

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/29/11 Wednesday Evening  
1 Corinthians 4:1-7

We're about to begin a new year. The following text is certainly a fitting one from which to gain the right kind of perspective for living in 2002.

*Review: 1 Corinthians*

There was a problem in Corinth, namely, personality competition. Church members had divided into cliques, rallying around their "favorite" church leader. This not only broke Paul's heart, but was fragmenting the church.

In order to justify their allegiance to certain teachers, some people began to put down Paul. 1 Corinthians 4 grows out of that background.

*The Need: A Proper View of Ourselves and Others*

Just who are we? If a church is to be healthy, it's vital that its members obtain and demonstrate a proper view of themselves and each other.

V 1 begins, "So then."

Q: What was Paul's discussion in chapter 3? God is the builder. The church is His temple. He uses different people in the building project. That being the case there is no room for boasting (21).

How then should we view the people that God uses to build His church? That's the issue Paul develops in chapter 4.

#### I. Here's how we should view ourselves and others (1-2).

V 1--"So then men ought to regard us as..." Paul tells the Corinthians how to view him. Here's what he wanted others to expect of him. Paul uses two key words...

##### **A. We are servants.**

The Greek term is *Huparitas*—a servant, helper, an assistant; one who assists a master or superior (i.e. a physician's assistant). John Mark is called the *huparitas* of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:5.

Q: Whose assistants or servants are we?

1. *We don't exist for ourselves.*
2. *We exist for the service of Christ.*

##### **B. We are stewards.**

*Oikonomia*—a manager, an administrator, a steward. One who has authority and responsibility for something. In Romans 16:23 Erastus is called the "city treasurer/manager."

We are stewards (KJV). We are people who have been given a trust (NIV). What is the "trust" we've been given?

Paul referred to himself as a person who had been enlisted by God to take care of His household. Though we are not apostles, the same is true of us as believers in Christ. We have been given grace, grace gifts, spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7). These gifts are for the good of the Body. Let this sink in...

1. *We've been given a trust.*

Q: What's required of those who have been given a trust? Ingenuity? No. Creativity. Not really. One thing...

2. *We must be faithful.*

Trustworthy. Dependable.

E.g.—I think of Daniel. He was not a flashy man, but he certainly was faithful. He outlasted a host of pagan rulers, and faithfully represented God in a very difficult environment. He didn't ask to be carried into captivity as a teen. And he didn't like living outside of the Promised Land. And he didn't appreciate being "framed" by self-seeking politicians. But throughout it all, he accepted what was "on his plate," and sought to honor God. He was *faithful*.

Discuss: What difference will it make if we truly lived with the mindset that we are servants and stewards? Furthermore, what difference will it make if we view others in the church the same way?

II. Here's the difference it will make (3-5).

**A. We won't live to please people (3a).**

Q: What did Paul say didn't matter to him? "If I am *judged* by you..."

The Greek term is *anakrino*—"to try to learn the nature or truth of something by the process of careful study, evaluation and judgment - 'to examine carefully, to investigate, to study thoroughly.'

καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνακρίνοντας τὰς γραφὰς εἰ ἔχει ταῦτα οὕτως 'every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what he said was really true' Ac 17.11.1

Was Paul a Stoic? Didn't it matter to him what people thought of him? In one sense, yes. That's why he is writing this letter. Some people were putting him down. But why is he "defending" himself and his ministry? It's not for personal gain. It's for the good of the gospel. In the ultimate sense, he didn't care what people did to him or thought of him.

Most of us struggle with being people pleasers.

Discuss: What are some ways this surfaces?

In fact, he took it a step further when he said, "I do not even judge myself." What does that mean?

**B. We won't live to please ourselves (3b-4).**

Q: What did Paul say he had at the beginning of verse 4? A clear conscience

1. *A clear conscience is good.*

2. *A clear conscience, however, doesn't guarantee innocence.*

Q: Why not?

**C. We will live to please Christ (5).**

Q: What's true of Christ? Two things...

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1Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

1. *He is the judge (4b).*

Nothing escapes His observation, as Paul says: “It is the Lord who judges me.”

2. *He will judge when He returns (5).*

Q: What will be true of this judgment?

⇒He will reveal the hidden.

We see only the surface of things. God sees it all. We live in a world of appearances, of representations, of plastic smiles, of hidden agendas. We can fool each other. We can even fool ourselves. But we can’t fool the Judge.

⇒He will expose motives.

⇒Each person will receive his due from God.

We have a choice to make. We can impress people now, and if we do so, we may receive man’s applause. Or we can live trying to receive man’s applause and never get it. Or we can do what Paul did. We can live *this* day in light of *that* day.

Each of us will receive our “due.” Paul calls it “praise from God.”

Q: What does he mean by this?

Here’s how the *NLT* puts verse 5--“So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether or not someone is faithful. When the Lord comes, he will bring our deepest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. And then God will give to everyone whatever praise is due.”<sup>2</sup>

III. Here’s what we must do about it (6-7).

**A. We need to apply these truths to our lives (6).**

Paul said he did so. He applied them to both himself and Apollos.

He also quoted a phrase known to them, “Do not go beyond what is written.” That is, what is written in Scripture. We should strive to be *biblical* in our view of each other, of ministry, and of life. If we do so, we won’t “take pride in one man over against another.”

We, too, need to apply these truths. We live in an age that is very surfacy. The church has become very surfacy. We’re impressed by appearances. We live to make good impressions. We can even do church the same way.

If we’re going to please God, we must go against this spirit of the age.

Discuss: What are some practical implications of this?

**B. We need to live with three questions in mind (7).**

1. *Who made me different from the next person?*

2. *What do I have that I did not receive?*

3. *If everything I have is a gift, what right do I have to boast?*

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<sup>2</sup>*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

