

## *“I Do Not Even Examine Myself”*

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*“But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.” (1 Cor 4:3)*

Read 1 Cor 4:1-5

The passage focuses on trustworthiness and the evaluation of it. Consider the words chosen by Paul in these 5 verses: regard, servants, stewards, required, trustworthy, examined, human court, against, acquitted, passing judgment, bring to light, and disclose.

The passage continues the thoughts that have preceded it by noting the individual leaders within the church fellowship. He says, “If you are going to evaluate us, evaluate us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (v.1).” The question is how authentically we as servants and stewards have adhered to the purity of the mysteries of God. The great mysteries of Scripture are the redemption of the fallen and reconciliation of the alienated. To see Jew and Gentile as one new man in one body and the means used to secure this is the greatest of mysteries. It is to this great message of reconciliation in its visual and verbal proclamation that we are to embrace and it is against this standard we will be judged.

Paul’s comment in verse 3 is fascinating. The Corinthian were “judging” the apostle (and others) as to his value, virtue, and/or vice. Paul rejected their assessment of him seeing that whatever conclusion they came to was limited and partial. They could not see the things done by Paul that were hidden from public view nor could they know the purposes of his heart (v.5). “In fact,” Paul says, “I do not even examine myself.”

I always find introspection a crippling activity. To wonder why we do what we do will cause us to live with regret and remorse over things we can no longer fix, control, and change. Introspection looks to the past, when our eyes are to be fixed on the moment. I believe we are to “test [ourselves] to see if [we] are in the faith; examine [ourselves]! Or do [we] not recognize this about [ourselves], that Jesus Christ is in [us]--unless indeed [we] fail the test (2 Cor 13:5)?”

To sit in judgment on oneself assumes you are capable of ascertaining why you do what you do and I do not believe you can always know. Neither are you capable of being infallible in your appraisal of why you do what you do. Were your actions and thoughts of the flesh or of the Spirit? God is far more active in His people than anyone can truly know.

Paul’s non-self-judgment does not mean he is not judged. Paul knew that only God could give an accurate and infallible evaluation of what He did in and through Paul. Paul was willing to deposit such an evaluation into the hands of God. Only God knows “The things hidden in the darkness and the motives of men’s hearts (v. 4).” As the people of God we have a tendency to place more worth on public figures and people in leadership positions than is healthy or wise. The true value of the individual is not in what is seen, but in what is not seen. Because “success” has become a means of measuring worth, we are blinded to the

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true character of any individual. God's evaluation of people is not based on what they do, but on who they are.

God's assessment of His people is based on their position in Christ, not their performance on earth. What we did while on earth is an expression of God working in us and through us according to His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). This in no way negates our willingness to work, but it is necessary to have the right view of our work. Listen to how Paul states this in First Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

If Paul was to evaluate himself, this would be his conclusion. All the people of God in the judgment will receive praise from the Lord. This praise is just, accurate, and equal to the object praised. There will be no misjudgment in that day. Not everyone will receive the same portion or perhaps kind, but everyone will receive praise. This will be in keeping with "placement and function" (1 Cor 12:12-26). I believe this will reflect the idea expressed in the parable of the soil in Mark 4:8, "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." Again, this ties into the idea expressed in First Corinthians 3:6 and 7, "But only God who gives the growth."

I believe we are to labor as unto the Lord knowing it is grace working in us and through us for the production of spiritual fruit. I believe we are to rest knowing He is performing His will. This is in contrast to the idea that we are to labor in order to secure larger rewards and bigger dwelling places. We are never to labor for approval or acceptance or reward. We labor because we are approved and accepted and He, Jesus Christ, is the reward.

Today, let us celebrate Him. Let us love Him and serve Him with a heart filled to overflow with joy. Let us see the beauty of what God is doing and ask Him to use us in a way we might never have known before. It is a joy to be a part of the journey.