

## I Corinthians - Lesson 04

I Corinthians Chapter 4

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

**Introduction:** Last week in Chapter 3, Paul dealt with the carnal Christians there in the church. We discussed how there is a daily battle we all face between the spirit and the flesh. Unfortunately, many there in the church were losing the battle and turning into carnal Christians. Paul encouraged them to seek the Lord and build on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and be led by the Spirit of God. This week we discuss the pastor and our relationship with him. In the minds of many people, there is much confusion over the relationship between the pastor and the church members. A correct understanding of this chapter, would help to resolve some of these destructive conflicts which are so harmful to the cause of Christ.

### I. The Leaders and Their Calling

*1 Cor 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

*1 Cor 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

God's ministers are to be looked upon as ministers of Christ. This is a high calling, and should be respected by every Christian.

*Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

*Gal 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

*Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The bible says these ministers of Christ are stewards of the mysteries of God. We spoke last week about how the church has been given the keys to heaven and how we should do our best to reach those who don't know the Lord. The minister of the Lord is given the ability to understand the mysteries of God which are the deep things of His Word. The mystery of the gospel of Christ... the church... the man of sin...the kingdom of heaven...the nation of Israel... the resurrection... the rapture... the millennial kingdom... all of these are mysteries of God that the minister of God is given understanding that he might teach and

preach with power and effectiveness. These are divine truths that are hidden from human wisdom, but revealed by God to His own.

The word "minister" in the Greek, means an under-rower, as the slaves rowed in Roman galley ships. The minister belongs to Christ and not to man, therefore he is an under-rower under Christ, and not man. The minister must be called of God, not by man, or by selfish ambition. He must have a life above reproach.

*Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.*

Pastors are "stewards of the mysteries of God." A steward was a manager in trusted with the management of his master's affairs. In the case of the Christian steward, he is in trusted with time, talent, opportunity, the message, and the people to lead. This is a tremendous responsibility.

*1 Cor. 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

Stewards must be faithful. This is a must if one is to please God and also true of every Christian but it is especially true of the pastor.

Paul's desire was not to please men, but rather to please the Heavenly Father. Being faithful seems rather simple, but the reality is that it is one of the most difficult things to do. The bible teaches that we will not be made stewards over anything important until we are faithful in the little things.

*Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*

*Luke 16:11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

*Luke 16:12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

*1 Cor 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.*

*1 Cor 4:4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

It is easy to judge another person, and there is the unscriptural judgment by men. Paul tells them that we must be careful in how we judge. It is strange that so many people think they are qualified to sit in judgment on the God called pastor.

*1Co 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

*1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

The Lord judges us today through His Word. His is the most important judgment.

*Heb.4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

It appears from some of the things we read earlier, that the Corinthian church had been judging their spiritual leaders based upon their brilliance and ability. Paul insists it matters little to him what the people thought of him. Until you and I reach the point that we are more concerned about what God thinks about us rather than what man thinks, we will never be effective in God's work.

Being faithful is more than coming to the church when we are scheduled to be here. It also means to be obedient to God's commands. Paul said he didn't know anything particularly negative about himself in this regard, but he knew that did not justify him. God is the one who truly judges, not man. We may be judged by our peers, but it means little compared to what God judges.

*James 4:11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*

*James 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*

*Prov 7:2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.*

*Prov 7:3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.*

*Prov 7:4 Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:*

*John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

*John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

*1 Cor 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*

At the judgment seat of Christ, all secret things will be brought to light. We read the verse last week about how the "wood, hay, and stubble" will be burned up, but the true works done in God's way, the "gold, silver, and precious stones" will

come forth and give us a reward. When Christ comes back this next time, it won't be as the righteous savior, but rather the righteous judge. He will judge all the acts and motives of all Christians. If we have labored for the wrong reasons, it will be brought out.

If we have suffered wrongfully for the name of Christ, we will be rewarded. For once, there will be righteous judgment with no partiality due to name or stature. We will stand alone at this judgment, and it won't be anything that we did that allowed us to enter heaven. It will be about what Christ did for us that saved us. God is the one that has the right to judge. Truly, man is not capable of exercising this perfect kind of judgment.

*1 Sam. 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

## **II. The Leaders and Their Followers**

*1 Cor 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*

*1 Cor 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

*1 Cor 4:8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.*

Some in the church were judging by the wrong standard and using the wrong motive. They were puffed up and self inflated. There is no room for human pride, when looking at self. God in His sovereignty, has given unto us all the good we have in us. We need to listen to the words of John the Baptist.

*John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.... 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*

In verse 8, Paul rightfully used sarcasm in saying the people were reigning in some of their judgments.

*1 Cor. 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

Paul did not name every teacher here that the people had gathered themselves about to follow, but he tells them that they are wrong in thinking that they should follow after men. Paul and Apollos had set examples that they should follow, as

they followed the ways of Christ. A faithful man is to be respected, but we are to follow after Christ. He warns to not think of humans “above that which is written.” If we do, we will wind up like they did and be puffed up about the wrong things. When I think of something being puffed up, the image of a big hot air balloon comes to my mind. While I’m sure they are fun to ride in, there is little there to hold you up in the air.

When we think worldly, we get our heads out of proportion and think more highly than we ought to think. This will cause divisions in the church if we continue in this carnal condition. Every good and perfect gift comes down from God, and we need to remember our position and where we stand. These people imagined themselves as full and rich, reigning like kings. Paul tells them they are wrong and this is not true. If Christ had returned, then they really could rule as kings, and Paul would be with them.

*Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

### **III. The Apostolic Example of Humility and Patience**

*1 Cor 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*

*1 Cor 4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.*

The world does not see us as wise when we are willing to be sold out to Jesus Christ. The apostles did not care what the world thought, but were willing to be considered fools for Christ’s sake. They were willing to be considered weak and to be despised. The Corinthians on the contrary, considered themselves to be wise and strong. They sought to receive honor in the world. Jesus warned those that wanted to be considered highly that it takes a heart of servant here on earth.

*Mat 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

*Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;*

*Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:*

*Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

*1 Cor 9:18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel,*

*I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

*1 Cor 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

While the people in the Church at Corinth were boasting in man, and in self, they were busy criticizing Paul and the apostles. The leaders were down in the arena, being made a spectacle of by the world.

*Phil. 1:29-30 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

These leaders were willing to be fools for Christ's sake.

*1 Pet. 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

*1 Cor 4:11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;*

*1 Cor 4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:*

*1 Cor 4:13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

Paul goes into detail about how the apostles had suffered and some of the things they had faced. Like their Lord, they had no certain dwelling place. They suffered both thirst and hunger. Were reviled for standing up for God and were persecuted. But they suffered it and counted themselves special to be counted worthy to be persecuted. Paul said in verse 13 that they had become as the "filth of the world", but believe me, this was only in the worlds view. God knew all about the suffering, and one day they will be crowned. .

*Matt. 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

They were working with their hands, while being reviled.

*Acts 20:34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*

*1 Tim. 4:10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*

The Leaders attitude through this all was commendable. They blessed in the midst of persecution and intreated while being defamed.

*Acts 22:22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and [then] lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a [fellow] from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.*

*1 Cor 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

*1 Cor 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

Paul wasn't saying all of this to shame the Corinthians, but rather used it to show his spiritual children what lengths he and the others went to in their service of the Lord. His desire was to warn them from the error of their ways, and to see clearly what serving the Lord would do for them when it is done with faithfulness.

One of my favorite verses in the bible is the one where Paul says he had learned to be content in whatsoever state he was in. We would all be wise to be able to attain to this great learning, and to know that we truly can do all things through Christ.

*Phil 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

*Phil 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

*Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*

Paul as a leader warned them as sons. He call them his beloved sons. He had begotten them through the gospel, but note that he did not claim credit for their salvation. All Paul had done was preached the gospel. The gospel was the means, Paul was just the messenger.

*2 Cor. 7:3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.*

*1 Cor 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

Paul had been the first one to preach the gospel to those in this church, and as their spiritual father, he calls upon them to follow his example of humility and unselfish service to Christ. When a man is sold out for Christ and lives Godly, he is worthy of following. But only as long as he follows the true teachings of the Lord.

Paul pleads with them to follow him. Please note that "be ye" is in the imperative mood in the Greek. This means that it is a command to be obeyed. "Followers" means to mimic or imitate. People in a Bible preaching New Testament Church should follow their pastor.

*Phil. 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

*1 Cor 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.*

Paul was sending a special blessing to the church by sending young Timothy to remind them of the things Paul had taught and practiced. A good preacher is blessed to have a faithful helper like Timothy.

*1 Thess. 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.*

Paul was steady and consistent, and his teachings were not just here in Corinth, but in every place that he went. Are our actions consistent in our day to day walk? Are we as faithful to Jesus on Monday and Friday as we are on Sunday. We should be.

Matthew Henry had these comments on Paul's encouragement to the church there in Corinth.

"In reproof for sin, we should distinguish between sinners and their sins. Reproofs that kindly and affectionately warn, are likely to reform. Though the apostle spoke with authority as a parent, he would rather beseech them in love. And as ministers are to set an example, others must follow them, as far as they follow Christ in faith and practice. Christians may mistake and differ in their views, but Christ and Christian truth are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Whenever the gospel is effectual, it comes not in word only, but also in power, by the Holy Spirit, quickening dead sinners, delivering persons from the slavery of sin and Satan, renewing them both inwardly and outwardly, and comforting, strengthening, and establishing the saints, which cannot be done by the persuasive language of men, but by the power of God. And it is a happy temper, to have the spirit of love and meekness bear the rule, yet to maintain just authority"

#### **IV. The Kingdom of God is not in Word but in Power**

*1 Cor 4:18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.*



*1 Cor 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.*

Paul very plainly states that he is not afraid to come to Corinth and face them... this is not why he was sending young Timothy. Timothy was another that was saved under the preaching of the gospel by Paul, and he was greatly beloved and Paul had great confidence in the young man. But Paul makes it clear that he was not afraid of those who might be puffed up against him. He intended to come to see them again shortly if the Lord allowed him the opportunity. The bible teaches us to not plan without regard to the Lord, because unless the Lord allows it, we may never accomplish the thing that we desire to do.

*James 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:  
James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.  
James 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

Paul was direct here and disciplined the church family. This was for their own good. Every family should practice discipline. The church family is no exception. Every church needs a godly pastor who will discipline the church family with the Word of God. Paul said that some were puffed up at the preacher. They thought that Paul would not be coming back to Corinth. Even if he did, they had made up their minds that they would not fear him.

*2 Cor. 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: 9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. 11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.*

*1 Cor 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.  
1 Cor 4:21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*

Paul promised to come and take care of the problem.

*Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

*2 Cor. 12:20-21 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be*

*debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.*

Paul explains the great power of the kingdom of God. He says based upon how their attitude was towards his message, he would come either with a rod or with love in a spirit of meekness. We all need to judge ourselves that God does not have to use the rod of chastisement on us. But if we are guilty of sin and refuse to correct ourselves, we will be punished. This is because God loves His children so much and wants the best for them.

*Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

*Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

*Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

*Heb 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

*Heb 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*

*Heb 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

*Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

*\* Comments from E.L. Bynum added in May of 2013*

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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**Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be**

**blessed.**