

God Bless!!!

I Corinthians

Chapter 4

Let's open with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

Again we thank you for your word and we thank you for your provision. We pray that you take your word and minister it to our hearts and minds as we study this next chapter. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!

So far, we have studied the message of the gospel, the method of the gospel, and the ministry of the gospel. Chapter 4 is the messenger of the gospel.

In Verses 1 through 5 we have the principles of ministry. There are three of them. The first one is in Verse 1, the position of ministry:

C.O.

I Corinthians 4 The Message of the Gospel
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1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,

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That's a very special Greek word. It's not the word Dulos for slave. It's the word for under-rower, the lowest of all slaves. By under-rower, I mean these are the ones that are down below in the bottom of the ships, and they're rowing the large boats across the water.

So he's not using the word Dulos. He says we are under-rowers. We are the slave of slaves. In essence, don't think of us as anything in the human as important.

But we are ministers of Christ, and stewards. This is where we get our word economy from and it has to do with administration.

We are under-rowers of Christ, and we are administrators of the mysteries of God.

That's the position of somebody that is called to ministry. In the human, he or she is not important other than the only importance being what Christ does in us and through us.

M.V.

I Corinthians 4:2

The qualification, and notice that it is singular. The qualification for the person in ministry:

There is only one. This one principle covers all the other qualifications we have in the scriptures that are detailed for us, especially 1 Timothy Chapter 3 where it details several qualifications if you will that a person in ministry must meet.

But they are all interpreted differently by different church groups. If we keep this as the basis, you can pretty easily see what those specific detailed qualifications are later on in 1 Timothy Chapter 3.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful, period!

That is faithful in every area of life. "Well, should we use him for ministry or not?" Is he faithful?

In Romans Chapter 16 we talked about Apelles. He was approved of the Lord. And that's the word testing. He had been through so many tests that he had proved himself to be faithful.

And I would submit to you and suggest that in our fellowships and churches, when we choose our leaders and look for the leaders that God has for us, that they must be tested and approved. They must have been put through the test of faithfulness.

One requirement! It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

The manifestation of one's works:

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.

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

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.

Don't judge anything before the time. We think we know, but many times we don't!

In Verse 6, Paul talks about the demonstration of ministry.

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.

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes;

Paul says that everything that I have been teaching, in these last couple of chapters, I have transferred to Apollos and myself, using us as examples for your sakes.

That you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written. Do not put people on a pedestal!

That no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

"I am of Apollos, I am of Paul," and so there is an argument in the body of Christ because they're comparing teachers and pastors and various leaders, one against the other. We're all of the same Spirit.

So he has questions for them.

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?

For who made you to differ from another? and what hast thou that you did not receive? now if you did receive it, why do you glory, or boast, as though you did not receive it?

In other words, whatever we have, God's given to us. Whatever is of God is of God! So if God ministers through one of us, or many of us, and He does some great things, it's because He has done it. We cannot boast in ourselves.

In the comparison, this is interesting. This is a sarcasm. This is Paul comparing himself to the carnal believers there in Corinth who were arrogant and puffed up with pride. They would brag about their spirituality and spiritual "gifts" as they called them.

Listen to Paul:

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.

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.

The word spectacle in the Greek is Theatron and is where we get our word theater from. He says we're like the world's just watching us like they're watching a movie down at the movie theater. We're a spectacle. And to angels, and to men.

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.

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we are dishonored.

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

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and we are naked, literally destitute of proper clothing, and we are buffeted, that is, literally we are physically beat up, and we have no certain dwellingplace; We are wanderers.

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

And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, that is insulted, we bless, meaning we speak well back; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Being defamed, and that's the word blasphemed. Being blasphemed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

The filth would be the garbage in a garbage can. The offscouring would be everything that's stuck to the inside that you scrape out or wash out that didn't come out when you emptied it.

We're the garbage, and we're the leftover garbage that is stuck to the side of the pail of all things unto this day.

You don't hear too many Christians presenting this as a resume for ones walk with the Lord. It's usually "Oh man, I've got all the gifts here. I can do whatever because God's made me great!"

It's like God gets credit for everything, but it's making me great. But Paul is ministering here the contrast between himself and the reigning kings.

He said I wish you did because I would be reigning with you, but Christ hasn't come back yet, so we're not reigning on the earth yet.

But there are Christians that say that we've got to take dominion over the earth. We have to rule and reign. God has given it to us. And all spiritual success is gauged by the human, the physical, whether it be money, or houses, or cars, obviously Paul is making a point!

The pattern for ministry:

Verses 14 through 17 is the admonition.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

Paul says I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

That's the word admonition, a warning.

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.

For though you 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 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Wherefore I beseech, that is I appeal to you, be followers of me.

We have to understand the word followers. It's not the same word that Jesus used when He said follow after me. That's Akoloutheo. This is the word Mimetai and it's where we get our word mimic or mime from in English.

And back in the days of Paul, a person coming out to perform a mime would be someone who would have a costume on. It might even be a one person act where they would just go back and change different masks.

But the person would come out and they would act out a message or a story without words.

When Paul is using it in this way, what he's saying is that without the human, as you see the expression of Christ in me, let this be the expression of Christ in you.

It doesn't mean let me take you as a human being and you come and follow me and just do whatever I do. And there are some people that have seminars and camps that do that.

Paul said to follow him, so I followed him, now you follow me, like it's a human chain of command. But Paul purposely used Mimetai to say I don't mean follow "me," but follow the expression through me.

So as the person would come out and perform the mime, they would purposely wear a costume and they would purposely not talk, and let the expression be the message, and that's what Paul's making reference to here.

M.V.

I Corinthians 4:17

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.

I've emphasized to you before that in Galatians Chapter 1 Verses 8 and 9 where Paul says if anybody preaches any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.

I also pointed out to you that at the beginning of the teaching section of the New Testament, the Book of Romans, that all of Paul's letters are put at the beginning.

Even the leadership in Jerusalem put their approval on Paul that he had been chosen by God to reveal the mysteries of Christ. It's not a one man presentation. The whole church agreed when they got together to discuss the matter.

So basically, as I told you before, it's foolproof!

If I hear teaching, or I come up with my own beliefs, I want to read through all of Paul's letters to find out if it lines up with the gospel that Paul preached.

If it's not there, where did it come from? Mystically, I can say that it came from the Spirit of God, but I can't prove it one way or another.

I can believe that I am being impressed by the Spirit of God to believe certain things. But if Paul didn't preach it or Paul didn't teach it, it's not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And it is interesting here that he says when Timothy comes to you, he will bring to your remembrance my ways which are in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

So either Paul is making an arrogant statement or he's under the inspiration of God's Spirit. He's making a point that God has made in his own life, is that God has raised him up.

We know from Galatians Chapter 1 Verses 8 through 11 that Paul said that he got his gospel from Jesus Christ, and that he was out in the desert for three years and was taught by Christ.

So the teachings of Christ in the gospels, and the teachings of Paul should match, which they do! And that's what I meant by foolproof, that if Jesus Christ was here for three years and He taught,

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and then we have 63 years of church history, the teachings within those 63 years for us, we know what those who were with Christ would be teaching at that time and what the church would be basing their doctrines on. This was all coming from the people who were with Christ and were taught by Christ Himself.

The proof of ministry, and Paul says we are going to have an evaluation!

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

Sometimes the people talk pretty big, especially when they don't think you're going to show up.

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.

He says, but I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but rather the power.

M.V.

I Corinthians 4:20

20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in* the spirit of meekness?

What will you? In other words, what do you wish? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

Paul says it's your choice!

Let's close with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

We are in such awe of your powerful word. We desire to know you more and more as we spend time in your word. Help us in our walk for apart from you we cannot know the way. We thank you for taking Paul and teaching him and using him to preach the gospel. We desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is by your grace and mercy that you

draw us to you. Help us to submit ourselves fully to the persuasion of your Spirit. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen!