



First Corinthians 4:3-7

Verse 2 - [From Session 10]

Paul, in verse 2 uses the word **Faithful** for **stewards**. The Greek word for steward is *oikonomos*, which is a compound word that means, *oikos* house, and *nomos* law. A steward is one who keeps the law in the house. And what is required of a steward? Faithfulness.

Stewards are **required** to be **found faithful**. In the sense of teaching the word, all men are required to be stewards. Stewards are to faithfully and rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). They are to be faithful stewards of the word of God. Being faithful holds for any leader (especially a pastor) within the church.

Many men today are not being faithful stewards of the Word of God. They are not studying the word of God, and they are not rightly dividing the truth of the word of God. They are not showing themselves approved. Studying the word of God is hard work, and it takes faithfulness. We need faithful men!

What if we just said, "*We want to be faithful to God's Word*" and then do it, study it, teach it, faithfully--I wonder what would happen in our churches?

And by the way, **one be found faithful** (vs. 2), Paul writes this word **one**, and it is translated as **man** in the KJV. It is okay to translate the word as **one**, but the pronoun is in the masculine form. He is making the point we need faithful men. We also need faithful women, but it is men Paul is saying God is looking for in the church.

Stay faithful to the Word. Be a faithful steward. Don't place your hope and trust in men. Be faithful in what God has entrusted to you.

Verses 3,4 -

Since we do not have the letter the Corinthians sent to Paul, we have to do a little surmising about some of the accusations or, as we read in 1:11, the *contentions* within the church. It appears that church members, divided among which leader is the best, and some were accusing Paul of not being a faithful steward. And we looked in session 10 at some of the reasons this may have been happening.

So as Paul mentions faithful stewards in 4:2, he now addresses which appears to be judging by the Corinthian church members toward him. Paul says **it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you**. Even **man's judgment** (literally, court, as in

man's *court*, or a secular court) is of very little account to Paul. He did not base his faithfulness as a steward on what men thought of him. His goal was always to be faithful to God first and to only boast in the Lord.

I do not even judge myself (vs. 3). I don't think Paul is saying he shouldn't examine himself (See 1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5). We should self-examine to make sure we line up with Scripture. His point is, no matter what he thinks of himself, ultimately the **Lord judges** (vs. 4) and that is all that matters. How do we know God's judgment? We only learn it from Scripture. So, as a good steward, Paul looks to God's word and lets the word of God examine him whether or not he is faithful.

A few weeks ago, someone wrote to me and criticized my use of a particular word in an article I wrote for our Cambodia ministry. This well-intentioned person thought a particular word I used was derogatory and that since, as he quoted, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*" I should address everyone as equals. I agree. I do consider everyone as my equal. But my response to the man was, "*Look at our ministry and the redemption we present through the Lord Jesus Christ and him only. I think it speaks for itself.*" In other words, don't just judge me by one word, let the whole body of what I have written be the judge of how I treat people.

The apostle Paul is saying I'll look at what is written in Scripture and let it be my judge.

For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this (vs. 4). This is a difficult sentence to understand what Paul means, but I think what Paul is saying is *no matter what I think, I am not declared righteous before God by my own opinion.* Therefore, **he who judges me is the Lord.**

Verse 5 -

People in the Corinthian church were not being faithful stewards and were judging others **before the time** (prematurely). The only pure Judge is the Lord.

For us today in the church, it is not our function to be the judge and the jury. The tendency is for us to moralize the lives of others. We need to be careful of that. There is a degree to which only a man's conscience can convict him--I can't do it. It has to come from the spirit. Our judging of others will not bring them to the point of conviction.

Rather, let us lay the word of God before people and let the word do its work. And by that, I do not mean open the Bible and start quoting verses to someone who is living in sin. What needs to happen is for the pastor to teach the Bible week after week, line by line, word by word, and for those who come faithfully and hear that word, it will convict them without someone else judging them.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Until the Lord comes, then it will be the time of judgment. His judgment won't be premature judging like men. The Lord's judgment will be at the right time and drive deep into the soul. Everything that is hidden in the darkness he **will bring to light**.

Hidden things of darkness. Once we confess our sins before the Lord, they are no longer hidden, and when he comes to judge Christians (at the Judgment Seat of Christ), if we have confessed, there will be no hidden things of darkness to **bring to light** (See Session 9).

Reveal the counsels of the hearts. This could be referring back to faithful stewards, those who are not judging and are striving to be faithful. Each faithful one will have **praise from God**. And that praise will probably come after the Rapture of the church when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 -

We are establishing from the previous verses that a problem of judging others was prevalent in the Corinthian church. Paul and Apollos were not the ones struggling with it, but Paul makes it clear he includes himself and Apollos **figuratively** in the discussion.

Mature believers are needed to set an example in a local church. The Corinthian church can see that Apollos and Paul are not divided and are not **puffed up** against each other, as are the men in this local church.

Since Paul and Apollos are not **puffed up...one against another**, neither should the church members be puffed up against one another. What he means here is we are to lead by example. Men, lead in the church by example; lead in your home by example; and, lead in your work by example. Lead and don't be puffed up, boastful and antagonistic against one another.

Verse 7 -

Paul was speaking to the entire church body, but for some reason, in this verse, he shifts pronouns from the plural to the singular; **For who makes you differ from another**, he is addressing one person. The **"you"** used here is a singular pronoun in the Greek. Is he referring to the figurative "a man"? It's a tough verse to interpret, but interesting that he uses a different pronoun nonetheless.

So when he says, **Who makes you differ from another** he asks the question rhetorically--the answer: God does. God distinguishes those who received the spirit of God, from those who received the spirit of the world.

What do you have that you did not receive? Why are you acting like you are a natural person who has not received the Spirit of God (2:14).

If you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it, or, why are you boasting about being right in this dispute in the church? Quit depending on your human reason and skill and depend on the Spirit of God.

Here is his point. Anything spiritual we have in our lives is from God, and we have no reason to boast. We live in the age of grace, and because of that, we did nothing to earn our salvation. It is a gift of God. Therefore, you and I have to be humble people and realize that anything we have is from God, and not our own doing.