

1 Corinthians 4:1-21 **Judge nothing before the Time**

Servants of Christ – Stewards of the mysteries of God

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 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. 4 For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

Stay with the Written Word

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?

Hardship of the Apostles – The Offscouring of all things

8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! 9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both 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 distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

Begotten through the Gospel – Paul's beloved children in the Lord

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

Sending Timothy as witness of Paul's work

17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Discipline the prideful ones

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. 21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

NKJV

Facts Revealed:

Servants of Christ – Stewards of the mysteries of God [1 Corinthians 4:1-5]

✠ God has entrusted the Apostles with understanding of the mysteries of His plan for the Salvation of mankind to those who believe. [Matthew 11:25-27, Luke 8:10, Ephesians 3:1-5]

✧ Understanding of the mystery of God is not discernable through human reasoning. [Matthew 11:25-27]

- ✧ The understanding was hidden from the time the earth was created until it was revealed through Jesus Christ. [Matthew 11:25-27, 13:34-35, Romans 16:25]
- ✧ The Apostles therefore consider themselves as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God who must remain faithful to the One Who entrusted them.
- ✧ Paul has served with a clear conscience, but only God can judge righteously.
- ✧ The time of judgment will be, when Jesus comes to set up His kingdom.
- ✧ At the Judgment Seat of Christ, all will be revealed, as Jesus will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will reveal the thoughts (counsels) of the hearts, and each one will be called to give account for himself for what he has done, both good and bad. [Romans 14:10-12, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Matthew 12:36, 25:31-46, 2 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 4:12-13, 13:17]

Stay with the Written Word [1 Corinthians 4:6-7]

- ✧ Paul has used the example of himself and Apollos to demonstrate the point that you may learn not to exalt self or another pridefully in the Church.
- ✧ Do not go beyond what is written. [Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, Revelation 22:18-19]
- ✧ Remember that the different gifts are not from man, but from God, as the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to each as He wills. [Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:5-30, Ephesians 4:11-16]
- ✧ So men should not boast as though it was his own accomplishment, but focus on the edification of the entire Church to the glory of Messiah Jesus. [Romans 14:19, 15:1-2, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 1:3-4]

Hardship of the Apostles – The Offscouring of all things [1 Corinthians 4:8-13]

- ✧ Referring back to the introduction of this letter, Paul restates the completeness of the gifts in the Church at Corinth; You are already full! You are already rich! You were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ! [1 Corinthians 4:8, 1:4-9]
- ✧ Paul goes on to say: "You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!" [1 Corinthians 4:8]
- ✧ Then he looks at the position of the Apostles in the Church as persecuted servants:
 - ✧ Men condemned to death.
 - ✧ A spectacle to the world, men, and angels.
 - ✧ Viewed as fools for the sake of Christ.
 - ✧ Weak, dishonored, hungering and thirsting, poorly clothed, beaten, and homeless.
 - ✧ Laboring, working with their own hands.
 - ✧ We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.
- ✧ The Apostles response to troubles:
 - ✧ Being reviled, we bless.
 - ✧ Being persecuted, we endure.
 - ✧ Being defamed, we entreat.

Begotten through the Gospel – Paul's beloved children in the Lord [1 Corinthians 4:14-16]

- ✧ Paul is speaking as a loving tender father to his beloved children.
- ✧ Paul acknowledges that the Church may have many instructors.
- ✧ Yet as their spiritual father he says; in Christ Jesus they were begotten through the gospel which Paul first introduced to them.
- ✧ As their spiritual father, Paul encourages the Church to imitate himself by following his example.
- ✧ It is a sign of a clear conscience of a father with a confident relationship with God who can say to his children, imitate me and follow my example in Christ.
- ✧ Oh that all believers had such a relationship with the Lord of all.

Sending Timothy as witness of Paul's work [1 Corinthians 4:17]

- ✠ Paul views Timothy as his beloved and faithful son in the Lord, whom he is sending to Corinth.
- ✧ When Timothy arrives he will be able to confirm the example Paul has set and taught in every Church everywhere in Christ.

Discipline the prideful ones [1 Corinthians 4:18-21]

- ✠ Paul realizes that some in the Church at Corinth have allowed themselves to become puffed up with pride, as though their gift is superior to the gifts of others in the Church.
- ✧ Paul intends to come to Corinth soon and when he arrives, he will deal with those who arrogantly belittle others.
- ✧ The Kingdom of God is not based on word alone, but in power of the Holy Spirit.
- ✧ So Paul can come with either chastening, or in love and gentleness, the choice is yours.