



First Corinthians 4:6-13

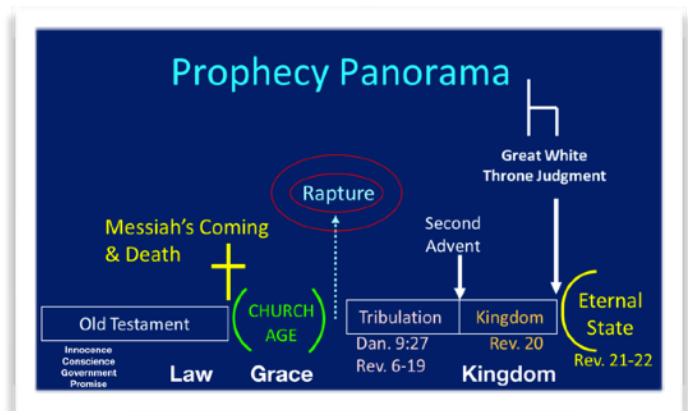
Verse 5 - [From Session 11]

Let me give you another proposition to think about when it comes to interpreting what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 4:5.

- * Is this passage speaking to us as Gentile believers living in the age of grace? Or, is Paul addressing more of the Jewish messianic believers in the congregation?

Remember that he has been writing to this church about their judging of others. He told them what God requires of a faithful steward, that is, that he be found faithful (vs.2). And so, he discourages this church in their judging of others, because the ultimate judgment comes from God. Paul told them they are to **judge nothing before the time**. What time is that?

- * **Until the Lord comes.** I think the key to interpreting this, phrase is in the word, **comes**. This particular Greek word, **comes** carries the meaning of *appearing*, or to *make one's appearance*. In other words, it means *when one comes visibly* for all to see. Which coming of the Lord is Paul talking about?
- * It has to be referring to the Second Coming of Jesus, after the seven year Tribulation, and not the Rapture of the Church. If so, this revealing of hidden things of darkness is not referring to the Bema Seat Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10).



At the Rapture of the church, Jesus is not coming to earth, all believers (dead and alive) will rise to meet Him in the air. He will not be seen. It will be in moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). But, at the Second Coming, *every eye shall see Him* (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30). So this phrase **until the Lord comes** has to be referring to those at the end of the Tribulation. Believers in Jesus will already been removed from the earth.

- * But there is coming a judgment when **Hidden things of darkness** are going to be revealed. Matthew 25:31-34 tells us of a Judgment that will take place when Jesus **comes** when He will sit on the throne of His glory.
- * All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will **bring to light** their treatment of the Jews. Therefore, God will judge the *faithful stewards*.

So, verse 5, Paul may be referring to that Matthew 25 Judgment, when afterwards God will welcome the faithful into His kingdom?

Nonetheless, this is a difficult verse to interpret with one hundred percent certainty and deserves more study and thought.

Verse 6 -

We have established 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. He puts himself right in the middle of the controversy so that they can see there are some mature believers in the church who are not struggling with this problem of judging.

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** (arrogant) against each other, as are the men in this local church. So it is possible to live in harmony and unity with each other.

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 that we are to lead by example. Everyone should lead by example, but it starts with the men. Men are to 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.

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 if you have the Spirit of God? Quit depending on your human reason and skill and depend on the Spirit of God.

- * This is maybe 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 need to be humble people and realize that anything we have is from God, and not our own doing. So let's not boast about anything in our own lives.

Verse 8 -

One of my grandsons asked me several years ago to teach him sarcasm. What is sarcasm? It is a mode of satirical wit that is usually directed against an individual. If you read anything on line you may have seen websites like *The Onion*, or *The Babylon Bee*. Those sites can be satirical and sarcastic. When my grandson asked me to teach him sarcasm it really threw me for a loop! He must have thought I was an expert! I told him, don't worry, he would learn it on his own. Sarcasm is not bad, per se, but like any weapon (and it is a weapon of speech) it has to be used with caution. The apostle Paul knew how to be sarcastic to make his point, and he does it in this verse.

For you are already full...rich...reigned as kings without us! Imagine that! You did not even need any spiritual guidance to puff yourself up and make yourselves look good. Paul rips into their factions of who is best in the church.

Indeed I could wish you did reign. Wow, if you guys were reigning as kings that would be amazing because you might even allow us (again, is he speaking of Apollos and himself here?) to **reign with you!** Wouldn't that be generous of them!

Verse 9,10 -

The Corinthians are living a pretty good life in the church. In verse 8, Paul, sarcastically, praised them for living rich and reigning as "kings." He continues his contrast of the high living, puffed up attitudes of the Corinthians verses the suffering of the apostles.

The apostles didn't rest on their laurels. **For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last.** The apostles were not elevated on a pedestal. They were not reigning as kings; they were not rich; they were last. Pastors should think of themselves in this light, get out of the limelight, and teach the word of God with humility.

The **apostles** were **condemned to death**. They knew the road they were on. They were doomed to death. They were not setting up their lives for retirement so they could live the good life. Their life was one of suffering. The world would look at them as a **spectacle: Θέατρον** theatron. We get our word theater from this word. It is a public show.

Today some pastors like to make a spectacle of themselves, but for the wrong reasons; it is to build their ego and pride.

The apostles were a spectacle of fools for Christ's sake. The **world**, the **angels**, and **men** looked at them: How is it these men could only preach one message; the cross (1:18)? What a spectacle they were.

Paul continues with his rebuke of the Corinthians and their high living, and he continues to do it with sarcasm:

We are **fools**. You are **wise**.

We are **weak**. You are **strong**.

You are **distinguished**. We are **dishonored**.

And that is not all, Paul continues his rebuke of this puffed up church,

Verses 11-13 -

After reading these verses, is there anyone ready to sign up for Paul's job? Are Christians who sit in comfortable churches week-in-and-week-out aware there are many Christians throughout the world who are **reviled, persecuted, defamed**, and treated as **filth**?

The world is a dangerous and evil place. Being a Christian and choosing to live a godly life is not easy and will often be met with opposition. We can expect opposition to the gospel of Christ to increase in the last days. Christian thought and values, when voiced publicly, will be met with reviling (verbal abuse), and worse. The apostles were considered scum and the **offscouring** of all things, meaning the stuff that is worthless and scraped off. Why should Christians in the 21st century expect any less?