

Paul continues his heart to heart talk with the Corinthian believers. He has warned them against following men, following men's wisdom, cliques, forming sects, building with poor materials. He has encouraged them to build with excellent materials on the solid foundation, that is Christ. He has opened their hearts to God's infinite wisdom. that displaces man's foolish wisdom. He turns their hearts away from men toward Christ Himself, who is indeed theirs. Is He not sufficient?

Now Paul returns to the fact that some of them were judging him (examining him, putting him under scrutiny). They were putting him down. Often ambitious men seek to elevate themselves by putting down others they view as competitors. They climb the ladder of "success" to prominence and power using others as stepping stones. Paul denounces the practice of judging their fellow brethren. He asks that they "account of [regard, view, esteem] us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

**Minister** = servant 5257 *huperetes*, an under-oarsman, i.e. subordinate (assistant, sexton, constable): - minister, officer, servant.

**Steward** = keeper 3623 *oikonomos*, a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer, i.e. an employee in that capacity; by extension a fiscal agent (treasurer); figurative a preacher (of the Gospel) : - chamberlain, governor, steward.

Paul and those with him were not officious, dominant leaders, but simply faithful workers and caretakers of what God had given them to preserve and distribute to His own, the mysteries of God. May we aspire to this role as well.

**Mysteries (secrets) of God** 2:5 *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* 6 *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:* 7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:* 8 *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

We also read of the mysteries of God in our study of Ephesians and elsewhere in the New Testament. May **we** each be faithful ministers and good stewards of the truth entrusted to us in the scriptures.

But **they** dared to judge, as it were, another man's servant.

What does it mean to judge?

**Judge** 350 *anakrino*, properly to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine : - ask, question, discern, examine, judge, search.

Example: Luke 23:14 [Pilate] said unto them, *Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people:*

*and, behold, I, having examined (350) [him] before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.*

**Judge** 2919 *krino*, properly to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication to try, condemn, punish: - avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think.

Example: Romans 14:4 *Who art thou that judgest (2919) another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

And they dared to judge (350) the quality of his work and the ability with which he did it. Neither his ability or the results were their business to judge. In chapter 3 Paul had laid down the principle that we are fellow workers together under God's direction, but individually accountable for the work we do, and that God will reward us.

3:8 *every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

Yes, our works will be judged but are not meant to be judged by men, but by the Lord. The Corinthians were preempting the Lord's rights. Paul gives Him His rightful place.

Paul contests the Corinthians practice of judging him and others. Do we have authority/responsibility to scrutinize, examine, investigate, question one another? Their person? Their works? Their behavior? Their hearts? Their thoughts? If some, which? Why? If so, when? If so, in what manner? With what intent? With what objective? What does scripture say? These are controversial issues among believers. Think about this, be sure you know.

We see in chapter 4 a class of things that Paul puts outside the jurisdiction of the Assembly and individuals to judge in others. Here he marks a line in the sand, so to speak, and forbids them to judge him or anyone else's spiritual gifts, natural abilities, efforts, service, works, performance, etc. done for the Lord. That is exclusively the Lord's place. He even excludes himself from the privilege to examine and judge his own service for the Lord.

4 *For I am conscious of nothing in myself; but I am not justified by this: but he that examines me is the Lord*

Psalm 139:23 *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

He declares that he is not conscious of any

shortcoming which he should correct, but he commits the determination of how well he is doing to his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. (There is no hierarchy given in the Assembly to report to anyway.) He is the one we are accountable to. The Lord is the only one who evaluates our service. He will also bring to light the hidden things of darkness and the secret counsels of our hearts. Any hypocrisy we now practice will be fully exposed for what it is and our true motives for our actions (or inactions) revealed. Now isn't that a solemn thought! He knows them now better than we do, yet he will clear our conscience of everything unsuited for heaven we haven't already judged.

But what a comfort and encouragement, "then each shall have praise from God." Not: "each shall suffer loss." (Some may.) Not: "some shall have praise from God." No it is **EACH!!! Each shall have** praise. None will be empty. Not merely recognition and acclaim from men, or even angels, but praise **FROM GOD!** Notice! He does not hold over us the threat of punishment or even of suffering loss as a motivation to serve. No is His "well done thou good and faithful servant" that urges us onward. Yes, we will each receive public recognition and be presented awards by the Lord in the glory for what He has done through us. This will be in the glory. Don't look for it here. But let's give Him our all here! And beware of judging other's work for why should we discourage them whom the Lord encourages.

The Lord says that men who seek acclaim now have their reward now.

*Matthew 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. {alms: or, righteousness} {of your: or, with your} 2 Therefore when thou doest [thine] alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Paul states in his second letter that men who seek

comparisons and acclaim among their peers are not wise.

*2Corinthians 10:12 For we dare not make o u r s e l v e s of the number, or compare ourselves with some t h a t commend themselves: but they measuring t h e m s e l v e s by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

The Corinthians weren't being wise. Apparently they didn't fully heed these admonishments of this first letter to them for the above quote to appear in his second letter. They were seeking power, prominence, preeminence, praise, pomp and prestige among their peers. They were ignoring the Lord who bought them and the messenger (Paul) who had brought them the saving message of the gospel such a short time before. And this attitude persisted so he had to write also in the second letter:

*2Corinthians 10:10 For [his] letters, say they, [are] weighty and powerful; but [his] bodily presence [is] weak, and [his] speech contemptible.*

Now we learn something extraordinary.

*4:6 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.*

O HO! They weren't even following Paul or Apollos, at all. They were only following some of their own leaders who were competing with Paul for prominence amongst them. Paul now presses three questions upon them.

*4:7 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]?*

Why were they boasting and comparing themselves with one another? God was the only one who really made them different from one another! He had created them and given them life in Christ, and the Lord had given them their spiritual gifts. The only differences they could make amongst themselves were based upon the foolishness of the wisdom of the world. How could they glory as if everything they were wasn't a gift from God? See also 1Corinthians 14:36. Such is the heart of natural man but we shouldn't see it in a believer, should we?

By Ron Canner, December 11, 2002