

# 1 Corinthians

## *Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World*

### Section 1: Unity and the Gospel

#### The Necessity of Maturity for Unity

#### A Dysfunctional Family to be Confronted

#### *1 Corinthians 4:1-5*

### Introduction

**ILLUS:** The uncomfortable nature of finding yourself in a family conflict. You find out more about people than you have previously known, sometimes it is discouraging, at other times encouraging, but at all times, it is revealing.

But as the writer of Hebrews notes, while it may afterward produce “the peaceable fruit of righteousness,” it never “seems to be joyful in the present.” (Heb. 12:11)

“In some ways this is one of Paul's finest hours. Here for the first time in his letters we catch a glimpse of the man himself, and what makes him run ... The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not a matter of creed for him; it was the singular reality that conditioned his entire experience.” (Fee, 170)

What the church should be is Mature - Food to be Eaten,  
Productive - Field to be Planted, Multiplying - Foundation to  
be Built Upon, and Relational - Family to be Indwelt.

But what they were in reality was A Dysfunctional Family to be Confronted.

This is what happens in a general manner in chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians, setting the stage for the specific confrontations beginning with chapter 5.

NOTE: 1 Cor. 4:21

This confrontation is based on the truths Paul has previously addressed. Specifically, in this section, he references back to being only servants of Christ (3:5-9), the coming judgment where our works will be tested (3:13-15), and the fact that only spiritual people can judge spiritual things so often times God's servants are wrongly judged (2:14-16)

"At the heart of this is the attitude of many toward Paul himself. These people are not simply for Apollos or Peter; they are decidedly *anti*-Paul, in the sense that they are rejecting both his teaching and his authority." (Fee, 169)

In fact, it is likely that the very things Paul has addressed to this point are the things the church has levied against him (not being wise, mature, planting, building well, etc.)

He begins by confronting their judgmental attitude.

## Be Too Busy Serving to be Judgmental (1a)

So, how should the church consider us (Paul, Apollos, Cephas)?

Servants: not *dulos* (a slave) – but an "under rower"

"We are not the captains of the ship, but only the galley slaves under orders." (Wiersbe, 582)

Of Christ

So, Paul was reminding them of their humble position.

## Be Too Busy Stewarding to be Judgmental (1b-2)

Steward: manager of a household

Of the mysteries of God – God’s plan of salvation, the Gospel

So, Paul was also speaking of their responsibility.

And that responsibility was faithfulness.

Notice this was not anything the Corinthians were looking for or arguing about in their leaders. They wanted educated, wise, eloquent preachers, and successful. They were judging the ministry of others by their preferences and prejudices.

**ILLUS:** We have good preachers but not pastors.

**ILLUS:** G. Campbell Morgan on some to be apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. The problem is people want them to be what they like best or a little of them all. Jack of all trades and master of none.

God’s requirement for His servants and stewards?  
Faithfulness to the gospel!

Giving this background, Paul now launches into addressing their judgmental attitude head on.

## Be Too Busy Searching to be Judgmental (3-4)

He begins by saying, their judgment of him is no big deal!

Small –

As I pointed out last week from chapter 3 and again today in verse 1 – Paul was clear that ministers are the servants of the church, but he is equally clear here that the church is not a minister’s master – Jesus is.

Paul was saying to the Corinthians, you think your judgment of me carries far more weight than it does but ultimately it doesn’t because I don’t work for you!

The truth is that there have been ministers who have abused this truth thinking texts such as this excused them from Godly counsel, correction, and accountability, which in itself is unbiblical. However, the misapplication of Scripture never lessens its truth.

Neither is that of any human court

Court is literally “day”

**ILLUS:** “Having one’s day in court”

But there is more to it than that – it reminds us

**1 Corinthians 3:13 (NKJV) — 13** each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.

He doesn’t even judge himself

“The assumption is that since the criterion is faithfulness to a committed trust, only the one from whom he has received the trust can judge him.”  
(Fee, 175)

But noting that his last statement could be misunderstood or taken out of context ...

Paul adds ... “For I know nothing against myself”

It was not that Paul did not examine himself, (which is what the Greek term translated “judge” to this point means.”

But that ultimately, even his evaluation doesn’t matter. It is ...

The Lord’s Judgment is what matters.

**Romans 14:4 (NKJV) — 4** Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

And because of that we should ...

## Be Too Busy Seeking to be Judgmental (5)

Paul here gives the warning ... “judge nothing before the time.”

It is here that we are now given clarity about just what type of judgement Paul is referring to.

It is not a judgement of things that one can observe, but judgment of “hidden things” and “the counsels of the hearts.”

Here is the crux of the matter. Paul is not saying that as believers we cannot make judgments. In fact, in the very next chapter he commands the church to do so!

**1 Corinthians 5:12 (NKJV) — 12** For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

And again, in chapter 6

**1 Corinthians 6:5 (NKJV) — 5** I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

Not to mention ...

**1 Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV) — 31** For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

**2 Corinthians 13:5a (NKJV) — 5a** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.

**1 John 4:1 (NKJV) — 1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**Matt 18:15-17**

The problem was not judging what they could see, but what they could not see. They were judging motives. They were

not judging people by things they could see according to God's Word, they were judging people by things they could not see according to their ungodly wisdom.

"One of the most difficult things for any man to do is to remind himself that he may be a fruit inspector but not a root inspector." (Patterson, 71)

Only the Lord can do that and on "that day" when He comes every unseen deed and motive will be revealed.

**1 Samuel 16:7b (NKJV) — 7b** ... for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

And this is not true for just church leaders, but for "each one."

So we should not be seeking the praise of men, but the praise that will come from God.

## Conclusion (6-7)

In concluding this section and introducing the next ... Paul says ...

**1 Corinthians 4:6-7 (NKJV) — 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**. **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?**

“Grace, more than any other Christian teaching, pulls the rug out from under our self-reliance, our boasting, and our pride.” (Wilson, 41)

“The application ... to the contemporary church seems self-evident. On the one hand, it is a word to those in the church who are forever ‘examining’ their ministers, and who in any case tend to do so on the wrong grounds .... On the other hand, although not intended so by Paul, by implication it is also a word to those who preach and teach, that they recognize themselves as ‘under trust.’” (Fee, 179)

I will go one farther ...

Be Too Busy Serving, Stewarding, Searching, and Seeking to be Judgmental