

1 Corinthians – United in Christ

11/15/2020 – 1 Corinthians 4

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

BIG IDEA: The antidote to pride is Kingdom Identity. To disable pride, you must enable Kingdom Identity.

- Randy defined pride as “thinking highly of yourself compared to others; and thinking often of yourself compared to others”. This was happening in the Corinthian church in the form of celebrity cults around certain teachers – “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos”. This division led to judgment and criticism, pitting Paul and Apollos against each other, and causing each clique to look down on the other because of their preference. In what ways do we mirror this same pattern in our own churches and lives?
- Reread the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 4. Spend some time developing a picture of what “Kingdom Identity” looks like based on this passage. Compare this to the messages we receive from our culture about identity.
- “In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says: Look! PRIDE causes you to think wrongly about who you are; BUT here is who you really are: SERVANT. SCUM. SPIRITUAL FATHER. That’s who you are! And that’s

who you NEED TO BE!”. Paul called himself and Apollos the Lord’s servant; the world’s scum; and the Corinthians’ spiritual father. We are called to imitate Paul (v.16). Let’s explore what that means.

- The word translated “servant” in this passage means under rower or galley slave. The galley slave was the lowest of all slaves, servant to the slaves, the officer’s crew and ultimately the captain. How do we apply this to our local church? To our own ministry in our lives at work, at home, or at play?
- In the world’s eyes, the apostles were considered “the scum of the earth, the refuse of all things” (v. 13b). The pastors/leaders the Corinthians were elevating and fighting over were no more than lint caught in the lint trap of your washing machine! Who are you propping up to a position that belongs only to Christ? How is the church following the lead of the culture and not Paul and Apollos?
- Paul was the apostle that brought the gospel to the people of Corinth. He preached the gospel and helped establish the church there. In this sense, he was their spiritual father in the faith. We all have people in our spheres of influence that we can influence for Christ. Take a moment and think about who that person or persons are and jot their names down.
- “You don’t have to know everything in the Bible to lead someone to Christ; but you do have to live what you know. This partisanship in our society now must not infect our church or else we lose our witness. We MUST exemplify selfless, cruciform – cross-shaped – love. And we can’t model crucifixion if we’re using the cross as a ladder to upward mobility.”
 - Think about your list of friends, family, or coworkers that God has put on your heart and in your sphere to influence. How does your life exemplify the cruciform life?
 - Our God is a God of grace who helps us in our weakness. None of us will be able to answer that question with perfection. We will have areas of struggle, areas where we need the Lord to help us. If you are comfortable doing so, share those struggles with one another and spend time in prayer, asking the Lord for help in living into our Kingdom Identity!