

Bible Study October 11, 2023

I Corinthians 4

The Ministry of the Apostles

I Cor. 4: 1-5 Paul addresses the Corinthian church as to how they should regard the ministry of the Apostles, especially Paul's ministry to them. Paul speaks of the mysteries of God, not only the Gospel, but things that can only be revealed by God. In our weakness we can't understand many things, but through God's Spirit, we see and understand. His term, "regard us, as servants of Christ," implies he is being judged and attacked by some of the members of the church. It appears they were judging his spiritual effectiveness through the lens of what they perceive as his shortcomings. Paul tells them he himself does not judge, but only Christ is the judge.

I Cor. 4: 6-7 Paul emphasizes the church to interpret Scripture in light of Scripture, and not to go beyond what is written, i.e. the law of the Pharisees or special knowledge in the church. Don't be puffed up, like the puffiness around a wound, as the root cause of arrogance is the sin of pride.

I Cor. 4: 8-13 Paul uses sarcasm, "... you have become kings!" We use today the phrase, "Who made you the king?" You have all you want! You have become rich! The sin of entitlement. He then shifts and uses the phrase "like men sentenced to death" to describe the calling of the apostles. They are seen, but like men going to the death at execution or like gladiators going to their death in the arena. We are fools for Christ's sake exhibiting foolishness, weakness, and suffering. Paul does address the falsehoods so these falsehoods do not become accepted as truth.

I Cor. 4: 14-21 Paul is not trying to shame them, but to see his rebuke as a loving father correcting his children. You have many guides (guardians) such as Cephas and Apollos, but Paul addresses them as a father. As Paul became their father in Christ through the Gospel, so too should they become imitators of Paul as Paul imitates Christ. Paul sent Timothy to remind them to be imitators of his ways in Christ. Paul obviously expected the Holy Spirit to come in power to confront those who were seeking to exhibit their own power. He plans to return to see if they indeed have any power behind their words. Power is shown through grace in the true church. Jesus gave His power to His disciples to be given away to believers. Is he to come to them with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness.