

Message #16

I Corinthians 4:1-5

“Minister bashing” was great sport in the church of Corinth. The believers in the church loved to judge, criticize, demean, and even condemn the pastor.

GOD’S PEOPLE IN GOD’S CHURCH ARE TO CONTINUALLY THINK PROPERLY ABOUT THE MINISTER AND HIS MINISTRY AND NOT CONTINUALLY JUDGE THE MINISTER AND HIS MINISTRY.

This text makes it very clear that if a minister has been proven faithful and is faithfully proclaiming God’s Word, it is absolutely wrong to judge him and it is a serious violation of God’s Word and will.

In fact, that word “regard” (4:1) is a word that means believers in the church are to make certain calculations, judgments and decisions regarding the minister. The people of the church are to think a certain way concerning a minister and his ministry.

CALCULATION #1 – God’s people are to calculate a minister as a minister under Christ’s authority . 4:1a

That word “servant” is a unique Greek word that literally means an under rower.

It was the responsibility of the under rower to steer the boat so it could move in the precise direction that the captain desired.

It is the minister’s job to follow the commands of Jesus Christ and see to it that the church moves in the proper direction.

The job of the minister is NOT to move the church in his direction, but to move the church in Christ’s direction.

Three practical observations are:

- 1) The church will not move in the proper direction without a minister .
- 2) A minister’s job is not to move the church in the way you think it should be moved; it is to move the church in the way that lines up with God’s Word .
- 3) You are to view the minister as one who is in a management position in the work of God.

CALCULATION #2 – God’s people are to calculate a minister as a steward of God’s Word . 4:1b

That word “steward” is one that refers to one who has been appointed to the office of an administrator or manager. Paul is specifically stating that the Church is to calculate a minister as being an administrator or manager for God. He is part of God’s management team.

Now carefully notice the primary area in which his managerial abilities and skills are given in unlocking the mysteries of God.

Ministers are men who have been given a special administrative ability from God to unlock and unravel His Word.

Paul himself devoted his entire life to teaching the Word of God. He studied to “rightly divide” the Word so he could declare the whole counsel of God to God’s people (Acts 20:20-21, 27). In fact, he studied until the day he died (II Tim. 4:13).

CALCULATION #3 – God’s people are to calculate a minister on the basis of his faithfulness. **4:2**

The verb “required” is a word that means it is a demand. The verb is present tense, which means that the primary qualification that is continually demanded by God for a minister is faithfulness or trustworthiness. God demands that His ministers continually and habitually maintain the character and quality of faithfulness to Him and His Word.

Now contextually, one area in which God demands faithfulness is in unlocking the “mysteries of God.” It is God who determines whether or not a person is faithful enough to be entrusted with ministry (i.e. I Tim. 1:12).

CALCULATION #4 – God’s ministers cannot calculate their own judgment. **4:3-4**

Perspective #1 - Paul considered another believer’s judgment of him as insignificant. **4:3a**

The word “examined” is a word that clearly implies that the Corinthians were questioning, examining and investigating Paul’s ministry. We know from the book that they were judging him on the basis of the way he spoke (2:1), on the basis of numbers (3:6-7), on his view of money (9:4-6) and on his philosophy of ministry (3:10). Paul viewed their judgment as a “very small” thing. These words imply that Paul viewed their judgment as very unimportant and insignificant.

Perspective #2 - Paul considered other men’s judgment of him as insignificant. **4:3b**

Paul was a man who was judged by everybody, both the saved and unsaved.

Perspective #3 - Paul considered his own judgment of himself as insignificant. **4:3b-4a**

We get a good glimpse from the first part of **verse 4** as to how Paul lived life; he lived life with a pure conscience. In examining his own conscience, he knew of nothing against himself; there was no sin in his life, there was nothing he was doing or that he was involved in that was wrong.

Perspective #4 - Paul considered God's judgment on him as significant. **4:4b**

The judgment that Paul feared was not the judgment of the church or the world or of himself; it was the judgment of God.

CALCULATION #5 – God's people are to calculate a proper view of judgment. **4:5**

Lesson #1 - It is not the church's job to pass judgment on the minister. **4:5a**

If the minister is faithful, it is a violation of God's Word to judge him.

Lesson #2 - When the Lord comes He will reveal even hidden things. **4:5b**

God will expose everything; there will be nothing hidden or secret that will not be brought to light.

Lesson #3 - When the Lord comes He will reveal motives in the heart. **4:5c**

The word "motives" is a word that refers to the purpose or motive behind an action. When Christ comes, He will not only reveal hidden works but motives behind the work.

Lesson #4 - When the Lord comes He will reward everyone. **4:5d**

Every minister will be severely judged and properly rewarded.

The Church of God needs to stop judging and criticizing a faithful minister and start praying for him and encouraging him. That is what God wanted the church to do in Corinth.