

3/11/12

How Do You Judge God's Servants?

1Cor. 4:1-7

In a book published in 1933, Dorothy Thompson related that it took her just 50 seconds after meeting Adolph Hitler to decide that “that formless, almost faceless man” would never become the dictator of Germany.

Here's how the Chicago Times in 1865 evaluated Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in commenting on it the day after its delivery: “The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish-watered utterances of a man who has to be pointed out to intelligent foreigners as President of the United States.” #2844

* Too often our judgments can be so wrong and short-sighted, despite our certainty!

The Corinthians were making judgments over human teachers, based on human worldly wisdom, as if they belonged to them, when in reality these apostles and teachers belonged to God.

1. In their carnal state they gave their allegiance to a teacher. 1Cor. 3:1-4
2. These men were mere instruments of God, one planed, while another watered, but God is the important One, Who gave the increase. 1Cor. 3:5-7

3. The one who plants and the one who waters are one in unity, as follow-workers of God and each will receive reward according to their call, enablement and faithfulness. 1Cor. 3:8-9

4. Paul warned the Corinthians against deceiving themselves with worldly wisdom, but rather to be a fool for Christ, that they might become wise. 1Cor. 3:18-20

5. They were not to boast in men by their judgment of one being greater than the other, they did not belong to them, but to God, Who alone will judge their faithfulness. 1Cor. 3:21-23

Paul instructed the Corinthians about their wrong perspective of apostles, the ministers of God in three ways: 1Cor. 4:1-7

- I. Paul corrected their judgment of an apostle. vs. 1-2
 - II. Paul critiqued their judgment of him as an apostle. vs. 3-4
 - III. Paul confirmed the righteous judgment of all, including apostles. vs. 5-7
- I. Paul corrected their judgment of an apostle. vs. 1-2**

A. The apostle Paul declared they were to view the men God used, the apostles, as the property of God. vs. 1a

* “Let a man so consider us.”

1. Paul is referring back to the last verse of chapter three.
 - a. The Greek presents the word so “houto”, at the beginning of the sentence.
 - * The word “houto” would be better translated “in this manner.”
 - b. Literally, ‘in this manner us’, in other words, in the same manner the Corinthians belonged to Christ and Christ belonged to God, so we, Paul and Apollos.
 - * The pronoun “us” is emphatic being placed before the verb.
2. Paul is not suggesting this, but rather commanding it.
 - a. The word consider “logizomai”, means to reckon, account, compute or calculate.
 - 1) The term is an accounting term, having the idea of careful estimation of the reality.
 - 2) The wrong estimation is by one’s feelings, personal liking or casual impressions of a person, due to the appearance, charisma, etc.
 - 3) The tense is the imperative present.
 - b. The one making this judgment is man “anthropos”, man in general, be they male or female.

- 1) They were to conclude that Paul, Apollos and any other person used by God belonged to God.
 - 2) These men did not belonged to people, but were for the benefit of the people.
- B.** The apostle declared they were to account these men, the apostles, as subordinates of Christ. vs. 1b
- * “as servants of Christ”
1. Paul used a very picturesque word.
 - a. The word servant “huperetes”, means an underrower.
 - 1) The word was used of a galley slave on a trireme ship.
 - 2) They were at the lowest level of the ship and their oars would constantly be in the water.
 - 3) They were often the first to die, due to bearing the constant strain and exhaustion.
 - 4) Some object to this meaning, saying that this meaning had been lost in the days of Paul?
 - b. The picture of a galley slave on a ship would certainly serve as a great metaphor for a servant of Christ.
 - 1) The picture of subordination to authority is clearly implied to the authority of Christ.

- 2) This is the only time the word is used in the letter to the Corinthians.
2. The word appears twenty times in the New Testament.
- a. The Greek word is translated “officers”, “ministers” and “servants” with the consistent meaning of one who is a subordinate to one of authority.
 - b. The Corinthians were Greeks and Greeks did not think very highly of manual work and serving.
 - 1) They believed in having other to do the work for them and serve them.
 - 2) So the entire concept of exalting men above who they were and comparing them, was what they were accustomed to.
- C. Paul the apostle declared they were to account these men, the apostles, as men accountable to God. vs. 1b
 * “and stewards of the mysteries of God.”
1. Paul uses a different word to give a more complete picture of God’s servant.
 - a. The word stewards “oikonomos” literally means a household manager, in the plural.

- 1) He was a slave who was entrusted with managing and supervising the estate of his master.
 - 2) He owned nothing of what he managed and was accountable for all the accounts, receipts, the oversight of the other slaves and the multiplication of the estate.
- b. The word appears nine more times in the New Testament.
- 1) For the faithful and wise steward. Lk. 12:42
 - 2) For the unjust steward. Lk. 16:1-8
 - 3) Erastus is called steward, being the treasurer of Corinth. Rom. 16:23
 - 4) Gal. 4:2, Tit. 1:7, 1Pet. 4:10
 - 5) A good example would be Joseph who served as a steward to Potiphar in Egypt.
2. Paul specified the stewardship that would one day have to be given an account of before God, the gospel.
- a. The word mystery “mysterion” has appeared already in chapter two and it was in reference to the gospel of Christ. 1Cor. 2:7
 * The word is used for the gifts and the resurrection. 1Cor. 13:2, 14:2, 15:51
 - b. Remember the word means something previously hidden, but now made

know, such was the gospel hidden in ages past in the Old Testament, but now made know in the New Testament.

- 1) Jesus Christ crucified. 1Cor. 1:23
- 2) Jew and Gentile one in Christ. Col. 1:26-27

- c. The steward of God was entrusted with the Gospel.
 - 1) To increase the proclamation of the good news to lost sinner
 - 2) To increase the number of save souls.

D. The apostle Paul declared they were to comprehend that these men, the apostles, were to be loyal to Christ, as His servants and stewards. vs. 2

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

1. Paul stated the individual accountability to the Lord. as a steward.
 - a. The article is present “the stewards”.
 - 1) The one the Lord called and sent.
 - 2) The one plants or waters.
 - b. The requirement is that “one” in the singular.
 - 1) God does not grade on the curve
 - 2) Each person will give an account for their call.

2. Paul stated the ultimate test of a steward over his masters goods, “to be found faithful”.
 - a. The word faithful “pistos” means one who is reliable, trustworthy, dependable and honorable.
 - 1) Not ability.
 - 2) Not talent.
 - b. The word “pistos”, as an adjective appears 66 times in the New Testament.
 - 1) The word is used of the Lord commending the servant in the parable of the talents, “Well done, good and faithful servant”. Matt. 25:23
 - 2) The word is used of God, as He called the Corinthians into the fellowship of His Son. 1Cor. 1:9
 - 3) The word is use of men to whom the gospel was to be committed to pass it on to others. 2Tim. 2:2
3. The requirement of a steward was that he be a person, who could be entrusted with whatever estate of affairs.
 - a. He was known for his diligence.
 - b. He was known for his honesty.
 - c. He was known for his character.
 - d. He was known for his reputation.

Illustration

One day a little boy was asked by his father, “What do you want to do when you grow up son?”, the son replied, “To be a captain of a ship in the navy like you Dad and order people around”, not recognizing that it involved responsibility and accountability to those in authority over him, as a servant and steward of the navy.

Application

1. The concept of being a servant of Christ is not only for apostles, but for all Christians, particularly for those who are called into the ministry.

- a. Sadly this is lost too often in ministry.
- b. Sadly at times those in ministry, rather than being subordinates to Christ, act as superiors to Christ.
- c. Sadly, rather than serving the people they desire the people to serve them.

* Jesus said that he who wants to be great must be the servant of all!

2. The concept of being a steward of the gospel again is not limited to an apostle, but for all believers.

- a. We are called ambassadors of Christ to plead and implore the lost to be reconciled to Christ. 2Cor. 5:20
- b. We are said to be God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2:10
- c. James tells us that faith without works is dead. Ja. 2:17

d. Paul has already told the Corinthians that at the Bema-Seat of Christ each man will be rewarded to the genuineness of their work.

1Cor. 3:13

3. The quality of faithfulness in a steward is not the rule in the church of Jesus Christ, though it should be.

- a. People serve in their stewardship to exalt themselves or raise a following at times. 1Cor. 3:21-23
- b. People at other times get lifted up in the work and are taken in by the complements of the people, being exalted in and through pride Satan destroys them, even though they are not novice. 1Tim. 3:6

Paul corrected the Corinthians judgment of an apostle!

II. Paul critiqued their judgment of him as an apostle. vs. 3-4

A. The apostle Paul declared to them that he was neither impressed nor discouraged by their human judgment of him. vs. 3a

* “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court”

1. Paul told them that it was an insignificant matter that he should be judged by them.

- a. The phrase “a very small thing” “elachistos” means the least in importance, estimation or authority.
 - 1) He is speaking about their subjective conclusion about him, not object truth.
 - 2) He will use it for the Corinthians judging the smallest matters among them. 1Cor. 6:2
 - 3) He will use it for himself as the least apostle. 1Cor. 15:9
- b. The word Judged “ankarino” means to examine, scrutinize or investigate as a judge and decide a final verdict.
 - 1) The tense is the indicative present active.
 - 2) It is used by Pilate of Jesus as he examined Him and found no fault in Him. Lk. 23:14
 - 3) It is used of searching the Scriptures to verify the truth. Acts 17:11
- 2. Paul included “human courts”, referring to a set collective group judgment.
 - a. The apostle was not being arrogant or prideful.
 - 1) But he knew that their human judgment was imperfect and bias at best, inferior to God’s.
 - 2) This was due to two things.

- a) They were judging with worldly wisdom, being carnal.
- b) They were unable to see the motive of the heart.
- b. The apostle also knew that they were not his Master to whom he gave an account of his servant-hood and stewardship.
 - 1) Jesus had called and enabled Paul.
 - 2) Jesus had sent and worked through Paul.
- c. The apostle knew that the understanding of the Corinthians, about the church body and it’s various teachers and leaders was wrong.
 - 1) They had exalted one over another among themselves.
 - 2) They had divided the church into factions of men.
- B. The apostle Paul declared to them that he did not trust his self-judgment. vs. 3b-4b
 - 1. Paul said he didn’t rest on the examination of himself. vs. 3b-c
 - * “In fact, I do not even judge myself.”
 - a. The word for judge is “anakrino” to examine and investigate as a judge to decide.
 - 1) The apostle was not saying that he never judged himself in terms of what he did or why he did it, for

- we are clearly told to judge ourselves.
- 2) The apostle is only saying that he did not trust his self examination and decision to be the final judgment or the absolute truth about himself.
- b. The reason being is that once again, Paul's judgment is human, imperfect, bias and equally unable to be certain of the motive of his own heart.
- 1) The basic problem is that our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and only God knows it completely. Jer. 17:9
 - 2) The added problem is love for self, more than others. Eph. 5:29
2. Paul said that though he did not find any fault in his self examination, it did not mean there wasn't, yet he was not justified by that conclusion. vs. 4a-b
* "For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this."
- a. The apostle candidly stated that in his present examination he did not find anything of fault in his service to God against himself.
- 1) His calling to Corinth.
 - 2) His obedience to Christ to establish the church.
 - 3) His motives for doing the work.

- b. The apostle categorically stated that even though he found nothing of failure or offense by his own examination, he could be wrong.
- 1) That did not justify him or acquit him of fault.
 - 2) This was due to his human imperfection.
- C. The apostle Paul declared that he depended and trusted in the Lord's judgment. vs. 4c
* "But He who judges me is the Lord."
1. Paul makes the sharp contrast between his own judgment and the Lord's.
 - a. The word but "de", is a contrasting conjunction.
 - 1) His own judgment does not justify him.
 - 2) The Lord's judgment could justify him.
 - b. The word judges is "anakrino" to examine and investigate as a judge to make a decision.

* It is the same as in verse three for the Corinthians judgment of Paul.
 2. The One who judged him was the Lord.
 - a. The Lord "kurios" is Paul's Master.
 - b. The Lord Jesus would hold him accountable for his service and stewardship.
 - 1) The Lord sees all things.

- 2) The Lord hears all things.
- 3) The Lord knows all things.

Illustration

A six year old lad came home with a note from his teacher in which it was suggested that he be taken out of school, as he was “too stupid to learn.” That boy was Thomas Edison.

Alfred Tennyson’s grandfather gave him 10 shillings for writing a eulogy on his grandmother. Handing it to the lad, the old man said: “There, that is the first money you ever earned by your poetry, and take my word for it, it will be the last.

Benjamin Franklin’s mother-in-law hesitated at letting her daughter marry a printer. There were two printing offices in the United States, and she feared that the country might not be able to support a third. #2845

Application

1. Too often we allow the judgment of others to discourage us from being used of God or to condemn us.
 - a. The believer is not to judge in a critical sensors spirit, finding fault with everything, due to the fact that other will judge you the same way and that at times we have a 4x4 in our eye while attempting to take out the sliver in our brothers eye. Matt. 7:1-5
 - b. The believer is under no condemnation in Christ Jesus walking after the Spirit, for all

sins have been forgiven and forgotten as if they never existed. Rom. 8:1

- 1) Condemnation is of the Devil, people and self for past sins paid for at the cross!
 - 2) Conviction is the prompting of the only Spirit to repent from sin or sins you are involve in the present.
2. The deception of the Devil is to cause us to trust in our own judgment and thereby feel justified.
 - a. I know in part, so I must pray that God search my heart and know my heart to try me and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Ps. 139:23-24
 - b. The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Matt. 15:18-19
 - c. The judgment of ourselves is not only commanded, but essential for ongoing fellowship. 1Cor.11:28, 31, 13:5, 1Jn. 2:1
 3. Our confidence for judgment is to be in the Lord, as well as our recognition that all of us will give an account.
 - a. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2Cor. 5:10

- b. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” Heb. 4:13

Paul critiqued their judgment of him as an apostle!

III. Paul confirmed the righteous judgment of all, including apostles. vs. 5-7

- A. The apostle Paul gave a three-fold conclusion in his instruction. vs. 5
1. Paul said no man is to judge nothing before the Lord’s coming. vs. 5a-b
 - * Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes.”
 - a. The word therefore “hoste”, indicates in conclusion.
 - * In view of the fact of all that has been said!
 - b. The word to judge “krino” means to pronounce judgment or preside over with such power of giving a judicial decision.
 - 1) This of course does not mean that we do not judge what is morally or ethically wrong or false in objective truth in teaching.
 - 2) The tense is present active and a key word to the epistle, appearing

- seventeen times, nine times just in chapter five and six.
- c. The time “kairos” means the specific time, the Bema-seat of Christ.
- * At the Second Coming, He come for judgment and His church with Him!
2. Paul said no mistake will be made by the Lord, it will be perfect. vs. 5c
 - * “who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.”
 - a. Jesus will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.
 - * Those things that no one else knows about us, but Jesus.
 - b. Jesus will reveal the counsels of the hearts, in other words, our motives.
 - 1) Why we did the things we did to people and for people.
 - 2) How we did them, our attitude.
 - 3) Jesus is not going to be concerned about the amount or numbers!
 3. Paul said no man will be short changed at the Lord’s judgment. vs. 5d
 - * “Then each one’s praise will come from God.”
 - a. Then each one will have “the praise” that will come from God as the works endure the fire, silver, gold and precious stone. 1Cor. 3:14

* In the future, hearing well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord. Matt. 25:21

b. Then each one's loses will be revealed as they are burned up in the fire. 1Cor. 3:15

* Wood, hay or stubble!

B. The apostle Paul make a three-fold application of his teaching. vs. 6

1. All that Paul has said was to be applied figuratively to Paul and Apollos for their benefit. vs. 6a-c

* Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes.”

a. The reason being that they were apostles and ministers of God for the gospel.

b. The reason being that they were two of the men chosen by the Corinthians to divide the church.

c. They were servants and stewards of Jesus, not man.

2. All that applied to Paul and Apollos had a reason, that they be humble, according to the Scriptures and not think beyond the Scriptures about God's servant and stewards. vs. 6d

* “that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.”

a. They were to be subordinate servants to the teaching of the Scriptures, as he final authority.

b. They were not to think in a conceited manner beyond the teaching of what is written, the Old Testament.

c. They were to do all things in accord with the Scriptures, pride and human wisdom is condemned throughout.

3. All that the Scriptures taught about servants and stewards would be benefited in two ways. vs. 6e

* “that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

a. That they not be puffed up with pride, present tense.

b. That they would not in pride choose one person against another, as they had in Apollos, Paul and Peter, even among themselves.

C. The apostle Paul gave an exhortation of his teaching in a form of rebuke by a three-fold rhetorical questions. vs. 7

1. Paul said, “For who makes you to different from another?” vs. 7a

a. The question is who distinguishes you from another, No one!

- b. The question reveals their foolishness for he has already stated that human judgment is imperfect and bias.
 - c. The answer is that all are nothing, except for the Lord and fellow workers in the work of the Kingdom. 1Cor. 3:7, 9
2. Paul said, “What do you have that you did not receive.” vs. 7b
- a. Nothing, he already told them that God gives grace according to the calling for the enabling. 1Cor. 3:5, 10
 - b. He exposes their foolishness in any boasting. 1Cor. 3: 21
* “Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours.”
3. Paul said, “Now if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it, if in deed you did receive it?” vs. 7c-d
- a. There is no reason to boast.
 - b. It is self deception. 1Cor. 3:18
* “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.”
 - c. It is pride that feeds it. 1Cor. 3:19-20
* “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness”; and again,

“The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

Illustration

Court cases sometimes are labeled: “Stevensen vs. The People” or “Jones vs. Texas”, and I sometimes wonder what great sin the person did to be “against” by so many person. But at the Last Judgment, every case will be labeled “I vs. God!”

Application

1. When we are all before God at the bema-seat I believe we will all be surprised at two things.
- a. First at the loss for doing so many things out of the wrong motive.
 - b. Second at the great reward others have received, who we thought were insignificant believers.
* “And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.” 1Cor. 8:2
2. Whenever we loose sight of the significance of God and get caught up with the insignificance of the instrument, we will prove to be unwise.
* “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” 2Cor. 10:12

3. Whoever boasts of what they have received or done in Christ is deceived by pride.
- a. When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble *is* wisdom. Prov. 11:2
 - b. By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised *is* wisdom. Prov. 13:10
 - c. Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16:18
 - e. These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren. Prov. 6:16-19

* I dreamed death came the other night:
 And heaven's gates swung wide.
 With kindly grace and angel
 Ushered me inside.
 And there, to my astonishment,
 Stood folks I'd known on earth.
 Some I'd judged and labeled
 Unfit or of little worth.
 Indignant words rose to my lips,
 But never were set free;
 for every face showed stunned surprise...
 NO ONE EXPECTED ME! #2843

Paul confirmed the righteous judgment of all, including apostles!

Conclusion

Paul instructed the Corinthians about their wrong perspective of apostles, the ministers of God in three ways:

- I. Paul corrected their judgment of an apostle!
- II. Paul critiqued their judgment of him as an apostle!
- III. Paul confirmed the righteous judgment of all, including apostles!