



1 CORINTHIANS

The Power and Wisdom of God

Sermon Guide

November 9th, 2025

The Problem of Spiritual Arrogance

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Billy Haines, Senior Pastor

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul exposes the danger of thinking we've "arrived" spiritually when in truth we have not. The Corinthians mistook early success and blessing for maturity, growing proud instead of dependent. Paul reminds them that faithful servants know their place, live as stewards under Christ's authority, and await His judgment, not the world's approval. True maturity orients the heart in gratitude, embraces suffering as the pathway of Christ, and depends not on talk but on the true power of God's kingdom.

1 Corinthians 4:1-21 (ESV)

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

⁶ I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

⁷ For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! ⁹ For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹ To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ¹² and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure: ¹³ when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

¹⁴ I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶ I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷ That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.

²⁰ For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

²¹ What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Sermon Notes

Intro

#1 Know Your Place

#2 Orient Your Heart

#3 Embrace Suffering

#4 Receive God's Power

Discussion Questions

1. Paul confronts the Corinthians for acting as if they had already “arrived.” In what areas of your life might you be tempted to think you’re further along spiritually than you really are?
2. Paul describes himself as both a servant and a steward. How do these images challenge the way the world tends to think about leadership? What would change in your attitude or daily life if you truly saw yourself the way that Paul saw himself?
3. Paul says, “It is the Lord who judges me.” Whose approval or opinion most shapes your sense of worth or success right now? How can you reorient that toward Christ?
4. Reflect on Paul’s question: “What do you have that you did not receive?” How might remembering that everything is a gift change the way you view your talents, ministry, or spiritual growth?
5. Paul contrasts talk with true power—the power of the cross displayed through weakness. Where might God be inviting you to embrace weakness or hardship rather than resist it?
6. The Corinthians were “following” Paul but not truly imitating him. What would it look like for you to imitate Paul’s humility and endurance in your relationships or service?
7. How can we cultivate a culture that resists spiritual arrogance and stays grounded in gratitude, humility, and dependence on God’s grace?