

1 Corinthians 4

Paul's view of the **present** was based in the **past** (Christ's death, resurrection and glorification) and the **future** (Christ's judgment of man and His kingdom).

The Corinthians viewed their **present** life with an inaccurate application of the **past** and with incomplete understanding of the **future**.

Once again, correct theology (especially, eschatology) determines world views, attitudes and behaviors.

4:1

Paul concluded chapter 3 with a doxology of sorts and it appears he has finished on the subject of exalting teachers and their wisdom, but instead Paul apparently picks up the same theme. But yet, with a different twist.

Paul is now going to build on the concept that he is one of the "servants of Christ".

Paul will carefully defend his apostleship.

Paul has just finished explaining that he and other leaders are merely servants for the people of God. Now Paul has to tell them they need to listen to what he is saying and obey it without contradicting what he has just written.

Continues with two areas previously discussed:

1. Servants of Christ (Paul, Apollos, etc.)
2. Future judgment of these servants

The point Paul is making is that these servants of Christ will be evaluated (judged) by Christ himself and not by the Corinthians.

Paul is entrusted with the "secret things of God". Who can evaluate him fairly and accurately if they don't know the "secrets"? Clearly only God can judge Paul.

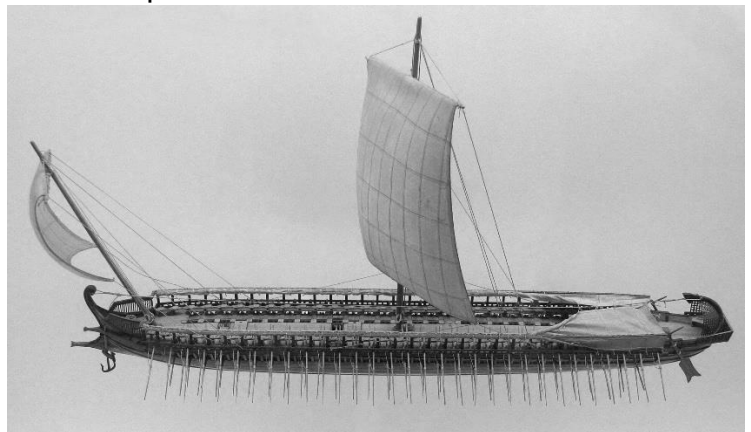
Paul belongs to them (3:21-22) but he is not accountable to them (4:3)

The Corinthians view of Paul may have been reflected in these previous statement

"**us**" refers to 3:22 – Paul, Apollos, Cephas

"**servants**" – ὑπηρετας *huparetas* means "underrower" and refers to slaves who rowed the trireme ships of the Greeks. It was important that all the rowers worked together.

"**those entrusted**" is οἰκονομους *oikonomous* – a steward entrusted with managing a household. Often a slave in charge of the whole household. The word means that this person was entrusted with a great deal of responsibility and accountability. Focus of this word is on the fact that this person is accountable to someone else. In Paul's case he is accountable to God and not to the Corinthians. The responsible head slave who assigned the other slaves their duties. Joseph was this in Potiphar's house. In the Greek culture this head servant was over the possessions of the absentee owner or the absentee landowner.



“secret things” μυστηριων *mystarion* or “mysteries” The Corinthians would have been familiar with the “mysteries” of their Pagan religions. Paul uses the word (in an OT scriptural way) here. In 1 Cor. 2:7 these secret things are the truths of God’s revelation the stewards are responsible for.

4:2

Those who have been entrusted must prove they are worthy of that trust.
The point is not only do they have the position they also have the accountability.
The “servants of Christ” will be judged by Christ.

Entrusted – Titus 1:3; Jude 3; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14

“Faithful” – πιστος *pistos* – the servant will be judge concerning how faithful they were in doing what they were assigned. Just like

1. a servant can not fail in their job but still be considered successful because they dressed nice
2. a teacher is not a success because the students like them.
3. a baseball player is not a success because he wore the right uniform
4. a truck driver is not a success because he has a load of freight
5. a pastor is not a success because people sit and listen

4:3

This begins “But it is a matter of the least consequence to me, that I am judged by you.”

The Greek literally says,

“To me and for a very little thing it is that by you I am judged or by a human day.”

“by a human day” refers to a day of judgment held by man.

This compares to “The Day” in chapter 3.

Paul cares little about public opinion because he will be judged the master landowner’s return.

Even Paul’s personal evaluations of his own performance are irrelevant.

4:4

Before Paul states, “It is the Lord who judges” Paul wants to clarify the statement “I do not even judge myself.” This could become a criticism in the hands of the Corinthians.

Paul tells them he has a clear conscience in regard to his own evaluation.

But, even a clear conscience does not make Paul or anyone “innocent” before God.

Consider 1 John 1:9

Your own clear conscience does not make you innocent before God.

4:5 – “so then” is imperative

Two things needed for complete justice:

1. full knowledge of facts
2. full knowledge of motives

So stop coming to conclusions and reaching verdicts you are not qualified to make.

Expose the motives because God searches the heart.

1 Sam 16:7; 1 Chr. 28:9; Psalm 7:9; Psalm 139:1, 11-12; Jer. 17:10

New Section (4:6-21)- Application of 3:5-4:5

Paul has established his doctrine so he now begins to apply them directly to the Corinthians.

- 4:6-7, Statement of purpose
- 4:8-13, Rebukes the self-promotion of Corinthians
- 4:14-21 – Explains the purpose of Timothy's visit

4:6-13 is filled with sarcasm and irony as Paul finishes off the Corinthians false views and attitudes.

4:6

They are arrogant

Actual names withheld, and names of Paul and Apollos are used as an illustration.

4:7

They are outside of the boundaries of scripture

4:8-10

They have arrived yet Paul is still way behind. Irony and Sarcasm
Corinthians watch from their lofty position while Paul struggles

4:9 Fight in the arena until they are killed.

“Doomed men” is the office of Apostle.

These battles took place in an amphitheater NE of the city of Corinth. Roman documents record Corinthians watching these combats outside the city in a ravine that held large number of people. This ravine was developed into the amphitheater.

4:11-13

A record of the apostle's suffering.

Paul boast about what the Corinthians shun and seek to avoid

4:12 – the social elite scorned physical labor. Elite Corinthians would have scorned Paul's job.

4:14-21 Paul reestablishes his apostolic authority:

Paul is correcting:

1. Bad Theology
2. Bad Behavior

4:17 – Acts 19:22 says that Timothy and Erastus have been sent.

4:20 – Use of the phrase “Kingdom of God,” its forms and possible references:

1. Future kingdom when God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28)
2. Present kingdom of God in process (Rom. 14:17)
3. Inward reality: eternal life, spiritual growth, spiritual fruit, church

4:21

The Corinthians can respond to Paul's gentle instruction or they can resist him and face his “whip”.