'll get the stricter judgment that's when we stand before The Lord, but here it's what you will go through in this life. You become fools for Christ sake, as the world will scoff at your morals, ideals, character and way of life, you think they'll admire you they won't, in fact many will actually feel sorry for you and your kids.
- Not only seen as a fool, but weak, despised, lacking the necessities at times, not cool poorly clothed, beaten physically, emotionally, and mentally, homeless. These men didn't have anything they had given up everything to follow Christ > **Math 19:27-30**- Peter says haven't we left all to follow You? Their reward will far outweigh their sacrifice, but make no mistake about it there was a tremendous sacrifice made
- **V14-17** he didn't write these things to put them to shame, but like any good parent he wanted them prepared for what is to come for living Godly for The Lord. As their immature beliefs had them mistakenly thinking the world was going to applaud them for their surrender to Jesus.
- **V18-21** Paul says when he arrives he will personally deal with all the falsehoods being taught in the Church he loves so much, but before he comes he sends his trusted protégé Timothy, first Paul, then Apollos, now Timothy is coming to minister to this Church, that is how much Paul truly cared about them to continue to send men who had had personally disciplined to teach and care for them.
- Isn't that what a good parent does for their kids, if they can't be there they make sure someone who is fully capable can. I love how Paul tells them that the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power, and when he comes it won't be with a rod of correction, but in love, and a spirit of gentleness. This Church was disobedient, but instead of Paul coming for a fight, he comes as a peacekeeper amen!