

“I Do Not Even Examine Myself”

1 Cor 4:1-5

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

- I. The identity of the minister (v. 1)
 - A. Ministers are servants of Christ (v. 1a)
 - 1. What is a servant?
 - 2. A servant of whom?
 - B. Ministers are stewards of God’s mysteries (v. 1b)
 - 1. What is a steward?
 - 2. What are the mysteries of God?

The mysteries of God are built on the Word of the Cross (1:18). The mysteries of God are reflected in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (2:2). This mystery is contained in Christ and in Christ alone (2:7, 8). What is this mystery? It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:24-29).

- II. The requirement of the minister (v. 2)

My stewardship is very pointed. Am I a faithful steward in my handling of the mysteries of God? Not am I faithful at church or in my home or with my children, but am I a faithful steward in how I have managed the mysteries of God? All of these areas are important, but that is not the issue on the table.

We celebrate faithfulness at the expense of what is right. Faithfulness is not a stand alone virtue. Faithfulness is only good when it is in and for the right thing. The pastor of a church might be an outstanding father and excellent husband, but a horrible administrator of the Word of God. Senior Pastors can be less than ideal in many areas of ministry, but there is one area that he cannot afford to fail in and that is in the handling of the Word of God.

- III. The evaluation of the minister (vv. 3-5)

Continued on the other side...

A. By others (v. 3a)

Paul states that their estimation of him amounts to something that is very little or small. Paul did not determine ministry or what his topic might be by its popularity or marketing power. He did not preach on topics or themes that would sell. Paul preached Christ crucified.

B. By oneself (vv. 3b-4a)

C. By God (vv. 4b-5)

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

God's day of examination is marked by three thoughts as found in verse 5.

1. God's examination is timely ("until the Lord comes")
2. God's examination is transparent ("who will bring to light")
3. God's examination is triumphant ("each man's praise")

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."

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