**God’s Servants and God’s Glory Will be Made Known**

**1 Corinthians 4**

One who **subordinates personal aspirations** and works in a coordinated effort with other members of a group, or team, in striving for a common goal…someone who **puts aside his personal goals** and **works well with others**, doing what he needs to do to strive for a common goal.

This, according to yourdictionary.com is the definition of a “Team Player.”

In our study of 1 Corinthians, so far, we have seen that there were some in the church who were trying to elevate certain teachers above others. Some teachers were getting praise and others were not. As one commentator put it:

**Slide 1**

“There must have been a very considerable group of church leaders, Paul's own converts, who, in Paul's absence, had become influential and self-important, and were trying to run away with the church. They had become haughty, overbearing, and boastful in their attitude toward Paul.[19]”

In other words, there were teachers in Corinth who were not team players. Let’s begin with 1 Corinthians 4:1:

**Slide 2**

**4****So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries. 2Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. 3As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don’t even trust my own judgment on this point. 4My conscience is clear, but that doesn’t prove I’m right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.**

**Slide 3**

**5So don’t make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.**

Now some think this is describing some general judgement where every good and bad deed is going to play like a DVD for all to see. I tend to agree with John Gill’s Commentary on the Bible when he writes:

There is a time "fixed" for the awful judgment, though of that day and hour knows no man: judge nothing

until the Lord come; who at the fixed time will certainly come to judgment, and that suddenly, at unawares, in an hour no man knows of:

who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; meaning not so much vices, immoralities, wickedness of all sorts committed in the dark, and which it is a shame to speak of; but those hidden things of dishonesty, those secret arts and private methods which false teachers have made use of to conceal themselves, and carry on their base designs to the injury of truth, the souls of men, and the cause of Christ:

and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; what were the views and intentions, the aims and ends of these men in taking upon them to be preachers of the word; when it will appear that these were not the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men, but filthy lucre, popular applause, or some such mercenary view, and sinister end.

And then shall every man have praise of God. Every regenerated soul; everyone that is a Jew inwardly; everyone that has the circumcision of the Spirit; and particularly every faithful minister, who is more especially designed; to whom it will be said, "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord". The apostle, in these words, has respect to the false teachers who sought the praise of men, and not the honour which comes from God; and which the true ministers of the word will have another day, however despised and criticised by men now.

In short, false teachers (or false professors of the faith) may receive praise now while true builders of God’s temple get ridiculed, but all of God’s servants will eventually receive honor and praise from their Heavenly Father.

I can’t help but thinking of Jesus’ words in Matthew 6, when He says:

**Slide 4**

**“6 “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. 2When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get.**

**Slide 5**

**3But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. 4Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”**

Paul believed that his motives were true and the intentions of his ministry were wholesome and would someday be revealed in God’s glorious temple. But He was leaving the judgment to God. Remember, last week, how I said that the gospel frees us up to work without fear of condemnation. It doesn’t mean we won’t drop the ball, it just means that God is going to judge and reward us according to the intentions of our heart and the authenticity of our servitude.

Continuing on in verse 6:

**Slide 6**

**6Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I’ve been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won’t be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. 7For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?**

Realize that in this last section, Paul is addressing the prideful people who were, at the time, non-team players. Paul, Apollos, and Peter were not being esteemed highly and in fact some were boasting about their abilities and belittling others. Paul wants it to be crystal clear that any and all glory and honor belong to God. Anything you learn today from this sermon, any truth that the Holy Spirit teaches you is a gift from God. I may have had the benefit of passing it along.

But any piece of glory that I will enjoy will only be the glory that belongs to God.

**Slide 7**

**8You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God’s kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then we would be reigning with you. 9Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor’s parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.**

**Slide 8**

**10Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. 11Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don’t have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home. 12We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. 13We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world’s garbage, like everybody’s trash—right up to the present moment.**

Have you ever noticed that the people who are the most full of themselves often get the places of highest honor in this life and the people who are the kindest and most Christ-like get the bottom of the barrel?

The prideful people in Corinth were living like kings and Paul and the other apostles were getting treated like peasant-servants.

**Slide 9**

**14I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. 15For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. 16So I urge you to imitate me.**

Did any of you have an uncle who was just all about having fun and messing around?

It was easy to like him, maybe you even thought he was cooler than your dad. That was because your uncle wasn’t responsible for teaching you all the hard lessons in life.

As you get older, you start to see the value and glory in those who taught you the hard lessons. It isn’t always apparent at the time, in fact, you might even despise some of the hard truths.

If you ask people what they want to be when they grow up, they usually say something that has some prestige or fame assigned to it. You don’t hear too many say that they want to be a servant. And if you remember from the beginning of this text Paul wrote:

“**So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries…”**

**Servants. I’m a servant, you are a servant, the people and teachers at Corinth were servants.**

Paul wanted this to be very clear to all to whom he was writing. And then he finishes the chapter with a bit of a promise and a warning…

**Slide 10**

**17That’s why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.**

**18Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. 19But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I’ll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God’s power.**

**Slide 11**

**20For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power. 21Which do you choose? Should I come with a rod to punish you, or should I come with love and a gentle spirit?**

How has God asked you to serve Him?

What steps are you taking to grow in your ability to serve?

Are you asking for, and trusting in, God’s power to be the team player that He wants you to be?

The world is in dire need of seeing God’s glory. And in His wisdom, He chose us to be part of showing it to the rest of the world.

I want to encourage you to be faithful in the part God has asked you to play. Don’t give up, don’t shrink back, get discouraged or grow weary. Even if you can’t see His glory in the work He has for you, you can be assured that He will someday show you His glory in all that you have done through His power.