**1 CORINTHIANS 4**

**Conflict, Correction & Caution**

**THE MINISTRY OF APOSTLES**

**1 Corinthians 4:1** Let a man so consider us, as ***(mere)*** servants ***(Under rowers)*** of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

* Under rowers were the lowest of the rowers on an ancient rowing ship. The under rowers rowed to the beat of their leader… Paul is making the point that it was the Lord who was calling the shots… He and Apollos were just following the Leader.
* He also called himself a Steward… That was the servant who had charge of the master’s household. Rich people today have house managers or Majordomos – They are NOT rich… They are just trusted.
* Paul KNEW that his role required faithfulness… Those of us in this privileged role of Pastor understand that we are NOT the Shepherd… We are the under shepherd… We are not determining the path of righteousness. We are following the Lord’s direction. Take that away and we are just fakers and speech makers – like on TV. 😊
* There are about 12 verses in the NT teaching about faithful & unfaithful stewards… Whether you have a ministry calling on your life OR NOT – it is important that you be faithful over the responsibilities you are trusted with. The Apostle took his responsibilities VERY seriously**… I DO TOO**!

**LET GOD JUDGE**

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. ***POST PAUL PROSYLIZERS…*** In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, ***(I have a clear conscience)*** yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

* Paul had detractors who came in behind him and criticized. It is an all too common practice that after a guy pours out his life in ministry… Somebody comes along after him and criticizes…. It is ugly and should not be done… Paul was not bothered by it…. He says, “My conscience is clear and I will let the Lord judge me.”

**DO NOT RUSH TO JUDGMENT**

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.

* **Romans 14:10** But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
  + IE, you may not care for the way another runner in your race runs… his kick may seem too soon… Too late… Perhaps his gate is awkward… BUT just wait until the end of the race to see how he does! He MIGHT finish in front of you…
* The apostle encourages us to hold our judgment… our criticisms… our complaints… our thoughts…

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, ***(IE, farmers, builders and servants)*** 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.

* The Corinthians HAD BEEN doing that… Claiming superiority over one another because of who had won them to the Lord. ***SAD***!
* Paul corrects them here… DO NOT think of us rather than the Lord!

7 For who makes you differ *from another?* And what do you have that you did not receive? ***(As a gift)*** Now if you did indeed receive *it,* why do you boast as if you had not received *it?*

* **CEV** - What is so special about you? What do you have that you were not given? And if it was given to you, how can you brag? **YOU DIDN’T BUILD THAT**

**SAID SARCASTICALLY**

8 You are already full! **?** You are already rich! **?** You have reigned as kings without us— ?**?**? ***IE, You think you have arrived spiritually?***

and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

* Perhaps one of the most dangerous attitudes is to think that you have arrived spiritually… Be careful to be humble beloved!

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.

* **NLT**- Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.
* Paul accepted that along with his calling to preach – he had been appointed to die for it as well. He was determined when it came time to die that he would keep his head high for all to see… even angels.

**MORE SATIRE**

10 We *are* fools ***(Told to shut up)*** for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise in Christ! We *are* weak, ***(In your eyes)*** but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we *are* dishonored!

* Paul had come in humility to the Corinthian church… but they are struggling to be humble… They are pretty well off financially so Paul gives them his condition to contrast their lives with…

**PAUL RESTATES THE PRICE TO PREACH TO THEM**

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.

* Why say these things to them?
* Just to remind them that he served them because he loved them… He didn’t preach to make a lot of money…
* He was NOT trying to make them feel bad… LISTEN…

**WARNING…**

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**.

* I hope that all of you had a Father that you could imitate… I did.
* I remember going to see my Dad at his second job. He worked at the School District all day and then worked in a little grocery store at night.
  + Doing all of this while teaching the youth group at our church…
  + He was at our baseball games… our football games… My brother’s wrestling matches… Sometimes at my tennis matches…How? I do not know…
  + He was a great mentor and example for me and my brothers. He loved my Mom and expected us to respect her as if he were hearing everything we said to her.
  + IF you did not have a father to imitate like the Apostle says… BE ONE! (Or a Mom as it applies😊) Be a faithful Aunt or Uncle or neighbor or friend… You don’t have to be perfect to be an example… Like Timothy for example…

**LISTEN TO TIM…**

17 For this reason ***(Being your spiritual Dad)*** 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, ***(IE, humility)*** as I teach everywhere in every church.

* Timothy was often sent to places that the Apostle Paul could not go…
* One of his gifts was that he had great discernment that came in very handy to Paul.
* Was Timothy perfect? NOPE – he was young, timid, nervous, and a little sickly… BUT he was very handy to the ministry.

**IGNORE YOUR ARROGANT MEMBERS**

18 Now some are puffed up, ***(Arrogant)*** as though I were not coming to you.

* Some people were offended that Paul sent others sometimes… As if they were too important to speak to an assistant.
* Paul is counseling the Corinthians to be less proud and to be more humble… He is telling them that they can believe him!

**LET YOUR DEEDS OUTRUN YOUR WORDS**

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.

* **NLT** - But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God's power.

20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word ***(Talk, talk, talk)*** but in power. ***(Changed lives)***

**GENTLE VS. HARSH**

21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

* The Apostle COULD be a stern teacher… He HAD BEEN before meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road…
* After meeting Jesus… The Apostle was a changed man… He was generous to his own harm… He would get a job when he started churches to NOT be a financial burden on the new little churches.
* AND… he became gentle as he grew older… THAT is what we want to do too, beloved.