

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Ch. 4 concludes the first major division of 1 Cor. and divides into three sections.

Section 1: V1-7

Key Verse: v6 – **that no one of you be puffed up**

How was it manifested: In judging one another, and by that to elevate one's self

Teaching: Recognition of stewardship & God's judgment

Section 2: V8-17

Key Verse: v17 – **who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ**

How was it manifested: Did not value or follow the apostolic example

Teaching: Follow spiritual fathers who set forth expectations and examples (v16)

Section 3: V18-21

Key Verse: v18 – **But some are puffed up, as though I would not come unto you.**

How was it manifested: By not recognizing apostolic authority

Teaching: To be part of the kingdom of God is to be subject to the power of it

V1-7 Puffed up one against the other.

Puffed up: Its origin comes that of nature or natural, and the word to spring up.

Contentions were occurring as various ones looked on their fellow believers and judged them. This included judging the apostles. From this background are the three questions in v7. They are rhetorical in nature and are intended to get our eyes off others, and to recognize responsibility to God alone.

Q1: It is His prerogative to set each believer in the place, position, and work as He has chosen.

Q2: Everyone started at the same beginning, and what we have is a gift.

Q3: God has chosen the differences and given the gifts but now believers were throwing all that aside and were marked by self-glory.

The correction of this error was understanding that there was to be faithfulness in stewardship, and the foresight that the Lord will review our lives.

Section 1 starts with two descriptions. **Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of Christ.**

Ministers: Those who do the bidding of Christ. Its authority in view, not necessarily the work a servant is completing.

Stewardship can be summed up by two words, responsibility and accountability. This creates a focus on both the present and future. Presently there must be diligence as we have received something with which to work. The future is that a day of reckoning or review is coming.

Emphasis of stewardship: **the mysteries of God.**

A mystery is simply something that was not previously known, but now in the perfect timing and plan of God, has been made manifest. Within context of these truths, there is to be faithfulness.

The emphasis is faithfulness.

To God: He has given us this deposit, we are accountable to Him

To People of God: Dispensing all the counsel of God.

The Truth of God: Conscious of the greatness of the deposit

To His Commission: Declaring truth authoritatively, & submitting ourselves

Paul was not concerned with human opinions as to his faithfulness, or the outcome of his life's work. He would not even trust own view of life, regardless of knowing nothing to be ashamed (v4) of. The Judge is the Lord, and He will judge righteously.

V8-17 Following an Example.

Teaching by drawing a comparison. These comparisons were a warning (an admonishment) in view of an expectant change. Notice a change of tone in v14. As a father, interested not only in their correction, but in their overall spiritual wellbeing.

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V8 Riches and Reigning

Translated: Already they were reigning, already they were rich. But the Christian will not reign until Christ returns. And until then, there was an apostolic example to follow.

V9 The word, **spectacle**, is a place of viewing, the theater, the arena. The arena is the **world, both angels and men**. What is going to be viewed are the lives of the apostles, as compared to how the Corinthians were being viewed among their community

V10 Three comparisons of Corinthians to Apostles
Fools – Wise, Weak – Strong, Despised – Honourable
Compare 1:27 ... forgotten exactly who God had called

V11 Six Descriptions of the Apostles Daily life
Hunger, Thirst, Naked, Buffeted, Without a Home, Labouring...Really were walking in the steps of the Lord

V12-13 Three Responses to Outside Influences
Reviled – Bless, Persecuted– Suffer it, Defamed – Intreat
Each of these are unnatural responses, but for the power of God.

V14-17 Whatever the believers thought of the Apostle, however hurtful were their attitude, and actions, they were his beloved sons (children).

Large distinction between an instructor, and a father.

Instructor: The imparting of knowledge to children, and application of correction
Father: It speaks of example and expectations.
There was a unique relationship, as one who had brought the gospel of Christ to them.

V16 A Call to Follow

This is not self-glorying by the Apostle, as he encourages them to be followers for two reasons. His ways were after the way of Christ, and secondly it was common teaching to all the churches.

V18-21 Recognizing Authority

The natural root of man once again rearing up in power. Saying either that Paul had sent Timothy as he himself was too timid to come, or that if he did come there would be no effect.

If the Lord will. A man under the authority of God (Ministers), will do only as the Lord directs.

V19-20 The power of man is contrasted against the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of God in its present spiritual reality. Speaking of the realm where His rule is acknowledged, & its power is demonstrated in the lives of His people.

Not in word, but in power. Reality is not seen in words, but in lives that have been touched by God, and lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Section 3 is a bridge into the necessary corrections of the following chapters. Recognition of authority will be needed if there is to be repentance.

The Corinthians response to the coming of Timothy and to this letter, will determine the coming of the Apostle.
Discipline will be meted out as required to preserve God's assembly. Or, their lives will prove their repentance, and Paul would come among them in love and meekness

May each be warned by these errors that have been recorded for our learning and then, ultimately, to apply the corrective teaching of 1 Corinthians 4.

Faithfulness in Stewardship
Fatherly Care for each believer,
Fullness of Power of Kingdom of God in our daily experience