

SUBJECT :

Serving Faithfully

BIBLE BASIS:

Lesson Scripture: 1Corinthians 4:1-13

BIBLE TRUTH:

God requires faithfulness not success.

MEMORY VERSE:

1Corn. 4:2

Lesson Aim

That we decide to make the commitment to
be a faithful servant

Introduction

- One of the serious problems in the Corinthian church was how the members viewed ministry. Some of the church members were esteeming one minister above the other ministers. They were judging the gifts, preaching styles, intelligence, and the success of their ministry.
- Some of the people had been helped and blessed by Apollos, so they spoke up for Apollos. Others had been helped and blessed by Cephas, so they spoke up for Cephas. Still others had been helped and blessed more by Paul, so they defended Paul.
- Then the inevitable happened: The matter became critical, little groups were buzzing about talking up the merits of their favorite minister. Deep feelings settled in, and the church fellowship was threatened. Divisions and contentions spread throughout the church. Gal. 5:15
- Underlying the divisions in the Corinthian church was the inflated view of their party leaders. God provides leaders for the church, but it is incumbent upon believers to view them as God does. Rom. 12:3
- It was necessary for Paul to instruct them to let God do the judging of ministers. Rom 14:4
- Our works will be review by Christ at the judgment seat. He will reveal the innermost thoughts and desires of our hearts. Those ambitions and motives will be brought to light. 2Cor 5:10

Be Faithful

- 1 Cor. 4:1-2 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. [2] Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.
- Paul wanted himself and other church leaders to be thought of as minister and stewards of the mysteries of God. Eph. 3:8-9
- A mystery is not something hard to understand. Rather, it is something that has been hidden and kept secret. It is something that was undiscoverable by human reason, but now is revealed by God through the Gospel. It is crystal clear to those to whom it is revealed, but it is completely alien to those who do not receive it. Rom. 1:16-17
- The first responsibility that a steward has is faithfulness to his master. This is an important point because being faithful and being successful are two different things. Success is not the responsibility of the minister since it is God that gives the increase. 1Cor. 3:6-9
- Can membership or money determine the success of a ministry?
- The preacher or teacher must be faithful to the gospel message we do not make up our own material, we are responsible for carefully expounds the Word of God. Gal. 1:6-9
- God's steward must not assume credit or blame for success. The Lord warned the prophet Jeremiah that he would not be successful. Jer.7:27

Don't Compare Yourself To Others

- [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.
- With responsibility comes accountability. For this reason Paul cared very little for the Corinthians or anyone's appraisal of his ministry. The congregation or some clique in the church may cut the minister to shreds, and they may break his heart, but they have absolutely nothing to do with the charge that God has on his life. Rom 14:12
- He may be judged as to his eloquence, intelligence, ability, or whatever some may or may not like. But none of it matters to God. Zech 4:6
- Paul does not even judge himself. No minister can honestly judge his own ministry. A person who begins to judge his own works either begins to think too highly of himself or too lowly which causes him to become prideful or discouraged.
- Paul, of course, is not talking about a minister evaluating his ministry for the purpose of strengthening it. He is talking about passing judgment upon his ministry in comparison to other ministries. Is my ministry as good as someone else's? Is Christ as pleased with his ministry as he is with the ministry of others? This kind of thinking is not good. 2Cor. 10:12
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Let God Be The Judge

- [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.
- The Lord alone justifies a man and his ministry. This is a significant statement by Paul. He knows of no place he is coming up short in the ministry. To his knowledge he is faithful in the ministry and pleasing to the Lord. But he is not justified and approved by his judgment. The Lord Jesus alone can put the stamp of approval upon his ministry. Psalm 19:12-14
- There is to be no judgment of ministers nor of anyone else until the Lord returns. He and He alone has the right and is capable of judging ministers and believers. Both ministers and believers will have the praise of God when Christ returns and judges their work, not before. No matter how successful men may judge one another to be, no person will have the praise of God until Christ returns and judges the secret things of a man's heart and life. This is the reason men are not to judge one another. Romans 14:4
- No believer can know the hidden things of darkness within a man. Only Jesus Christ can bring the hidden things to light. Luke 12:2

See Men As God Sees Them

- [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.
- Paul used his and Apollo's names to the cliches in the church for a purpose. He avoided singling out the guilty leaders by name. The Corinthians needed to see the seriousness of their problem objectively. Paul and Apollos were not competitors. The Corinthians inflated views of men caused them to be puffed up with pride, pitting on leader against another. 1Cor. 1:3-4
- The point is this: Paul was writing to teach the Corinthians (and all other churches) how to relate to ministers and their gifts.
- Believers must stop comparing and judging their ministers and elevating them above what Scripture says. Some in the Corinthian church were judging some ministers to be better and more capable servants of God than others.
- Note the words “*puffed up*”. The phrase means to be inflated. It is a picture of puffed up air bags. The point is, the judging of ministers and the feelings that one can judge ministers is nothing but hot air in *puffed up* balloons. It is meaningless. It means absolutely nothing to Paul nor to God. 1Cor. 4:18-19

God Is The Giver Of Gifts

- [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?
- The Corinthians pride was pointless, for God, not man, causes the differences between men. One believers gift does not make him superior to another believer. There is no place for boasting, for each of us is gifted as God wishes. 1Cor. 12:18
- Note the three piercing questions of Scripture that drive the point home. What makes us think we have superior judgment to others? What do we have that we did not receive? What is our spiritual gift? Did we create it or did God give us the gift? If we are spiritually mature, did we earn it, or did God by His grace enable us? 1Cor. 3:10, Pro. 25:14
- Were we saved and brought into the family of God by our own efforts or by the grace of God? Eph. 2:1-8
- What do we have or possess that we did not receive? Life? A body? A mind? A spirit? 1 Cor. 6:20
- Why do we glory in exalting ourselves as the person with the spiritual maturity to judge who should and should not serve? Luke 18:9-14

Don't Fool Yourself

- [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.
- The Corinthian believers thought themselves to be full and rich and reign as kings. It is the idea of being perfected and complete. Paul had already declared them as being carnal minded babes in Christ. 1Cor. 3:1-3
- However, the Corinthian believers were acting as though they were perfect and mature, and had the right to pass judgment upon God's people. They felt they lacked nothing—no gift, no insight, no knowledge, no spiritual understanding. 1Cor. 10:12-13
- They were acting as though they were reigning as kings in God's church. They were acting as though God had already given them their spiritual reward and exalted them to rule over the believers of the church. Rev. 3:17
- Paul says this: he wishes they were reigning as kings, for then the ministers of God would be reigning with them. It would mean that God had already created the new heavens and new earth and rewarded the believers, exalting them to their promised reward. Rev 21:1-6
- A judgmental Christian who thinks he is spiritually superior and full, needing very little, is an extremely dangerous person. Gal. 6:3-5

God View Of A Good Minister

- [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. [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.
- Here is how I think God sees us as Apostles, last not first. Their life carry the sentence of death with it. 2Cor. 4:7-9
- God has set forth the minister as a doomed gladiator to serve the world no matter the cost. Luke 9:23-25
- The minister is counted as a fool for Christ because of His strong devotion to Christ, while believers in the Corinthian church saw themselves as wise.
- The believers of the Corinthian church are thought to be strong, for they receive the fulness of Christ without suffering too much and without having to go through hardship day after day.
- The believers of the Corinthian church are thought honorable and while ministers are too often without honor among the world and, tragically, even among believers.
- According to this lesson as a minister you should seek courage, not comfort. One can understand the desire to be comfortable, however we were not call to be comfortable but to suffer for Christ. 1Pet. 2:21

The Life Of A Minister

- [11] Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; [12] And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:
- The work of the ministry, whether at home or abroad, is not an easy task. Gods servants are often pushed out of their comfort zones. Suffering is to be expected. Paul says that he and the apostles were suffering, “even unto this present hour.” 1Peter 4:12-14
- They sometimes lacked food, water, and clothing. They were buffeted and beaten with fists, slapped. They had no home. They were not a burden to the church even if it meant that they had to labor at secular jobs in order to support themselves. Acts 18:3; Acts 20:33-34; 1 Cor. 9:6-11; 2 Cor. 11:7-9
- They were reviled or railed at, but they blessed. They were persecuted, but they suffered it. Luke 6:28, 1Peter 2:23;
- Suffering is not a sign that one should quit or move; It is a sign that one is doing a work for the Lord and that the devil is unhappy about it. Let us pray, then, for courage and steadfastness and not stop in the going gets tough. 1Cor. 10:13

It Gets Worse

- [13] Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.
- If the apostles are willing to be treated like garbage, why should the Christians in Corinth try to climb ladders of self importance? How can they wallow in their own pride while ignoring greater issues of stewardship and faithfulness to their master?
- Surely the sarcasm and the vivid language of Paul will wake them up and make them see the truth.
- What are we doing for Christ today? How much are we suffering to preach the gospel and to minister to people? How many of us have honestly given all they are and have to share the gospel with the world? How many of us have sacrificed and given so much that they can eat only one meal a day? How many of us have only a few clothes hanging in the closet? How many cars are in our garages? How much money is in our banks? How many of us have really sacrificed all we are and have like the apostles did? Matt. 10:39, 2Cor. 12:10, Phil. 1:29
- The life of a minister is not easy. Its not a life of ease, comfort, success but one of challenge, courage, and faithfulness. The ministry is not for the faint of heart. Pro. 28:1