

True Ministers Arise During Time of Division

Scripture 1 Corinthians 4: 1-6

¹ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.

² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

I. Background

A. Issues Addressed in Corinthian Church

1. Factions (1 Cor. 1:10-4:21)
2. Moral Delinquencies (1 Cor. 5:1-6:20)
3. Marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-40)
4. Food Offering to Idols (1 Cor. 8:1-11:1)
5. Disorder in Public Worship (1 Cor. 11:2-14:40)
6. The Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-58)
7. Practical and Personal Matters (1 Cor. 16:1-24)

B. Audience

1. Good sized membership (Greeks, Romans, Jews, and other nationalities – predominately a Gentile audience) & majority Greeks
2. Good, reputable tradesmen and women were diverse
3. Huge differences in social status (slaves and freedmen)
4. Majority were poor (1 Cor. 11:21-22)
5. Some had a deeply sinful past (1 Cor. 6:9-11)
6. Corinth members took on the characteristics of a sinful, wicked city
7. Old moral habits crept into the church
8. Audience preferred Greek eloquence (Paul decided to speak in simple terms – 1 Cor. 2:1 and preached Jesus Christ crucified – 1 Cor. 2:2)
9. Majority of the members did not want his simplistic message (1 Cor. 10:10)

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C. Purpose

1. Paul is in constant communication with Corinth (he wrote many letters to them)
2. Paul receives information about factions created (1 Cor. 1:11) by members of the household Chloe
3. Paul sends Timothy to Corinth as a personal representative (1 Cor. 4:17)
4. Paul writes 1 Corinthians prior to Timothy's arrival due to much concern at Corinth
5. Paul receives questions from various individuals in Corinth
6. Paul addresses some of the women in the church who happen to be behaviorally inappropriate during worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16) and taking the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

II. How to Address Factions in the Church (1 Cor. 4:1-6)

A. Understanding God's True Ministers (vv. 1-5)

1. Appointed by Jesus Christ – *servants of Christ* (v. 1)
2. Administrators of revelation – *entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed* (v. 1)
3. Commitment to faithfulness – *must prove faithful* (v. 2)
4. Do not fear man – *I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court* (v. 3)
5. Understand God as their judge – *it is the Lord who judges me* (v. 4)
6. Wait upon God's move – *wait until the Lord comes* (v. 5)
7. Discern the condition of their congregant's hearts – *will expose the motives of the heart* (v. 5)
8. Know God's judgment as correct – *At that time each will receive their praise from God* (v. 6)

B. Differentiating God's True Ministers and the Fake Ones (v. 6)

1. Apollos and Paul vs. other leaders – *I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit*
 - a. These things = discussions on factions (everything from 1 Cor. 1:10-4:6)
2. Use scripture as the basis for motivation of a thing – *do not go beyond what is written*
3. Goal is to point people to God, not people – *Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other*

III. Implications

- A. Many will fall away (due to a lack of shepherding and understanding)

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1. Matt. 24:10 – then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another.
 2. 1 Timothy 4: 1 – Now the Spirit expressly says that in later^[a] times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons
 3. Hosea 4:6 – My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge
- B. Many will fall away because they follow a man or woman and treat them as God
1. Jeremiah 3:15 – I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.
 2. Jeremiah 23: 3-4 – Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.