

# 1 Corinthians 4 - A Source of Inner Strength

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## Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand his motivations toward them

- The Corinthians were exalting one man over another, strife, envy and division
- Some would have not been receptive of Paul's ministry (opposing it)
- Paul thought it important the Corinthians know exactly how he viewed his ministry
- And in the end he told them in VS 16 I urge you, then, **be imitators of me**

1Co 4:1-21 ESV 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.

## To be regarded as **SERVANTS** of Christ - "Under oarsman"

- **Spent their life** in the belly of the ship with one focus - **to row to the captain's command**
- **FOR US:** Knowing this, moves Christianity from an "on again, off again" proposition, or a smorgasbord, picking what you like - **to consistently seeking to carry out the heart of God**

## To be regarded as **STEWARDS** of the mysteries of God

- It is required that **stewards must be faithful** --- There are mysteries of God (*list*)
- Thank God for those who considered the "mysteries of God, or the word of God" a SACRED TRUST -- they have guarded it, preached it and many have given their lives for it
- **FOR US:** We have also been given a SACRED TRUST...we guard the scripture by believing it, holding to it, teaching it, aligning our lives according to it...When seeking for answers for our lives, we don't take scripture as ***one option among many, but as the only option***
  - 2Ti 1:13-14 NIV What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 **Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.**

## As Servants/Stewards we are **ACCOUNTABLE** to Christ alone

Because of how he views his relationship to Christ (servant / steward) - **he is not concerned about what others think of him** - it is not a cavalier attitude, rather it is a submission to the ultimate judge

- Small thing to be judged by YOU, by a HUMAN COURT or even by HIMSELF
  - Maybe we look too much for the **approval of man** (judged by men)
  - Maybe **peer pressure** plays a role in our life (**court of public opinion**)
  - Maybe we judge ourselves - either unjustly, or on the other hand justifying

### The judgment of God includes 3 things in these verses

- He will bring to light the **things now hidden** in darkness
- He will disclose **the purposes of the heart**
- Then each one will receive his **commendation** [*praise of*] from God

**FOR US: The judgement seat of Christ was one source of motivation for Paul - he recognized it is the LORD who judges him - and he lived with that in mind - may we do the same**

- 2Co 5:9-10 ESV So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

### Understanding this is FOR YOUR BENEFIT

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!

- A benefit that you would understand why Paul says and does what he says and does
- A benefit in that they would be able to receive from Cephas, or Apollos, or Paul
- A benefit in that the same issues apply to their lives
  - they would not boast of be puffed up against one another (1 Cor 8:1 knowledge puffs)

### To be regarded as “A SPECTACLE”

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**.

This is an illustration, the criminals were brought into the arena to fight wild animals LAST, - in a similar way - they are a **spectacle [theater]** to the world, angels and men. They want to be certain they are carrying out their role in the play, **the world, angels and men are watching**.

- Act 26:25-26 ESV But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for **this has not been done in a corner**.
- 1Pe 1:12 ESV It was revealed to them [*OT prophets*] that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

## Because he is a SPECTACLE - He is willing to endure so much

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** [*used in Mt 26:67 they hit Jesus on the face*] 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.

### **The nature of his suffering**

- His **reputation** is smeared
- His **physical needs** are unmet
- He is abused and **mistreated**
- **There was disrespect** from the church (I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos) is an affront to Paul

### **Has the cause of Christ captured your heart?**

- Paul endured -- not just hanging on by a thread - but THRIVING?
- He was willing to endure things most men would RUN AWAY FROM
- We must avoid the **Christianity of Convenience**

Thank God the infant church was in the hands of men like these - who were captivated by something **eternal, something more critical, something more important than personal gain or comfort**

## He loved them as a Father - even in the midst of the mistreatment

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.

- He calls them to imitation

## A Father reserves the right to correct his sons

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?

- He is setting the tone for the remainder of the book
- He is coming to correct them, but he is coming as a father
- He is coming as a SERVANT, as a STEWARD, as one ACCOUNTABLE to Christ alone