

## 1 CORINTHIANS 4

*Teacher: John M. Brown, Olive Hill CHURCH OF CHRIST, Sunday Bible Class, April 2012*

### I. TRUSTWORTHY STEWARDS, 4:1-5

#### A. The place of teachers in God's plan, vv. 1-2

##### 1. "Ministers of Christ"

- a. Greek, **HUPERETES** = "*properly, an under rower...hence to denote any subordinate acting under another's direction*" (Vine)
- b. At 3:5 "ministers" is from Greek **DIAKONOS** meaning "*servant, attendant, minister*"; Here in 4:1, Paul uses a more subservient term – NOTE the context of what has been discussed in the previous chapters, and see that Paul is setting forth all (including preachers) are subservient to Christ

##### 2. "Stewards of the mysteries of God"

- a. Greek, **OIKONOMOS** = "*the manager of a household or estate*"
- b. Such persons were usually slaves, or freed slaves.
- c. They must be faithful! Recall Paul is speaking of teachers, ministers, servants in context: a teacher/preacher/servant need not be brilliant, eloquent, famous, beautiful, or wealthy, but he must be FAITHFUL!

#### B. Judgment, vv. 3-5

1. Who is not to judge? Not the Corinthians, a human court, or even Paul.
2. The LORD is the Judge! (see 2 Cor. 5:10)
3. Regarding this judgment, notice the WHO? WHEN? WHAT? RESULT?
4. Note: Paul knew nothing against himself, though some men were very much against him; but that would not dissuade Paul, for he knew God was his ultimate judge.

### II. FAITHFULNESS, 4:6-21

#### A. Paul and Apollos, v. 6

1. They were faithful teachers (3:5-9), but should not be thought more highly of than is right: the Corinthians are being charged not to go beyond God's Word in thinking more highly of men than God's Word allows.
2. Had the Corinthians been guilty of this? See 1:12 and 3:3-5

#### B. Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians, v. 7

1. They were differing with one another over this very matter.
2. But they must know: God's Word came to them THROUGH teachers, but not FROM teachers; what they received came not from men but from GOD, thus they should have honored God and not men!

C. The contrast between the Corinthians and the Apostles, vv. 8-13

1. There is a great deal of irony, sarcasm, and satire in this section.
2. Paul wished the Corinthians were already reigning (vv. 8-9) - satirically, he depicted them as full, rich, and reigning - but in reality, they were full of self-satisfaction and rich with intellectual pride!
3. Compare John's description of the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:17-18).
4. Note Paul's use of IRONY in comparison:

**APOSTLES**

**CORINTHIANS**

FOOLS.....WISE  
WEAK.....STRONG  
DESPISED.....HONORABLE

This was the world's assessment of them. In fact, the world was not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38)

This was the brethren's view of themselves! However, the opposite conclusion was in fact correct (see again 1 Corinthian 3:1-3)

**COMPARE THE TRUE CONDITION OF THE APOSTLES**

*appointed to death; spectacle unto the world; hunger and thirst; naked and buffeted; having no certain dwelling; laboring, made as filth*

And, notice carefully how the apostles responded! (compare Matt. 5:38-48)

D. A personal message of LOVE and WARNING, vv. 14-17

1. Paul explains why he had written to them in this way, using irony and satire: he was to them as a father, they as his children (see Phil. 4:9).
2. Paul urges them to imitate him (see 11:1).
3. He would send Timothy unto them. (see 4:17 with 1 Tim. 1:2)
4. Note: what Paul taught at Corinth, he taught in every congregation; this is unity of doctrine!

E. Paul's reply to his enemies, vv. 18-21

1. Paul would come again unto the Corinthians (compare 11:34; 16:5).
2. Would he come with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness?