

CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY JUNE 9, 2024
1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21

PASTOR THOM KELLER

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JUDGING OTHERS

The story is told of a young boy who enters a barber shop, and the barber whispers to the man in the chair, "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it." The barber puts a quarter and a dollar bill on the counter and says, "Which one do you want, son?" The boy takes the quarters and leaves the dollar bill. "What did I tell you?" said the barber. "That kid never learns."

Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of an ice cream parlor. "Hey, son, may I ask you a question?" "Sure," the boy replies. "Why did you take the quarters instead of the dollar bill?" The little boy licks his ice cream and responds, "Because the day I take the dollar, the game is over." Pretty smart young boy, wasn't he?



In our chapter today, the Corinthians, like that barber, think that they are so wise and advanced in their understanding, but Paul is going to set them straight. As you look at **chapter 4** today, it is rather astounding that Paul devotes nearly four chapters to the dissension that was in the church over the debate concerning which was their favorite preacher. Amazing! **Chapter 4** starts out once again addressing that dispute, as clearly evidenced in **verse 6**. "Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another."



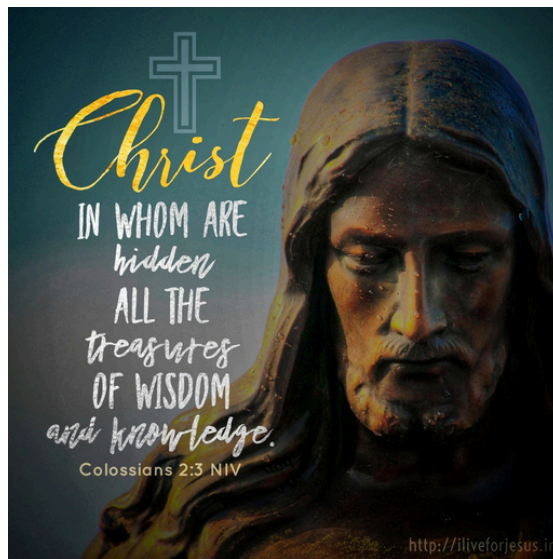
Chapter 4, Verse 6: "Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another."

So, let's go back and pick up in **verse 1**: "So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's mysteries. Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide."

I've always loved **verse 1** here in the Living Bible. Listen closely: "So Apollos and I should be looked upon as Christ's servants who distribute God's blessings by explaining God's secrets." Listen again: Apollos and I, these two preachers, should be looked upon as Christ's servants who distribute God's blessings by explaining God's secrets.



In the border of my Bible next to this verse, in September of '03, two years after we planted the church, I wrote my prayer, my desire, my hope when we started the church. As I read that, I always apply this verse to Dan and myself, and then later to Dan, Duane, and myself as Duane came on board. It is an honor and a privilege, an awesome calling, to distribute God's blessings by explaining God's secrets. Teaching the Bible uncovers God's truths. This is why my personal life verse for this church has been **Colossians 2:2-3**: "I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."



It's all about Jesus, right? It's all about Jesus. This is why we teach the Bible chapter by chapter, verse by verse. It is the principles and teachings contained within this book—dealing with relationships, marriage, finance, authority, leadership, and so on—that change lives. But they must be taught by the power of the Holy Spirit, using these truths to dismantle the lies that stand in the way of life-transforming truths. I've said it many times—I sound like a broken record—but I'm going to keep telling you this. When I first started reading my Bible in earnest when I was 30, God started revealing truths to me and breaking the back of the lies that I had believed for so long in every area of my life.

I remember thinking every single Sunday, "Why don't they say that? Why don't they tell me that?" You know what I mean? There are a lot of things to say. I don't say it every Sunday, but it should be said: if there's nothing else you remember today, remember this—this book can change your life. How many people can say this book changed their lives? Praise God!

A strong suggestion is to get into this book. If you haven't already, let these words change your life. I remember when I first started reading it in earnest. I have enough time to say this: I remember one time when I gave my life to Christ. I was so excited about my faith; I was 30 years old.

"You love the Bible too much. You sound like you love the Bible more than Jesus." I thought, "Oh, I don't want to do that." But if you love the Bible, you do love Jesus. Isn't it one and the same? He is the Word, so you can't love the Bible more than you love Jesus. The more you love the Bible, guess what? The more you love Jesus. That's exactly right.

This is why a congregation can't grow beyond their pastors and their personal growth and maturity. I want to tell you this: I know the pastors here well, and they are the real deal. They love the Lord, they love the Word, and you can trust them. I might be the notable exception to that rule, but they really do.



I've said this before: a message prepared in a mind reaches a mind, a message prepared in a heart reaches a heart, and a message prepared in a life reaches a life. If these principles aren't understood and lived out by the leadership, all they're doing is teaching you empty words—something they read somewhere. But when it's in their life, it comes out.

**A message prepared in a
mind reaches a mind.**

**A message prepared in a
heart reaches a heart.**

**A message prepared in a
life reaches a life.**

You can tell when you hear a married man teaching about marriage. By how he talks, you can usually tell whether he really loves his wife or not. If I were getting married, I would want to make sure the person officiating my wedding loves his wife because it shows up in some way—not just in the audible words he chooses, but it just comes out.

I've said this before: when I do a marriage series or a marriage retreat for other churches, I always try to do those with Sue. Sometimes she can't go, and I'm telling you this is ironclad: when I do a marriage retreat for another church and Sue's not there, it's only 50% as effective. 50%!

I remember a pastor who told me that when he attended a church with the previous pastor, the pastor's wife would sit about a third of the way back, right in the middle. She would sit there like this, and when he said something, she would go like this. You could look at her and see the real deal from the wife. So it has to be real from within.

In **verse 3**, Paul says that we can't even trust our own judgment on how faithful a person has been—not even ourselves. Listen to **verse 3**: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself."

There are two Greek words for "judge," and this is so important. You've heard me say this before, but it's crucial to understand. In English, we just have one word for "judge," which is tragic because Greek has two words: "krino" and "anakrino."

"Anakrino" means to examine, investigate, inquire, scrutinize, and question. On the other hand, "krino" means to separate out, select, choose, approve, prefer, or summon to stand trial, so that one's case may be examined and judgment passed on it. As Christians, we are given license by God to "anakrino," but we are not given license to "krino" anyone.

Matthew 7:1 says, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." The word there is "krino"—we are not to judge anyone in the sense of passing final judgment. The unsaved world often throws this verse in our faces, saying that we're not supposed to discern if what they're doing is wrong. But that's not true; we are supposed to "anakrino" (discern), not "krino" (pass final judgment).

Greek – Judge

Krino

To determine and so to judge and pronounce judgment. It includes:

- Assume the office of the judge
- Undergo the process of a trial
- To pass sentence
- To condemn in judgment
- To execute judgment

The full gamut - prosecuting attorney, judge, jury, and executioner.

Greek – Judge

Anakrino

- To examine
- To investigate
- To question
- To scrutinize

In **verse 4**, Paul uses the word "anakrino," meaning that he isn't capable of accurately investigating, examining, or scrutinizing even himself. He says, "My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide."

Then, in **verse 5**, Paul uses "krino" as a warning: "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God." He says, "Therefore judge nothing"—don't separate, select, or deselect, don't choose or not choose, don't approve or disapprove. By doing so, you act as judge and jury. We take on the role of judge, jury, and executioner, but we are not to do that.



From now until Jesus comes, this still applies to us. We are not to "krino." When Jesus comes, He will reveal the true motives of everyone's heart. For those who did what they did with pure motives, verse 5 says, "Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due."

Verse 6 continues, "Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another." Paul says that since we cannot know even our own motives, how could we possibly "anakrino" (examine and scrutinize) the motives of others? He advises us not to compare or lift one teacher above another.

Many years ago, I wrote in my prayer list just two words: "Don't compare." Don't compare yourself to others in a favorable light, and don't compare others to you in an unfavorable light. It's the answer to social media—don't compare. It gets you in trouble every time.



In **verse 7**, Paul makes a key point: "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" First of all, what makes you better than anyone else? This teaches us humility and the importance of recognizing that all we have is a gift from God.



In the book of **Philippians**, Paul provides a solution to our wrong sense of superiority. **Chapter 2, verse 3** says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves." Similarly, **Romans 12:10** states, "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

I remember years ago, I read a little clip that said, "The reason the ocean receives the homage and praise of a thousand rivers and streams is that it keeps beneath them." The ocean, by staying beneath the rivers and streams, exemplifies humility. We should consider others more important than ourselves.

"What do you have that God
hasn't given you?
And if all you have is from God,
why boast as though you have
accomplished something on
your own?"

1 Corinthians 4:7

In the second part of **verse 7**, Paul says, "If all you have is from God, why do you boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?" This is a key truth in life: everything that is good in us, every talent, every ability, has come from God. The NASB translation puts it this way: "And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?"

Every talent, every advantage, every blessing we've ever been given can benefit us, but primarily, they are for the benefit of others. Why would you be the end-all of a gift you've been given? Each gift is meant to be used for the benefit of others.



One practical point about praise: when people praise you, try to deflect all praise to God. I picture holding a 12-inch by 12-inch mirror, and when they say something, I cover my face and angle the mirror at 45 degrees to reflect their praise up to God. If there's anything good you see in me, it's always and only because of Jesus, right? Always. Send it up to God. It's a test—not just from people, but also a test that God uses to examine your heart and where you stand in terms of pride.

Proverbs 27:21 says, "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise." This is a test, so try to be careful about that and deflect all praise to God. What do you have that hasn't been given to you? It's all about Jesus.



In **verse 8**, Paul gets pretty strong. He says, "You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God's kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then we would be reigning with you." These three sentences are ironical, emphasizing the word "now." Paul says that the Corinthian Church claims that they are now, at present, full, rich kings sitting upon their thrones.



There's an old proverb that says, "He who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool—avoid him. But he who knows not and knows that he knows not is a wise man—instruct him." Pride is an insatiable thing, and it requires a childish mind to imagine that just at the beginning, one has already attained the whole. These men have not even seen the beginning of a matter and yet are so high-minded as if they had already laid hold and understood it all.

Paul then compares the Corinthians sitting in their imagined exalted thrones to the poor and low estate of the Apostles. I believe he includes the eleven Apostles plus himself. **Verse 9** says, "For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings."

Paul compares himself and the apostles to those condemned by Rome to fight and eventually die in the arena. These condemned were brought forth to either fight wild beasts or one another. Christians would not fight one another, so they were released to fight wild beasts. If they somehow escaped death that day, they would be brought out again the next day, and again and again until they died. Paul's comparison is apt; the apostles faced daily threats from those who wanted to kill them.



The King James Version says, "We are appointed to death," which is an apt analogy. On a daily basis, the apostles faced those who wanted to kill them. Paul accurately sensed that all the apostles had an appointment with martyrdom, which was true for all except John, who survived an attempted poisoning and boiling in oil and lived to old age on Patmos.

The Twelve Jewish Apostles

1. Andrew - Crucified
2. Bartholomew - beaten then crucified
3. James, son of Alphaeus - Stoned to death
4. James, son of Zebedee - Beheaded
5. John - Boiled in oil, but when that failed he was exiled for his faith; died of old age
6. Judas (not Iscariot) - Stoned to death
7. Matthew - speared to death
8. Peter - Crucified upside down
9. Philip - Crucified
10. Simon - Crucified
11. Thomas - Speared to death
12. Matthias - Stoned to death

There is only one reason these Jews were willing to suffer such terrible persecution for Yeshua's name, because they had seen the **MESSIAH CRUCIFIED & THEN RISE FROM THE DEAD**, and the Truth was worth dying for.

Paul adds an interesting group to those viewing this "arena" of the apostles facing death. **Verse 9** says, "We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike." Benson explains that some understand these angels to be evil ones, who might delight in the blood of martyrs, while others believe they are good angels, who find great joy in the faith and constancy of the apostles.



In **verse 10**, Paul says, "We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are dishonored!" Paul is making a stark comparison between the Corinthians, who see themselves as wise, strong, and honored, and the apostles, who are perceived as fools, weak, and dishonored.

Paul continues in **verse 11**, "To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless." He's not just speaking about himself but about all the apostles. They endure hunger, thirst, lack of proper clothing, beatings, and homelessness. They work hard with their own hands to earn their living. "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment" (**verses 12-13**).



Here, Paul contrasts the self-perception of the Corinthians with the harsh realities faced by the apostles. While the Corinthians see themselves as elevated, Paul and the apostles experience severe hardships. Paul elaborates on his suffering in **2 Corinthians 11**: "Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea." The apostles, who were often married and with children, led wandering, uncertain lives, relying on the hospitality of strangers.

Paul emphasizes that, despite these hardships, he did not ask for financial support but instead worked as a tentmaker to support himself. "We bless those who curse us and respond gently to insults" (**verse 12**). This is a difficult standard to meet. The NIV translation says, "We have become the scum of the earth," which reflects the Greek word meaning any vile, worthless, contemptible object. Paul is saying that the apostles were treated as such by the world.



Despite these strong words, Paul clarifies his intent in **verse 14**: "I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." Paul's goal is not to shame but to warn and correct out of love.

A good leader, parent, or manager should always aim to correct in a way that encourages improvement and growth. Reproving someone should not be about shaming them but about believing in their potential and helping them become better.



Paul asserts that even if the Corinthians could compile a list of ten thousand teachers, including himself among them, he alone holds the unique position of having brought the gospel to them. Therefore, he asserts his right to admonish and correct them as a father would his children (**verse 16**). This authority leads Paul to urge them to imitate him, a sentiment he repeats in several letters (**1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:6**).





Paul uses the analogy of a father and son to illustrate this relationship, challenging his audience—whether parents, siblings, or coworkers—to ask themselves if they can confidently say, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." This, Paul believes, should be the standard of Christian living and leadership: to be an example worth following, flawed though we may be.

In **verse 17**, Paul mentions sending Timothy, whom he describes as his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind the Corinthians of how Paul himself follows Christ's example. This underscores Paul's commitment to living out his teachings and ensuring they are practiced in the churches he oversees.



Regarding Chloe, a member of the Corinthian church, Paul acknowledges that members of her household informed him of quarrels within the church (**1 Corinthians 1:11**). In response, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and dispatched Timothy to address the issues in person. The delay in receiving the letter and Timothy's visit may have caused uncertainty about Timothy's arrival in Corinth, as noted by Benson's commentary.

Paul's warning in **verse 18** is stern: he cautions against arrogance among some Corinthians who doubt his return. He asserts his intention to visit them soon, to discern whether their lofty speeches are mere pretense or genuinely empowered by God. The King James Version characterizes these speeches as "puffed up," indicating prideful and empty words.

Ultimately, Paul stresses that the kingdom of God is not about eloquent speech or boasting but about living by the power of God—a sentiment echoed in various translations, emphasizing the need for genuine spiritual authority and authenticity in Christian life and leadership.

Jameson and Brown say, "The predominant feature of Greek culture was their love for the prestige achieved through the power of discourse, using flowery words to gain prestige within their culture." Paul challenges the Corinthians, asking if their faith is evidenced by mere words or by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. He asserts that the true sign of God's power at work is not in eloquence of speech but in a life changed by God's power (**verse 20**).



Paul contrasts superficial speech with the tangible demonstration of God's power, stating that the evidence of God's work in someone's life is their living out God's power. This principle remains relevant today: actions speak louder than words. Many people say, "Don't tell me who you are; I'll watch and decide."



In **verse 21**, Paul presents the Corinthians with a choice about his impending visit: Should he come with a rod to punish or with love and a gentle spirit? He asks them to decide whether they want his visit to be one of discipline or of gentle correction. This question is a stark reminder of the balance between God's love and discipline, a theme reinforced in **Hebrews 12:7**, which states, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?"

Paul's rhetorical question about choosing between discipline and love underscores the nature of God's discipline as proof of His fatherly love. Just as a good parent disciplines their children to correct and guide them, God's discipline serves to refine and protect His children.



Applying today's lesson, especially in a church context like Calvary, where teaching is conducted chapter by chapter and verse by verse, helps to ensure that no part of Scripture is ignored, even the challenging or uncomfortable parts. This approach aims to maintain a comprehensive understanding of God's Word, avoiding the temptation to skip over difficult topics. This method encourages us to confront all aspects of Scripture, ensuring that we grow in faith and obedience, fully embracing the whole counsel of God.

The next three chapters of First Corinthians—chapters 5, 6, and 7—address Biblical sexual ethics, which Paul addresses to the Corinthian Church. Some of this content may be uncomfortable or challenging. However, we encourage you to journey through this material with us. Parents, we trust you to decide whether your children should be present during these three Sundays of the service. We suggest reading the chapters ahead and making an informed decision based on what you see in the chapters. If you're uncertain about how to discuss this specific content with your children, feel free to reach out to the church office and schedule an appointment to speak with a pastor.

How does today's lesson apply to me? Returning to **verse 5**: "So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due." The truth is, some people are doing so much good that it may never be fully known until Judgment Day. Conversely, there are others, even leaders and pastors, whose evil deeds will also be revealed on that day. **First Timothy 5:24** underscores this point: "Remember, the sins of some people are obvious, leading them to certain judgment. But there are others whose sins will not be revealed until later. In the same way, the good deeds of some people are obvious, while the good deeds done in secret will someday come to light."



Jesus clarifies our role in judging others in **John 12:47**: "If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." Does Jesus encourage us to discern, watch, and observe? Yes, absolutely. But does Jesus call us to condemn and pass judgment on the saved? Never. Judgment even for the lost will only take place on the day of reckoning, as Jesus just affirmed.

Greek – Judge

Krino

To determine and so to judge and pronounce judgment. It includes:

- Assume the office of the judge
- Undergo the process of a trial
- To pass sentence
- To condemn in judgment
- To execute judgment

The full gamut - prosecuting attorney, judge, jury, and executioner.

Greek – Judge

Anakrino

- To examine
- To investigate
- To question
- To scrutinize

A second point to consider: Why should we give thanks to God? Because everything we have, everything we are, comes from God.

I suggest that we regularly remember Paul's point here that everything we have belongs to God; He is the true owner. Therefore, let's learn to hold things with open palms. When God places a gift, ability, or talent in our hands, we should hold it loosely, ready to release it as He directs. If we start to grasp tightly, thinking it's ours to control or use for personal gain, we're in danger. Always keep your palms open; it's God's gift, entrusted to us for His purposes.



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Let's read this together: "If you hold your hand closed, nothing good can come in. But the open hand is blessed, for it gives in abundance even as it receives. The closed hand cannot receive; only the open hand can."

"If you hold your hand closed, nothing good can come in, The open hand is blessed, for it gives in abundance even as it receives."

—
Bridget "Biddy" Mason

Now, consider this question: If an unbeliever asked you how you know your faith is real or if God exists, would you try to prove it with words, or would you share life stories that demonstrate it? **First Corinthians 4:20** tells us, "For the kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power." My mentor, John Drescher, used to say, "If your life can be explained in natural terms, there isn't anything Christian about you." Our lives should reflect supernatural stories because we serve a supernatural God. Timing and events unfold in ways that defy explanation—story after story.



Living by the power of the Holy Spirit is straightforward: ask. Here's a true story: During an evangelism Sunday at a church, a little boy invited more people than anyone else. When asked how he did it, he went to the microphone and said, "I asked the Holy Spirit." **Luke 11:13** reminds us, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

So, I encourage you to make it a daily request: "Father, I want to live my life fully by the power of your Holy Spirit, overflowing onto others. Let me live today through your Spirit because there's only one other option—the flesh. I know what my life looks like in the flesh, and I don't want that. I want to walk in the Spirit because that's the only way to accomplish anything of eternal value."

