

1 Corinthians

Chapter 4

I. Introduction

- a. Our study of 1 Corinthians brings us to Chapter 4
 - i. Remember, Paul has addressed division in the body and the importance of spiritual wisdom rather than worldly wisdom
 - 1. Part of their division had been that they were dividing under various church leaders
 - a. Today's lesson continues addressing this problem

II. Commentary

a. Verses 1-5

- i. Paul wanted the Corinthian saints to consider the ministry of the apostles and how they didn't try to elevate themselves above others
 - 1. Paul and his companions were called "*servants of Christ*"
 - a. The KJV's translation of this Greek word as "*ministers*" is simply a poor reflection of the meaning of this Greek word
 - i. We use the word minister in an almost elevating way
 - 1. For example, Prime Minister
 - b. The word translated "*servants*" really means "under rowers" or even "galley slaves"
 - i. These were the slaves who were assigned the place of rowing on a ship
 - 1. There was not a lower position
 - 2. They were also called "*stewards*"
 - a. On a ship, this one was assigned the duty of supplying tables for the men to eat at
 - i. We understand what a stewardess is on an airplane
 - b. Obviously, these have no ownership of the supplies
 - i. And we have no ownership of the Gospel
 - 1. We are simply commissioned to share it
 - c. These were required to be faithful, as we are
- ii. Paul considered it a "*very small thing*" to be judged by other believers
 - 1. Certainly, we need to consider this ourselves
 - a. Our Judge as well as our fellow believers' Judge is God
 - b. We must not spend our lives trying to please men
 - i. It is our Christian duty to serve man
 - 1. However, in this we please God
 - 2. We cannot even judge ourselves rightly, can we?
 - 3. Ultimately, we will all be judged by the Lord at the Bema Seat

b. Verses 6-7

- i. Paul used the picture of a “galley slave” and a “*steward*” as relating to Paul and Apollos for the sake of the Corinthian believers
 1. The desire is that they would stop diving under these various preachers of the church
 - a. Nobody would ever divide under a “galley slave”
 - ii. We don’t have anything to be “*puffed up*” (that is, arrogant) about
 1. Our salvation is a free gift from God
 - a. We had nothing to do with it
 - i. So, we have nothing to glory in

c. Verses 8-13

- i. Paul sarcastically declares that they are already reigning like in the Millennial Kingdom
 1. Of course, they were not
 - a. But their arrogant attitude was as though they were
 2. He does say he desired for the Millennial Reign to come
- ii. The apostles were rejects in the minds of the world
 1. The “prosperity Gospel” preachers of today need to take a good look at the lives of the ones closest to Jesus
- iii. Though the apostles were deemed as nothing in the worlds eyes, they had still given their lives as servants to God and His people

d. Verses 14-17

- i. Paul tells the saints here why he has used such strong language
 1. He loved these believers
 2. He had “*begotten [them] through the Gospel*”
 - a. That is, he was the instrument God had used to reach them
 - i. We are commissioned to “*make disciples of all the nations*” (**Mat. 28:19**)
 1. Paul was a great example of this
- ii. Paul urges them to follow the example he had set before them
 1. To emphasize this, Paul was sending Timothy to them as an example
 - a. What a commendation of the life of Timothy!
- iii. Paul had taught these truths in every church
 1. All churches should be in harmony on the Bible

e. Verses 18-21

- i. Some were living a life in opposition to Paul’s teaching because they believed he was not returning to Corinth
 1. However, Paul fully intended to return if God allowed it
 - a. Then, he would correct those in error
 - i. He desired to do this in a very loving way rather than the harsh manner he felt necessary in this letter