

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: The True Judge and True Judgment

Text: 1 Corinthians 4: 3-5

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**1 Corinthians 4: 1: Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2: Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3: But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4: For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5: Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.**

Every preacher sent of God and every believer saved by God's grace is a steward. We are Christ's ministers. We are stewards of the mysteries of God—the gospel of God.

“Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” Faithful to who? Faithful to God, to our Lord Jesus. Faithful to do what? To be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of Christ alone! Faithful to spend our lives hearing him in his gospel and believing and heeding his word. Faithful sending the gospel of Christ forth into all the world.

Religion has their numerous “ways to a healthy church.” There is only one Way! Christ said, “I am THE Way, THE Truth and THE Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.” (Jn 14: 6) Christ is the great “Physician” who makes his people and his church healthy. Christ alone accomplished redemption for God's chosen people. Christ intercedes and sends forth the Holy Spirit, creating life and faith in the hearts of dead sinners. Christ is the Faithful One constrains his people by the love of Christ. God the Father, said, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.”

The preacher is to give himself to the study of God's word, to prayer and to preaching. Every believer is to take care of all other daily cares so that the preacher can do so. If we would be faithful stewards of God we are to hear, believe, preach, support and send forth the gospel of Christ and ask him to bless it.

Here is a question: who judges whether or not I, or my fellow believers, have been faithful?

The Lord Jesus is the only Judge who knows the heart, as well as the things hidden in darkness, therefore he alone is able to judge.

## **DO NOT UNJUSTLY JUDGE**

Believers are not to judge our brethren in rash, harsh, haughty, unjust judgment—**1 Corinthians 4: 2: Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3: But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment:...**

Some in the church at Corinth questioned Paul's faithfulness; others overly exalted Paul. To both Paul says “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you [believer's at Corinth] or of man's judgment [or of worldly man's judgment.]

Did it not matter to Paul how his brethren or the world viewed him? Sure it did; Paul is clear about that in other scriptures. Was Paul saying believers are not to judge at all? No! Believers are to judge righteous judgment. Christ said what Paul is saying in our text:

Matthew 7: 1: Judge not, that ye be not judged...

Be not rash, looking for a word or deed to condemn, be not overly severe, and never judge a man's eternal future. But then he said this in verse 6,

Matthew 7: 6: Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

If a man blatantly opposes the gospel of Christ, I am to make a judgment that it is useless at that point to cast these pearls of the gospel before him. I am not to judge such a man as not being an elect child of God—he might be! I am not to judge such a man as being forever lost—God may have a time appointed when he will call him to life and faith in Christ. But I am to judge righteous judgment. Until God opens the door and gives the man a heart to truly receive the gospel, it is useless to force the gospel on such a God-hating sinner!

Also, in rare instances, the church is to judge a believer if he is distracting from Christ and dividing the church. We will come to that in chapter five of 1 Corinthians. Paul said, "I've already judged concerning him that has done this deed." (1 Cor 5: 3)

But we are always to judge—not by the letter of the law—but with righteous judgment with spiritual discernment. When Christ healed a man on the sabbath day the Pharisee's harshly judged our Master. He said,

John 7: 23: If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? 24: Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Circumcision in the flesh was a mere outward picture of a man being made whole inwardly by circumcision of the heart by God. The sabbath day pictured Christ our eternal Rest. These men were condemning Christ because they were more concerned about a ceremony and a day in the law of Moses. They did not judge according to the law of Christ which is the law of faith and love and mercy. They did not judge that there stood the true Rest who made a man every whit whole. Christ is and does what the law only typified. Therefore, the Master said to these unjust judges, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

The problem at Corinth was that they were not using righteous judgment. They were harshly judging professing believers as unfaithful and they were justifying others as being truly faithful simply over where they stood in this division over preachers.

Sadly, I have seen this happen in my lifetime. This is what needs to be emphasized. If you and another professing believer who is proven faithful—both of you loving the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ—come to realize that you do not have the same understanding of a certain doctrine—it does not mean either of you are suddenly unbelievers! That is what this division at Corinth had caused. Paul says it is wrong!

When it comes to the faithfulness of God's preachers and his people we do not know the motive of their hearts nor do we know everything there is to know. How do you and I judge? Is it different than how the Lord sees? Scriptures say, "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. (1 Sam 16: 7)

Hannah got up from the table where they had been eating and drinking. There was probably wine at that table. She walked onto the porch, moving her mouth but no words came out. Eli judged she was drunk. But Hannah was pouring out her heart to the Lord, asking him to give her a child. Our judgment is by sight and our sight is very limited.

Even when brethren fall and stumble in sin, we need to remember that a believer can fall and look like an unbeliever—even for a very long time. Consider Lot, David, Abraham, and Jacob. But Paul said receive your brother without doubting and disputing. Because if they are truly Christ's then Christ is their Master and not you and I.

Romans 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.

## **JUDGING MINE OWN SELF**

Paul even said the same thing about judging his own self—**1 Corinthians 4: 3:...yea, I judge not mine own self.**

Again, be sure to understand what Paul is not saying. He is not saying that we should never judge ourselves by God's word. We should!

1 Corinthians 11: 31: For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32: But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

When our actions are obviously contrary to God's word, we know it is wrong! If we would judge ourselves and correct it, we would not be chastened. But when we are judged, it is the Lord who chastens us. He may use brethren or even strangers or he may use his providence but it is the Lord who is chastening his child. It is because the Lord will not allow one of his chosen blood bought children to perish. So yes! We are to use spiritual discernment to judge our own selves. But we need to always remember that the Lord is the only true and just Judge.

## **THE ONLY TRUE AND JUST JUDGE**

We are not the true and just judge—**1 Corinthians 4: 4: For I know nothing by myself;...**

Paul says, "I am not aware of being unfaithful to God in my stewardship." He said in another place, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23: 1) That required Paul to judge himself. He is not saying we are not to judge ourselves by God's word.

He is saying this—**1 Corinthians 4: 4:...yet am I not [yet I am not] hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.**

Believers do not justify ourselves in any way, not from the curse and condemnation of the law nor do we justify our faithfulness as being the genuine work of God.

When it comes to the curse and condemnation of the law it is the Lord that justified his people

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Christ is God. God was in Christ satisfying his justice and justifying his people. It is Christ that died. He poured out his blood unto death. Now Christ is risen and is ever living to make intercession for us. So who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who *is* he that condemneth?

Also, it is the Lord who justifies his child as being faithful. Paul said, "My faithfulness is not justified as being true faithfulness by my judgment "but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

Notice the four judges listed here. There is the judgment of brethren, the judgment of the world, my own judgment of myself, and the Lord's judgment. Who is the only true Judge? It is Christ the Lord.

John 5: 22: For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23: That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

There are two extremes believers are apt to fall into when we judge our own faithfulness. One, we are overly biased and justify ourselves as being faithful when we are unjust in a thing. Or, two, we condemn ourselves to the point of thinking we are lost. We must remember we are not the final judge either way. "But he that judgeth me is the Lord."

## THE INSTRUCTION

Having taught us all this the Holy Spirit moves Paul to give us the Lord's instruction—**1 Corinthians 4: 5: Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,...**

Never be hasty and rash in judgment. Judge nothing before the time. Wait because the Lord Jesus Christ shall come. He comes now in season to instruct and correct his children including you and your brethren! He comes now to put down our enemies and protect his church. And he is coming again to judge the whole world. Therefore never judge? No! He says "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come."

Believer, rest and believe on Christ knowing that the Lord our Judge knows everything that happens in his church, in his people and with our enemies. When he comes—**1 Cor 4: 5:...who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:**

For the unbeliever, Christ will judge even his very best deeds as wickedness. Christ will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts including every selfish, unholy motive. Then he will cast them out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But for the believer, Christ will bring to light before you and everyone else, the truth that you stand clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, holy, unblameable, unreprouvable in his sight. He will bring to light all the times you mourned over your sins and turned from your sins for his sake. Every faithful prayer will be brought forth as perfectly righteous and holy. He will bring to light and make known all the things that you did for others without anyone knowing, not seeking praise or acknowledgment. And most of what Christ will reveal will be things you and I did not even recognize ourselves. He will reveal the perfect holy motive of the heart of all his people was that they were "constrained by the love of Christ."

You and I will stand amazed! We will be amazed because we know that the only way we do any good work is by God's grace. Everything we are and do is by God's grace alone. God ordained every good work we do and God works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. Sin is mixed with all our works. But Christ washes all our works in his blood and presents them spotless to the Father. Christ said,

Matthew 25: 34: Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37: Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? Or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? 38: When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? 39: Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40: And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Here is utter amazement! For Christ's sake, in Christ—**1 Cor 4: 5...and then shall every** [saved, glorified believer] **have praise of God.**

For the sake of Christ and the righteousness he has made us, God will say to every child of God in the day of judgment, "Well done my good and faithful servant!"

**Amen!**