

## *“How We Are To Think”* *1 Corinthians 4:6-7*

INTRO:

Our self-centered society is obsessed with the idea of self-esteem. We do all put a value on ourselves. Sometimes we think well of ourselves and what we do. Other times our self-worth factor is not quite as high. The problem comes not in that we do this. The problem is the source of our perceived self-worth.

We draw our understanding of our worth from (1) how others see us. A person who does this becomes a prisoner to popular opinion. (2) We can draw our sense of significance from things that we possess. We may rely on the power we think we possess as a measure of our importance. Many of us get our sense of significance from our accomplishments. This too can lead to a warped view of our true value.

Where is our self-esteem supposed to come from? Paul speaks of this in our text today, **1 Corinthians 4:6-7**. He tells us we need to draw our importance from the God who made us.

*I. How We Should Think (v. 6)*

*II. Why We Should Think This Way (v.7)*

*I. How We Should Think (v. 6)*

A. In studying any text we must consider the context. Paul told us about the problem of the party spirit in Corinth. The context says a lot about this problem. Paul painted several word pictures to describe how the Corinthians are to think about the men who were the leaders of the Corinthian church.

**(1)** They are field laborers serving the Lord who owns the field and who makes the crops grow. **(2)** They are builders who are laying the foundation for the building which is God's. **(3)** They are assistants who are instruments for doing the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. **(4)** They are stewards who are using the wealth of the Master wisely and who will someday account to God for their stewardship.

B. Now Paul applies all of this in **1 Corinthians 4:6**.

*“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, [in order] that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, [in order] that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other”*

Paul used the device of applying the truths to himself and to Apollos in order that they the Corinthians might learn two things: not to put themselves above what is written and not to puff themselves up.

C. First, he did this;

***“[in order] that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.”***

What is Paul talking about here? It is that he wants them to not think of themselves or of any other person beyond what is written about them in Scripture. Paul, in talking about how they should think about these leaders and how the leaders should think about themselves was trying to get them to ask, “How should we think about ourselves?” How does the Bible speak of us?

1. The Bible says that humans are the personal creation of God. We were created in God's image for the express purpose of having a relationship with the Creator. All of this gives us a great value for we are the highest of all of God's created beings.

2. However, the Bible also says humankind rebelled against our Creator and thus we live in a state of spiritual alienation called “sin.” Being sinners, humankind deserves damnation and eternal separation from God in hell. We are helpless, hopeless, and deserving of condemnation. Paul described our situation before Christ saved us in **Ephesians 2:1-3. “And you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”**

3. The Bible also says that although we deserve nothing, God sent His Son into human history to become a man to live a sinless life and to die on a cross to pay the price for our “sin.” He also rose from the dead to announce His victory over sin and death. Apart from the redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus we are nothing, but in Christ we have everything.

4. How do we think of ourselves? Do we see ourselves as created beings, brought into existence that we might walk in fellowship and in relationship with God? Are we aware that in ourselves and apart from Christ we are nothing? Has the wonder of grace taken hold in our lives that we recognize that the only thing that we have that we can truly glory in is our Lord and all that He is to us?

D. The second reality that Paul wanted them to learn was to not be puffed up one against another. He wrote

***“[In order] that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.”***

1. Pride was the overall evil Paul aimed at in the Corinthians lives. They were getting caught up in a sense of their own self-importance and thus being put at odds with others.

2. The problem of exalting their own opinion of a specific Bible teacher over the opinion of others was only symptomatic of the pride that they displayed in exalting themselves over others in the church. Their opinion was superior because they were much smarter than those who disagreed. They did exactly the opposite from what Paul prescribed in **1 Corinthians 1:31**. ***“Let Him that boast, boast in the Lord.”***

## ***II. Why We Should Think This Way (v.7)***

A. To help us in thinking the way we should about ourselves, the Apostle asks the Corinthians and us three rhetorical questions. These questions draw us back from self-exalted fancy to reality. The first question is:

***“who made us different from one another?”***

The obvious answer is God. In **Psalm 100:3**;

***“Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”***

There is nothing in us that should cause us to feel superior one over another.

B. The second question adds to this distinction.

***“And what do you have that you did not receive?”***

You may be able to sing, preach, pray, visit, make money, comfort, etc. Why is that so? It is because God has given that ability to you. So who then should receive the glory from all of this? Certainly not you and I, we are just tools designed by the Creator. He deserves all the glory and credit.

C. The third question continues the probing of the second one and drives home the point that the Apostle Paul is making.

***“Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”***

This is the key question. If we recognize the truth exposed by these three questions, we recognize that as Paul assert in Chapter one, that the only thing we have a right to boast in is the grace and mercy of God.

If the Corinthians and we are not to draw our sense of worth and significance from our talents, stuff, power, or smarts, where should we get our sense of worth from? The Apostle Paul already told us in **1 Corinthians 1:26–31**;

***“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, [in order] that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’”***