

The Irony of Servant Status

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

Key Word: Servant

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

[1] This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [2] Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. [3] But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. [4] For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. [5] Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

[6] I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. [7] For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? [8] Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! [9] For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

[10] We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. [11] To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, [12] and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; [13] when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Road Map

- 1) **A redirection of hierarchy**
- 2) **“Judge not lest you be judged”**
- 3) **The Contrast and the Ironic**

A redirection of hierarchy

In Chapter 4 verse 1 Paul again titles himself and Apollos as “servants,”

- a servant exists only to serve and please his master
- It is God, himself, who draws people to himself (John 6:44)

Paul introduces the concept of “stewards”

- The quality required to be a steward is “responsible.”

The emphasis is on The Master (David Jackman in his commentary on 1 Corinthians)

“Judge not lest you be judged!”

Paul has been judged less desirable

- Paul considers man's judgment unimportant
- Rom 2:16 ...on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Paul issues a warning about a judgmental spirit.

- “God himself ...will disclose the purposes of the heart.”
(ver5)

“Judge not lest you be judged!”

Apollos and Paul will be judged by the same standards they preach

A warning against extra-biblical requirements

Paul has used scripture to anchor his teaching

Isa 29:14 (1 Cor 1:19)

Jer 9:22-23 (1 Cor 1:31)

Isa 64:4 (1 Cor 2:9)

Job 5:13 (1 Cor 3:19)

Ps 94:11 (1 Cor 3:20)

The Contrast and the Ironic

“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!” (ver 8)

➤ Paul charges them of elitism and egotism

★ Honest reflection and humbleness before God renders us useful in His Church. Ego and self-importance are great hindrances.

The Contrast and the Ironic

Paul twists the blade in verse 9

- **“For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men.”**
- **Matt 20:16 “So the last will be first and the first last”**
- **Matt 20:26 “Whoever would be great among you, must be your servant.”**

The Contrast and the Ironic

Contrasting statements from a Corinthian viewpoint:

- We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. (Ver10)
- We are weak, but you are strong. (Ver10)
- You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. (Ver10)
- To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. (ver 11-12)

The Contrast and the Ironic

Contrasting statements from a Corinthian viewpoint:

- When reviled, we bless; when persecuted we endure; when slandered we entreat. (ver 12-13)
- *John Wayne – “I won’t be wronged. I won’t be insulted. I won’t be laid a hand on. I don’t do these things to other people, and I require the same from them!”*
- **Matt 5:39** Jesus says that we aren’t to fight the one who is evil, but to “turn the other cheek.”

The Contrast and the Ironic

“We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.” (ver 13)

- John 15:18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.
- John 15:24 “If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.”
- Jesus was loved by the world one minute and hated and reviled the next. Should we expect any different?

Wrapping it up

1 Corinthians 4:14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

To follow Christ is to be a servant and to have the heart of a servant.

Where is your heart today?

