

I CORINTHIANS 4:1-21

REVIEW...

- **I CORINTHIANS 1:1-9 - THE GREETING TO A TROUBLED CHURCH...**
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:10-17 - THE 1ST PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - FOLLOWING MEN...**
 - When there is division in the church - it keeps us from being effective for Jesus...
 - The solution to division - focus on Jesus Christ - the one thing we all have in common!
 - The first cause of the division - following men - I am of Paul / Apollos / Peter / Jesus...
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:18-31 - THE 2ND PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - THE WISDOM OF MEN...**
 - The Wisdom of God's message - the cross / the Wisdom of God's messengers - the foolish...
- **I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16 - THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S MESSAGE...**
 - Paul was determined to just preach Christ crucified to the church - the simple Gospel...
 - So that the faith of the believers would be based in God's Word - not men's words...
 - Those who received the message of the Gospel - are made perfect and understand..
 - Revealed by the Spirit of God within us - who knows the mind of God..
 - Unlike those who do not believe - cannot know the truths of God - no Holy Spirit!
- **I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16 - THE 3RD PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY...**
 - The believers in Corinth had never grown in the Lord - still babes in Christ...
 - Shown through their division - their focus on denominations...
 - That they were acting like unbelievers - missing the unity we should have in Jesus!
 - One plants - another waters - but God gives the increase!
 - Paul had built the church on the foundation of Jesus...
 - But those who added to the church needed to be careful...
 - Their work would be tested by fire - if it was of God / or a work of men...
 - Therefore do not cause division - do not tear down the church of God!

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL & APOLLOS...

- **1ST - SERVANTS OF CHRIST... VS. 1-6**
 - Rather than the saints in Corinth arguing if they were 'of' Paul or 'Apollos'...
 - Paul commands them to instead follow their example - to Jesus!
 - Look at us (*Paul/Apollos*) as servants of Christ - stewards of the mysteries of God...
 - 1st - Servants of Christ - *huperetes* - 'under rower' (*only used here by Paul in NT*)...
 - A slave who worked a Roman ship - under the deck - hard working - driving an oar...
 - No one would ever see and 'under rower' - it was a humbling position - no prestige...
 - Paul's point is they were no one special - they were called by God to serve...
 - Sad to say the church has lost sight of that today - 'Minister' has become a title...
 - Rather than working hard for God - it describes one who tells others what to do
 - 2nd - Stewards of the mysteries of God - responsible for explaining God's Word...

- Paul/Apollos were simple 'under rowers' - no one special or important...
 - But they had been entrusted with the most important of all duties...
 - They were the caretakers of the truths of God's of God's Word!
 - We have all been entrusted with God's Word - we know truth of the Gospel...
 - We were not given this honor so we could hold onto (*hide it*) for ourselves...
 - We're called to tell others - to those who don't know/understand about Jesus!
- God looks for stewards who are faithful (*Aorist/Passive/Subjunctive*)
 - If you had a valuable ring - you would not give it to you 2 year old to hold on to...
 - You look for someone who is proven - steady - faithful and true...
- This was the question that had arisen in Corinth - was Paul faithful... vs. 3-4
 - There were those who questioned Paul's integrity - his love for the people!
 - They accused him of using his authority to get money - **II Corinthians 12:13-17**
 - There are many 'preachers' and 'pastors' today - who have false motives...
 - Rather than caring for and feeding God's people - they take from them!
 - * **Ezekiel 34:2** - "Prophecy against the leaders of Israel. Give them this message... Destruction is certain for you... who feed yourselves instead of your flocks."
 - But Paul never took anything from Corinth - he only gave back to them...
 - * **II Corinthians 12:14-15** - "I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."
 - The true heart of the steward/pastor - is to give his life for the sheep!
- The 'opinion' of the church in Corinth - or men in general - counted very little to Paul...
 - Men always have their idea - their comments - about others...
 - You can't give too much credence to them - you don't know their motives...
 - More often than not - men say things as a means to an end...
 - 'Don't go to church it's useless' - when really they're convicted they are not going!
 - Paul did not even trust his judgment of himself - because he did not know himself...
 - His conscience was clear - but that didn't matter - the Lord would examine him!
 - Most of the time we do not fully understand our own actions...
 - We might beat ourselves up over a decision we have made - right or wrong...
 - **I John 3:20** - "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart."
 - But ultimately it is only the Lord who knows our heart - He will judge us...
- So be careful not to Judge before the time... vs. 5
 - The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness / reveal the heart...
 - God will reveal the inner thoughts of the heart - the ulterior motives...
 - Men can fool other men - but men cannot fool the Lord - He knows the heart...

- Then praise will come from the Lord
 - Paul was not looking for praise from the church in Corinth / from men...
 - He was faithfully serving the Lord - waiting for the praises of God...
 - **Galatians 1:10** - "Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."
 - Do we worry about what others think – or about what God thinks
 - Too often we seek men's praise/opinion that are fickle & short lived
 - If we are more concerned what others think – than what God does
 - We are serving men – and not serving God
- Paul and Apollos were good examples - not to depend on men... vs. 6
 - If you pay attention to the Bible - you won't brag about one leader over another...
 - The example of God's Word is clear - God uses sinners...
 - Moses was a murderer / David was an adulterer / Peter was a coward!
 - These are not men to admire - it is God who is the one who deserves all the Glory!
 - So don't put men on a pedestal - don't think they are someone special...
 - If men come to us looking for answers and help – it's easy to be the answer...
 - If someone needs food, money, or wise counsel... we try to be Jesus
 - And men would much rather look to someone they can touch and see...
 - Therefore they are much more inclined to trust in a man than God
 - The problem is we are limited – and can't always help those who look to us
 - Maybe we can help them once – but when they come back - again and again...
 - We have limited abilities and resources – only God has limitless!
- **DON'T BE PRIDEFUL... vs. 7-13**
 - What makes someone different/better than another person... vs. 7
 - Everything you have you received from God - so it is not yours to glory over...
 - So why do you brag as if you have not received it from God...
 - You intellect / your race / your family / your country - all were given to you!
 - We have nothing - which we have not received - so all the credit goes to God!
 - The church in Corinth had forgotten... vs. 8-13
 - You think you are already full - rich - you have reigned as kings without us...
 - The saints in Corinth looked at themselves and thought they had it all...
 - (Paul notes I wish it were true - we would be reigning with you - **Revelation 3:21**)
 - * **Revelation 3:17** - "You say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."

- It is not about having lots of stuff - money - it is about having Jesus!
- So what do those who have Jesus look like - what is the cost of salvation...
- The cost of following Jesus...
 - We are last - men condemned to death - **Luke 9:23**...
 - God set the Apostles as an example - POWs - for the world (& *angles*) to watch...
 - We say we believe in Jesus – but do we really understand what that means
 - Are we looking for a way to have salvation – but live our lives our way
 - Believing in Jesus mean following him – taking up our cross – dying to ourselves!
 - Being scorned by the world...
 - Whereas the church in Corinth was seen as wise / strong / and honored!
 - Their dedication to Jesus made them look like fools / weak / and laughed at...
 - When we are dedicated to the Lord - the world does look at like we are crazy...
 - They think we need a crutch in Jesus - but they are strong so they don't...
 - Not living for the pleasures of the moment...
 - To this hour - we are hungry / thirsty / poorly clothed / beaten / homeless...
 - We labor/toil with our own hands - they did not have important jobs...
 - We bless those who curse us / we are patient with those who abuse us...
 - If we are looking for the Gospel/Jesus to give us a better life here...
 - We will likely be sorely disappointed - the Gospel is about Eternal life!
 - But the momentary - light - troubles of this life are nothing compared to heaven!
 - **II Corinthians 4:17** - “Our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!”
 - We are falsely accused - treated like the filth/trash of the world...
 - If the world likes you - if they think you are great - something is wrong...
 - Following Jesus means the world hates you - thinks you trash...
 - **John 15:19** - “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”
- FOLLOW ME... vs. 14-21
 - Paul did not write to shame them - but as little children - to warn them... vs. 14-17
 - Paul saw the believers in Corinth as his children in the faith...
 - They might have ten thousand teachers in Christ - but only one father...
 - Paul was the one who had first given them the good news of the Gospel...
 - Paul was not upset with the church - he was worried for them...
 - When we get our focus off of Jesus - when we get caught up in the world...
 - God is not upset with us - He is concerned for us - He knows where sin leads - death!
 - He might be strong on us - rebuke us - but only because He loves us - **Hebrews 12:6**

- Therefore follow me (*Present/Middle/Imperative*)
- Paul set the example for the church - the model for them to follow in Jesus...
- **I Corinthians 11:1** - "Follow me, just as I also follow Christ."
- I have sent Timothy (*my beloved faithful son in the Lord*) to you - **Acts 19:21-22**
 - Timothy would remind the church of Paul's teachings...
 - The same teachings Paul taught in all the churches of God...
 - **II Timothy 3:10** - "You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance..."
 - When we get caught up in the care of this world and we do forget...
 - We need a 'Timothy' - a Godly brother to come along our side and remind us...
 - Point us away from the world - wisdom of men - and back to Jesus!
- Some of you have become arrogant... 18-21
 - There were some in the church who were confident Paul would never return...
 - But Paul would come - and face those who were causing the problems...
 - Not to hear their words - but to see 'what they are made of'...
 - The Kingdom of God is not just in word (*logos*) - but also in power (*dunamis*)!
 - Like a protective father - Paul was going to come and deal with troublemakers...
 - There are many today who don't think Jesus is going to come back...
 - They have become arrogant in their sin - thinking there will be no consequence...
 - **Matthew 24:44** - "Be ready, for [Jesus] is coming at an hour you do not expect."
 - Do you want a rod - or love and gentleness...
 - The saints in Corinth could continue in their divisive ways - choose the Rod...
 - Or they could humble themselves - turn back to Jesus - choose love and comfort...
 - Like the church in Corinth - we have a choice - how will He find us...
 - Will we find ourselves under the judgment of the Lord - the Rod...
 - Or do we humble ourselves - and find the grace and comfort of God - **James 4:6**