

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**Whom to Follow**  
**1 Cor 4**

Last time...spiritual growth, both as individuals and the Church, with meat vs milk  
Our co-laboring with God of planting, watering, and building

This time...the most serious issue facing the health of the fellowship at Corinth is divisions

Ch 1:10-13

Ch 3:3

The devil was seeking to diminish or destroy the witness of the Church then, as he is now  
Eph 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ

Those who say

- I am of the Pope
- I am of Martin Luther
- I am of John Calvin
- I am of John Wesley
- I am of John MacArthur
- I am of Chuck Smith
- etc

have their eyes too low

The result is divisions over pastor/s teachers vs unity in Christ

The Holy Spirit thru Paul has more to say about this in 1 Cor 4, throughout which the Spirit is saying, "Follow Jesus."

v1-2 ministers...stewards...faithful:

3 words that are to be synonymous with a follower of Jesus Christ:

1. minister...subordinate, servant, "under rower"  
(a slave chained to an oar beneath deck on a Roman sailing vessel)
2. steward...manager responsible for taking care of the Owner's precious possessions
3. faithful...trustworthy, a character trait revealed in times of testing and temptation

The believers in Corinth are divided, hung up on whom they follow –

some Paul, some Apollos, some Peter, some Jesus Christ

In their flesh they are envious and stiving with each other about that

A house divided cannot stand, said Jesus

Therefore this issue must be addressed and resolved

So Paul, the vessel called by God to plant and now correct this church, tells the church to "take inventory" of the ministries of himself and Apollos and conclude that both of them are

1. ministers...of Christ, not themselves
2. stewards...of the mysteries of God, eternal unchanging truths of God
  - the Godhead – Father/Son/Holy Spirit, 3 in 1
  - Light and darkness
  - man – body/soul/spirit, male/female
  - marriage
  - iniquity
  - Redemption/Salvation
  - Messiah/Christ – God incarnate
  - Kingdom of God
  - Resurrection
  - The Church
  - Christ in you, the hope of glory
  - Rapture
  - blindness in part to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in
3. faithful...found to be so thru trials and temptations

"You are squabbling and contending over us, but we are both servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God."

What do those men and their ministries look like?

Spiritual train wrecks or spiritually healthy?

Urging them onward in their walk with the Lord or holding them back?

Vessels of God or self-serving?

An examination of Paul and Apollos and their ministries reveals that both are

1. ministers **of Christ**
2. stewards of the mysteries **of God**
3. faithful, pleasing **to God**

Those 3 synonymous words are to apply to us as well, as we follow Jesus

v3-4 judged:

But what the church at Corinth thinks about Paul is of no consequence to him  
To Paul, how the church “examines, scrutinizes” him and his ministry really  
doesn’t matter

How the court of popular opinion “examines, scrutinizes” him is irrelevant  
Paul even realizes how he personally “examines, scrutinizes” himself and his  
ministry does not matter

Because man, the world, and even Self are flawed judges with limited and  
incomplete information

No man, not the world, not even Self can declare a person right before God

Paul knows and teaches and lives according to the Word of God

Spoken thru a faithful and rejected servant, the prophet Jeremiah:

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked:  
who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins,  
even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the  
fruit of his doings. (Jer 17:9-10)

Paul knows the only One qualified to “examine, scrutinize” him and his ministry  
with complete information and perfect knowledge is the Lord Jesus Christ

After his last breath, Paul will not stand before any man or before a court of men  
He will stand before the Lord at His judgment seat (2 Cor 5:10)

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not contestants in a popularity contest or  
entrants in a beauty pageant

We are not here to “win friends and influence people” in worldly affairs

We are not to measure ourselves or anyone else with the metrics of the world –  
numbers; the size of our Social Media footprint is of no consequence

We are not able or qualified to render an accurate assessment of any person or  
ministry...even our own

1 John 3:20-21

Rom 14:4

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own  
master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up:  
for God is able to make him stand.

We are here to be faithful (God's metric) servants and stewards of the mysteries of God where we have been planted

v5 Therefore:

Since v1-4 is true

judge nothing...and then every:

Judge (different Greek word than the one used 3 times in v3-4 – “try, decide, condemn”) nothing until the proper time, which is when the Lord Jesus Christ comes (to earth) to

- illuminate the hidden/concealed things of darkness/iniquity  
Darkness/evil is broader and deeper than we know/realize!
- reveal all the counsels/will/purposes of the hearts of men

Until then, God is still working on softening hearts and saving souls,  
and His works-in-progress are being finished

It's not over until it's over

Wait, for all is not yet known and all is not yet revealed

At the perfect time, when Jesus returns, the truth will be completely revealed by Him, the Revealer of Truth, and nothing will remain hidden or concealed

Truth is revealed in part now

1 Cor 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit  
e.g. Pastor John at CCCM Board Meeting

1 Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part

Matt 7:15-16a Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Mark 10:26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

But “full revelation” (the hearts of all men) will come when King Jesus does

Then every eye will see what God sees

1 Cor 3:12-14

1 Cor 2:21a

In the meantime...

- "Wait for it", since that is all we are qualified to do
- Follow Jesus, since only His opinion matters

v6 that ye might learn is us:

Paul has applied these things (v1-5) to himself and Apollos for a specific purpose: to heal their divisions

1. that they, these babes in Christ, might learn how to not think more highly than they should of any person (Rom 3:10, 23)... except Jesus Christ
2. that none of them would be boastful and proud of anyone... except Jesus Christ

So must we learn

1 Cor 3:7

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (of Christ)

The only acceptable standard of comparison of persons and ministries:  
the Lord Jesus Christ

After all,

v7 who makes thee to differ:

God is not a respecter of persons, so why do you play favorites among yourselves?

Why do you, as children of God, care so much about what celebrities have to say?

Why do the words of an actress/actor or a sports star carry more weight in the Church than the words of a longshoreman?

Why is discrimination based on skin color and gender bad but discrimination based on social standing and Social Media impact ok?

Why are you lining up behind "under rowers" of Jesus and comparing and competing among yourselves?

Why do you follow "celebrity pastors"?

If they or you have received a calling from God, why do they or you boast about, as if it were all their or your idea and strength and glory?

Our Father is the Giver of every good and perfect gift

All we have comes from Him, so why are you boasting in yourselves?

People and stations and talents differ...to the glory of the creative genius of God  
So do not look around to compete and compare with others, for that is not wise  
What is wise is to

- look up to and worship the One Who gave according to His sovereign will, for His glory and never for our glory
- follow Jesus

Divisions based on personalities (Paul, Apollos, Peter) is wrong and unhealthy...  
spiritually immature  
Comparisons based on worldly metrics is not wise

So, either with tongue-in-cheek humor or with sarcasm (the Holy Spirit uses the personalities of God's servant, Paul is feisty), Paul compares "ye" vs "we" in v8-13

v8-9 ye...we:

Ye (plural "you", the church at Corinth) are full...have had more than enough  
Bread of Life to eat

Ye are rich...endowed with great spiritual riches in Christ

Ye have reigned as kings (their opinion of themselves) without us

If it were only true so that we (him, Apollos, Peter) might reign with you

It seems that God has made an exhibition of the apostles

- last/lowest, as in appointed/doomed to death just like the prophets
- a spectacle to the world, angels, and men...theatre, must-see-TV

Matt 5:10-12

it is all about Jesus

2 Cor 11:23-28

it is all about Jesus (Acts 9:16)

1 Peter 1:10-13

it is all about Jesus

So why are you divided over those who are "the last" rather than following Jesus,  
the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End?

v10-13 We...ye:

We are fools...thought to be stupid/absurd...for the sake of Jesus Christ

Ye are wise/conceited in Christ

We are weak...ailing and without strength

Ye are strong...valiant and boisterous

Ye are honorable...noble, honored

We are despised...dishonored

We are hungry and thirsty and naked (poorly clad) and buffeted (beaten)  
Phil 4:11-13 I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content.  
I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:  
every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full  
and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can  
do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

We labor...to the point of exhaustion

Being reviled/vilified, we bless/speak well of those who curse us...Christ-like  
Being persecuted, we suffer/endure it...Christ-like  
Being defamed...trash talked, spoken evil of...we entreat/exhort for the  
good...Christ-like

We have become the filth/garbage of the world and the scum of all things...  
Christ-like

Lam 3:45 Thou hast made us the offscouring and refuse in the midst  
of the people.

We follow Jesus...you follow Jesus!

v14-16 not to shame...warn...followers of me:

Paul's motive in writing these strong words is that of the heart of the Father:  
Not to shame or confound or stumble them, but to warn/caution them in  
their walk with the Lord not be hindered

This church has had, and will have throughout time, many  
instructors/schoolmasters in Christ, but only one "father" – Paul  
Paul was the first to preach the Gospel to them and they were fruitful and  
multiplied under "his" guidance  
Therefore, Paul urges them to be followers/imitators of him

Timeout!

This, v16 by itself, sounds like Paul is drawing disciples after himself!  
(Acts 20:28-30)!

Keep reading, read in context

v17 Timothy...bring you into remembrance...my ways which be in Christ:

Paul is absolutely NOT drawing disciples unto himself!

He is following Christ, as evidenced by how he universally lives and teaches in  
every church

He is walking in the Way, the Truth, and the Life

He is walking the talk

So they can imitate Paul: “Follow me following Jesus!”

Paul, ministering in Ephesus, will send this letter to them via Timothy, his faithful and beloved son in the faith, who will remind them of Paul’s faithful life of following Jesus

v18-20 not come...will come:

Some of those entangled in the envying, strife, and divisions are saying

- We are never going to see that man again!
- Paul has moved on; he is gone; we can forget about him

But Paul would love to return to Corinth to see his beloved children in the Lord!  
If it was the Lord’s will...”Not my will be done, but your will be done, Lord”  
(Christ-likeness)

Should Paul return, he will learn not the words of those who are dividing the flock  
but will learn of their power

The Holy Spirit would not so divide the flock so they are moving by another  
power

Rom 16:17-18

These divisions must be healed for the health of the church, so...

v21 rod...love...meekness:

And if I do return, how would you prefer I come...following Jesus

With the Good Shepherd’s rod of correction?

With the Father’s love?

With the Holy Spirit’s meekness/humility/gentleness?



## **Take-away**

What is the message?

Follow Jesus!

1. It is only important that we please Jesus Christ our Lord and King, not Self or others or the world

All that matters is pleasing Jesus!

Who else is going to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”? (Matt 25:21)

2. God places a very high premium on humility and faithfulness

We, the children of God, are not in a popularity contest

We are not in a beauty pageant

We are new creatures sent to speak the Truth in love and meekness in a world that has declared war on the truth

We are to be servants, stewards, faithful

We are humble ministers of God’s love and grace

We carry the Divine invitation to accept the gift of eternal life

We are light shining in the darkness

We are salt in the stench of humanity, unregenerate mankind

We are following Jesus, we are only following Jesus

This mystery of God, the Church, is not about anyone with a calling, it is ALL about the One calling!

Follow Jesus!