

1Corinthians – Week 16

I. Quick Review:

A. Chapter 3:16-23

- i. The Church is a temple where God lives.
- ii. God will destroy anyone who tries to destroy His Temple
 1. Destruction may be in the form of:
 - a. Excommunication (1Cor. 5:5, 13)
 - b. Sickness and Death (1Cor. 11:30)
 - c. Eternal Condemnation
- iii. It is better to be a fool of God than a genius of men.
- iv. All things belong to the Church:
 1. Its teachers, the world, life, death, the present and the future!
- v. And the Church belongs to Christ!

II. Chapter 4: The Role of Church Leaders

A. In chapter 3:18-23, Paul tells us not to adopt the world's view of wisdom.

B. Now, in chapter 4, Paul addresses how we should regard those who “plant” and “water”...

- i. 1Cor. 4:1 (ESV), *“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”*
 1. Paul uses two vivid pictures describing those who teach...
 2. Servant – Greek word *“huperetes”*
 - a. This is not the common word for “servant” (*diakonos*) that is usually used in the New Testament.
 - b. Originally, it meant *“an under-rower,”* referring to the slaves who were chained to the rowing benches in the bottom tier of the Roman war ships.
 - i. These unseen men labored together under the direction of their master.
 - c. Paul says that he and other teachers are servants under the direction of their Master, Jesus Christ.
 3. Steward
 - a. A steward is someone who manages everything for his master.
 - b. His time, talents, and energy are devoted towards his master's interests and not his own (cf. Matthew 25:14-30; 1Peter 4:10).
 - c. A steward has the master's complete trust.
 - d. We still use that term today to refer to the men and women who serve us on airplanes—stewards and stewardesses. They have similar areas of responsibility while we're with them on the flight.
 - e. Teachers are stewards of the mysteries of God, that is, their responsibility is to communicate the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1Cor. 2:7).
- ii. 1Cor. 4:2 (ESV), *“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”*
 1. Stewards must be trustworthy, that is, faithful to God and trusted by God.
 2. So the main issue is not, “Is Paul a better teacher?” or, “Is Apollos a better preacher?” The main issue is, “Are these men faithfully carrying out the work God assigned to them to do?”
 3. Faithfulness means
 - a. Excellence – A faithful person not only does things, but does them well.
 - b. Integrity – A faithful person practices what he preaches. God sees us, even when others aren't watching.
 - c. Dependability – A faithful person is reliable. You can depend on him in getting the work done.

- d. Perseverance – Some folks go up like rockets and come down like rocks. But a faithful person does not allow other things to sidetrack him or cause him to drop out of the race. He perseveres to the finish line.
- iii. 1Cor. 4:3-4 (ESV), *“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.”*
 - 1. The term “judged” means to investigate, scrutinize, or examine.
 - 2. Since Paul saw himself responsible as a steward to his Master only, it mattered little to him what others thought of him.
 - a. Those who seek to please men become popular and draw a following, thus creating divisions along party lines: “I follow so-and-so’s ministry.”
 - 3. To Paul, it mattered little to him whether he was popular or unpopular.
 - 4. His main concern was to be found faithful and pleasing to God (cf. 2Cor. 5:9).
 - 5. As far as Paul was concerned, his clear conscience led him to believe he was being a faithful steward, but he knew that that didn’t make him innocent before God.
 - a. Our conscience, like the judgment of men, is unreliable.
 - i. It can make us feel better (or worse) than what we should feel.
 - ii. Our conscience can be blind to our sin or can beat us up with our failures.
 - iii. For this reason, Paul recognized that he could be wrong, even if his conscience was clear...
 - 6. He knew that only his Master had the insight and authority to properly judge him to be a faithful servant and steward or not.
 - 7. Often, people get concerned about what others think of them instead of thinking what God thinks of them.
- iv. 1Cor. 4:5 (ESV), *“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. Imagine this:
 - a. On Judgment Day, there will be people, who perhaps, were popular and well known not receiving commendation from God, because they sought the praises of men and the relied on the wisdom of the world.
 - b. Then there will be those who were unknown, who did not seek the praises or applauds of men, who remained faithful under-rowers and stewards of God’s truths. These will receive commendation from God.
 - 2. But until then...
 - a. Do not pronounce judgment, especially by saying, “Paul is a better teacher, I will follow him” Or...
 - b. “Apollos is a better speaker, I will follow him...” Or...
 - c. Do not divide along party lines nor boast in men!
 - d. Remember, we are all workers in the Lord, under the headship of one Master, Jesus Christ!
 - e. And when it’s all said and done, God, the faithful and true Judge, will expose the hearts of all and will reveal who truly were his faithful servants and stewards.