

## 1 Corinthians Class 6 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

This is class number 6 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthian Church. We hope you're enjoying this series. This evening we'll be picking up in **chapter 4**.

But as always, before we begin, we want to ask God's blessing and guidance for all of us. So, if you would please just bow your heads, and we will ask God's blessing on this class.

[Prayer]

Well, welcome back. We are eager to get started this evening. As we mentioned in the intro, we are about to start into **chapter 4** in this series on **1 Corinthians**.

At the end of **chapter 3**, Paul was talking about how God had sent a variety of servants, including himself and Apollos. He refers to Peter as well, though Peter hadn't been in Corinth, but he refers to the different servants and makes the point that it makes no sense to try to choose whichever one our favorite is, because God has given different responsibilities to each one. And, if we choose one over others, then we cut ourselves off from what God is providing through the others. So it's important for us to recognize that God's called all of us to work together, and He's given each of us unique tools and aspects of our lives that we can add to that whole process.

So, as we begin **chapter 4**, Paul begins by talking about what he would like to be known as. And I think it's really profound, as you look at this. Paul is the apostle to the gentiles. He is the individual who wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer. He could certainly claim a great deal of responsibility, of authority, of glory, in that sense. But that isn't what Paul wants to be known as. And he summarizes it here as we begin.

[3:00]

He says in **verse 1** of **chapter 4**:

*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

There are two different important words that are used here. He talks first of all about a *servant*. Now this isn't the normal word that we've talked about. Remember, in **chapter 1** we talked about the word *doulos*, which has to do with a bondservant. The word here has a different origin. It originally meant "someone who was a rower on the lower bank of a Greek Trireme"—in other words, one of those slaves who just didn't even see what was going on, but just sat there, pulling the oar as he is commanded to by the ones pounding out the beat. So it's an individual who is completely at the service of the one in charge.

*Barclay* puts it this way. He says:

Some commentators have seen in this a picture of Christ as the pilot who directs the course of the ship and Paul as the servant who accepts the pilot's orders and labors only as the master directs.

So it's a unique term in that way. And, it fits among the other aspects of what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ. And then he says, "I would like to be known as, just *consider us*, as not only *servants of Christ*, but *stewards of the mysteries of God*."

The word *steward* is a special word, *oikonómous*, and *Barclay* describes it this way:

The steward was in charge of the whole administration of the house or the estate; he controlled the staff; he issued the supplies; but, however much he controlled the household staff, he himself was still a slave where the master was concerned. Whatever a man's position in the Church, whatever power he may weald there or whatever prestige he may enjoy, he still remains the servant of Christ.

So, it reminds us of a particular responsibility.

Now, in a large household, there would be a number of servants, and the larger the household, the more servants, and the more responsibility was there. But the owner of the house—the whole household, the estate as it might be—rather than being bogged down with all the details of the day-to-day decisions to be made, chose a very trusted servant and made him the steward, made him the one responsible for all of those day-to-day decisions. And in many cases, the steward could buy and sell, hire and fire, determine what was done by whom, when, where. There were certain decisions that he would take to the owner, but by being able to fulfill those responsibilities, the owner is free to focus on the things that are more important, that take a little more of his attention.

[5:39]

If you were to think of a biblical example, probably the best one we would find is in the Old Testament—the story of Joseph as the steward of Potiphar in Egypt, and how Potiphar entrusted everything to Joseph.

If you're thinking in more modern terms, if you were a fan of the television series *Downton Abbey*, you may think of Mr. Carson. Mr. Carson is a wonderful example of what a steward was in the early 20th century, upper-class British society. So it gives you an idea.

But now I'd like to spend just a moment considering a little bit more, because *stewards* here—we're called to be *stewards of the mysteries of God*. We need to look at that concept a little bit.

The *steward* actually has four elements to his stewardship:

1. First of all is ownership versus management. The steward always knows that he is not the one who controls the resources. He may operate and carry out various functions, make decisions, but all that he does is done for the benefit of the owner, not the steward. He does not act on his own in that way.

#### 4 ELEMENTS OF STEWARDSHIP

**Stewards** = *oikonómous*

- Ownership vs. management
- Responsibility vs. optional
- Accountability and reward
- Faithfulness

2. Second, the second characteristic is responsibility, as opposed to something being

optional. In other words, when an individual is placed in the office of being a steward, that individual is responsible to see that things are carried out. It's not an opportunity for him to sit back and say, "Well, you know, I'll get to that." Or, "Someday I'll do that." No, this is a full-time, full-focus responsibility. His entire life is focused on that responsibility that has been entrusted to him by the master.

3. The third is accountability and reward. In other words, a steward always knows he will be accountable to the master for what he does. And, there is the recognition that a faithful steward receives a reward, and, the unfaithful steward receives something less. We may think of certain examples in Scripture—there're two that especially come to mind—of the parables that Jesus gave: the one that had to do with the talents, when the talent was a very large sum of money—or the minas, which is a very small sum. But we note that in both of those parables, the stewards, the servants, have an accountability. And, those who do well are rewarded; those who don't, lose what they have. But there is always the recognition that: "What's been entrusted to me, I'm accountable for. There is one in charge, and I must account to him for what I've done."
4. And the fourth characteristic which we'll look at just a little bit more is the concept of faithfulness. Faithfulness is absolutely essential where stewardship is concerned. You can only give such a weighty responsibility to someone who has proven that they will be faithful. So, as we see this, one of the commentaries puts it this way. It says:

The ministry is more than a mere profession or trade. It is a calling from God for stewardship. Each minister, and for that matter, each member in a sense, has a certain aspect of stewardship to their lives. We've been entrusted with the truths of God, and here he calls them "the mysteries of God."

Now what do we mean by that? The word "mystery" in our dictionary today would describe something that's difficult to understand. (I believe we've talked about this a little bit already, as we looked through the first part of **1 Corinthians**.) But, what we're dealing with here, the way that God uses the term, is not something that cannot be understood, but something that is not understood until that mystery is revealed.

[9:20]

Probably one of the best examples of that is the meaning of the Holy Days. There're many, many people who know that the Holy Days are there but have no idea what they mean.

I'm still reminded of hearing, years ago, an Orthodox Jewish lady talking about the Days of Unleavened Bread and saying, "We're at that time of the year when my people don't eat anything leavened, but I don't know why. We just do it that way." Well, when I first heard that, I thought, "Well, how can that be? Your people have been keeping these days for 3500 years. How could you not know what they mean?" And then I was reminded: "Well, there's only one reason why I know what they mean, and that's because God has revealed that to us. We understand the

symbolism of leaven during those Days of Unleavened Bread.”

So, we’ve been—we’ve had that mystery revealed to us, and therefore we don’t lack understanding of it now. We are reminding ourselves every year, as we go through those Holy Days, what they mean. But for the rest of mankind who haven’t received that, they really don’t know what that means. They don’t know what the other elements of the Holy Days mean.

So basically, he’s telling us here that—Paul says, “What I want to be known as, is an individual who is faithfully using what God has entrusted to me—the truths that God has revealed, this very special understanding of what it means to truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ.”

So he moves on to [1 **Corinthians 4**] **verse 2**, and he says:

*Moreover it is required (or demanded) in stewards that one be found faithful.*

Faithfulness is extremely important, and faithfulness is not an on-again, off-again thing. An individual must be faithful all the time, or they can’t be relied upon at all.

You may think of a proverb that’s a rather short one, and it seems rather obvious to people on one hand, where it says: “A liar will tell lies.” What does that mean? It basically means that if a person in character is willing from time to time to tell a lie, for whatever reason, you can never trust what that person says—even when they confirm to you that what they’re saying is absolutely true. If they’re willing to be a liar at all, you can never believe them. Likewise, if a person is not willing to be faithful all the time, you really can’t entrust things to them because they may not be faithful when you need them to—when things get difficult.

[11:48]

How do you come to trust someone? It’s interesting: a book was written a few years ago by Stephen Covey, the son of the famous Stephen Covey who wrote the book on *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. And this book was called *The Speed of Trust*. It talked about: “What does it take to establish trust between people—for there to be a trust?” And he boiled it down to two fundamental components, which were *character* and *competence*. In order for us to trust someone, we must know that their character is solid, and we can rely upon that—and, that they have the competence to carry out those skills.

Now I think it’s interesting to see that, and we could apply that in many, many different ways. But I have been fascinated by a passage, also, in **Psalms 78**. Mr. Kilough uses it a lot when he presents some sections to the Service in the Church class here at FI. It’s found in **Psalms 78**, right at the end of that chapter—of that psalm.

I’ll begin in **verse 70**. He says, (referring to God):

[**Psalms 78:70**] *He also chose David His servant,  
And took him from the sheepfolds;  
71 From following the ewes that had young He brought him,  
To shepherd Jacob His people,*

*And Israel His inheritance.*

I think he is making a point there that David was brought from a position of caring for the young and the helpless, those that needed caring, those that did not have power to protect and care for themselves, especially as he has that very tender description of the ewe with the young lambs.

Notice **verse 72**, that describes David:

**72** *So he shepherded them (he shepherded Israel) according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.*

Those exact two characteristics that Covey talks about, David talked about 3000 years ago. But David was one who is described—or at least, I should say, actually Asaph, I believe, is the writer of **Psalms 78**—but he talks about David, and he says David *shepherded them*, and he guided them *according to the integrity of his heart, and by the skillfulness of his hands*. Exactly the same thing we're talking about: character and competence. That's extremely important. For an individual who's going to be a steward of the mysteries of God, those characteristics are important.

[14:13]

Think about another passage. **Luke chapter 16, verses 10 through 12.**

[**Luke 16:10**] (He said) *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;—*

That's kind of the lesson of the parable of the minas because the minas were a very small amount. But, the servants had to be faithful.

He goes on to say here in **Luke 16 [verse 10]**:

*—and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Verse 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?*

Let's go forward just a little bit to **Luke 19** because there we are actually looking at the parable of the minas. And notice what is said to the two servants that are described as having produced very well—one producing ten times as much, one five times.

In [**Luke 19**] **verse 17**:

*And he (the master, the owner, who has all of this) said to him (the servant), 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'*

So we see here the characteristic of faithfulness. We see that the ownership belonged to the master. We see the responsibility that this servant took and the accountability and reward that came as a result of that.

So it's a very important concept for us to have in mind. Each of us should desire likewise to be faithful stewards of what God's committed to us. This is not just some knowledge that we can stick away somewhere and not use. We are just like those servants who, in the parables, were

expected to produce with what they were given. We likewise are expected to produce, and we are accountable to God, who's shared those mysteries with us. He's going to call us to account. But again, remember that when God calls to account, most of those who are described here received reward, not punishment. And God certainly wants to reward you and me for the faithfulness that we have.

[16:21]

Alright, let's move on, [1 **Corinthians 4**] **verse 3**. Paul says:

*But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.*

Now Paul is not saying, "I don't care what you think. You can think whatever you want of me." He's not really saying that because, for anybody to take an approach like that, well, how can they be a very successful minister of Jesus Christ if they don't really care that they give an offensive or a bad impression to people? He's not saying that.

But he is making the point that ultimately the judgment that matters is God's. People are going to make judgments about us. People are going to look at us and decide they like us; they maybe don't like us; maybe they're neutral toward us. Those things are a part of normal human nature—that's going to exist. We are not going to just automatically identify with everyone. But Paul says, "You know, that kind of judgment is really not the kind of judgment that matters. What matters is what God says."

*Barclay* says something—this is a little bit longer, but I want to quote it because I think it's an interesting thing.

Paul speaks of three judgments that every man must face.

He must face the judgment of his fellow men. In this case Paul says that that is nothing to him. (It doesn't matter.) But there is a sense in which a man cannot disregard the judgment of his fellow men. The odd thing is that, in spite of its occasional radical mistakes, the judgment of our fellow men is often right.

Antisthenes, the Cynic philosopher, used to say, "There are only two people who can tell you the truth about yourself—an enemy who has lost his temper and a friend who loves you dearly." It is quite true that we should never let the judgment of men deflect us from what we believe to be right; but it is also true that the judgment of men is often more accurate than we would like to think.

You may want to tie in with this **1 Timothy 3** and **verse 7**, which talks about the characteristics an elder is supposed to have. And one of the characteristics it mentions there in the old *King James* is *having a good report from those who are without*—talking about those who are really outside of God's way. That an individual who is going to serve as an elder needs to be the kind of individual that even those who are not a part of the Church can respect and honor because of the character

### 3 "JUDGMENTS"

Each steward faces three judgments:

- Judgment of others
- Judgment of ourselves
- Judgment of God

that they see in that individual.

[18:47]

So, we are judged by others. And as we said here, it's not the final judgment; it's not the main one that counts. But we should pay attention, at times, to what people think. If people find us to be unfriendly, or they find us to be overly critical or negative or depressed, those are things we ought to take to heart. We ought to look at those things and consider ourselves and see if there are ways that God would expect us to be different.

As you move on to [**1 Corinthians 4**] **verse 4**, he says:

*For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.*

So, Paul says, "Okay, I'm really not aware that I'm doing something wrong. If there are people who are critical of me, okay, maybe they've seen something I haven't seen. The fact that I look at myself and I don't find that I'm doing those things that I'm accused of, okay, that doesn't make me innocent because we can all blind our eyes." How many times do we find in the Bible that we are warned against deceiving ourselves? So Paul recognizes that. He must look at himself. He must analyze himself and come to some conclusions. But he also recognizes there's a limit: "because I can be very, very blind to my own flaws."

*Barclay* continues:

He must face the judgment of himself. Once again Paul disregards that. He knew very well that a man's judgment of himself can be clouded by self-satisfaction, (and) by pride and by conceit. But in a very real sense, every man must face his own judgment.

We have to look at ourselves in the mirror. We have to be able to judge ourselves honestly, and if we don't deceive ourselves, need to make sure that we're not being hypocrites in what we do—that we are genuine.

Now ultimately, my judgment of myself—your judgment of yourself—is not going to make the difference of whether we're a part of God's Kingdom or not. The judgment of others isn't going to make that. But it can at least help us. Both of those can be helpful for us. After all, even later in this very book and into **2 Corinthians** as well, we're going to be told that we need to be judging ourselves, especially as we approach the Passover. So there is a role that self-judgment plays. There is a role that judgment of others plays. But ultimately, what matters is God's judgment.

[21:08]

(So he says,) **verse 5**, *Therefore judge nothing before the time (It's literally: stop judging or passing judgment; stop criticizing before the time.), until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

So, Paul is telling us here that we also face a much more important judgment, and that's the judgment of God.

*Barclay* goes on to say:

In the last analysis this is the only real judgment. ... God's is the final judgment for two reasons:

1. Only God knows all the circumstances. He knows the struggles a man has had; He knows the secrets that a man can tell no one; He knows what a man might have sunk to, and He also knows what he might have climbed to.
2. Only God knows all the motives. "Man sees the deed, but God sees the intention." Many a deed that looks noble may have been done from the most selfish and ignoble motives; and many a deed which looks base may have been done from the highest motives. He who made the human heart alone knows it and can judge it.

So we are told to be careful about the judgment that we have, even of ourselves, because ultimately God is the One who must do the judging. And only God can bring to light the things that we need to see in order to make a proper judgment.

He says here, *until the Lord comes*. I don't really think Paul is saying that all judgment is going to take place at Christ's return. After all, Peter tells us in **1 Peter 4:17** that *judgment is now on the household of God*. What he is telling us is that our ability as human beings to judge is always going to be constrained until we're no longer human beings, until we're no longer in this physical flesh, because this flesh keeps us from understanding certain things. I can't read your heart. You can't read mine. So we really are not in a position of being able to judge each other.

[23:10]

Now again, is Paul just throwing this in as kind of an interesting thought? Remember the context of what we're talking about. These people have kind of been judgmental of each other. They haven't separated into different organizations, but within the congregation they're looking at each other and they're making judgments about each other. And Paul is saying, "Okay, that's going to happen. I can't really stop you from that, though you should probably stop yourself from it. But, remember the limitations of your judgment. Remember that there are things you can't see, and only God can."

I think that's one of the great lessons of the book of **Job**. There are things going on behind the scenes that we don't know anything about, and we can't really form a proper judgment without that information. So, our judgment needs to be patient and kind and considerate, with the recognition of the limits that we have.

He goes on to say here in [**1 Corinthians 4**] **verse 6**:

*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes,*



*that you may learn in us (by using us as an example) not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.*

So, we see here that Paul says, “Look, I want you to understand this, so I’m using an analogy. I’m talking about myself and Apollos because you’ve been choosing sides there. Okay, does that make any sense? The fact that I judge myself and I think I’m doing all right doesn’t really prove anything. And Apollos could say the same thing.”

So he’s saying, “No, I’m giving you this example because here’s a clear example of what you’ve done. You’ve seen this, you know, in the Church. These conversations have taken place. So, I’ve given you that example. But just like with much of the Scripture, the intention is not that you just focus on the example, but instead you look at the principle behind it. ‘Oh, if I’ve done that where Paul and Apollos and Peter are concerned, wow, could I be guilty of doing that with my brethren as well—that I’m not judging in the right way?’ ”

So he says, “Be careful.” He uses probably what was a proverb at the time about not to think beyond what’s written. We really are not talking about something written here, *per se*; we’re talking about the way people have conducted themselves.

[25:39]

But you know, sometimes when you get a message—even today, you get an email message, and you may look at it and the way the words are put together, it kind of makes you think, “Well, this person must be upset,” or “This person must be feeling down,” or whatever it may be, and you begin to read things in. Sometimes we even read motive into things that the other person didn’t intend at all. We’ve probably all been in that spot, on that end of it, as well. So it’s probably a warning to say: “Be careful. Be careful in your judgment, because if you start reading motive into things that are not there, you may misread those motives and misunderstand.”

It also says here that we should not *be puffed up for one against another*. That means to kind of “inflate.” [It] literally means: “to use bellows to inflate something.” But it’s also an interesting indication, because here we have the phrase about being *puffed up*. And again, as we said earlier, we believe this book was written leading up to the Days of Unleavened Bread. So the *puffed-up* aspect of it is probably going to strike a chord with those who are receiving this.

**Verse 7** He says:

*For who makes you differ [from another]? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

Paul is addressing the pride of those in Corinth with three questions. And, as you look at those questions, it’s interesting the approach he takes. Paul could very easily have gotten upset and said: “You are full of pride. You need to humble yourself.” He could’ve done that, but instead he asks them questions. He invites them to think about this: “Okay, *who makes you differ from one another?* If some of you begin to feel like maybe you’re superior to others, who made you the way you are?”

Now of course, they didn't understand genetics in the way that we do and all that goes into making us the people we are, but, they undoubtedly did understand that we are, to a great extent, the product of the things that we've been through in life. And most of the time those things happened to us, and we haven't really set them up in a special way. It's just experience as we go through. "So, if you think you're better than somebody else, why would you think you're better? Who made you better than someone else?"

[28:08]

And then he asks the question: "Okay, well, suppose I'm a rich person, and I think: 'Well, that's because I'm rich; I've got a better education, and I'm doing better than these other people.' Okay," he said, "what do you have that you didn't receive?" In other words: "What did you bring with you when you arrived in the world?" When you were born and you were that weak and helpless and powerless little baby, what good traits did you bring with you? Did you have a lot of knowledge then? Could you recite the Ten Commandments at that point? Did you have these things in your mind and in your heart? Were you wealthy then? No! You didn't bring anything with you. Everything you have has been given to you. You've received it. You are wonderful beneficiary of all that's gone before.

Even if we're talking about spiritual truth, you and I who are here at this point in the history of—the modern history—of the Work, we are the beneficiaries of those who've gone before us. Some of those individuals we've known, and they've gone to their graves, and they're awaiting the resurrection. But you know, there are many thousands of others that we've never met that went back long before that, who brought the Church up to the point where it is today, and who are going to be in God's Kingdom. So, what do we have that we didn't receive? What do you have that you are responsible for coming up with? All the truth that we've been given has been **given**—it's ours.

So then he says, "Okay, let's take this a step further. Why are you different?"

"Well, I have more than someone else."

"Okay, what do you have that you didn't receive?"

"Well, nothing."

"If you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if it wasn't a gift, as if you hadn't received it, as if it was something you just had?"

"Well, I don't really have a reason to do that. I have no basis for separating myself as being better than my brethren."

[30:08]

Now he's essentially saying, "Okay, if God is not separating you, why are you separating? If God called you to be a part of one body, why are you fracturing within that body? Why are you developing your cliques, your little groups, your favorites, and non-favorites, and all that? God called you to be one, so why would you start separating?" God doesn't call people to be together

and then separate them. That's not what he intends to have happen. We're to be one body.

But now, Paul realizes that for some of those—well, sometimes once you address a situation like this, you can have a number of people who will respond to rhetorical questions like that. They'll stop and think, "Well, yeah, you're right. You know, I've been thinking too much of myself. I've been giving myself too much credit. No, God's the One who's given me these things, and He's called me to be a part of the body." And it can be very humbling.

But you know, there are also people who just don't respond to that kind of thing. So Paul gets stronger with them. He says:

**8** *You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!*

Now obviously there were not people in the Church who literally were reigning as kings. Paul is using exaggeration, using even a little bit of sarcasm—which you have to be very careful about—but he's using a bit of this to drive home the point: "Oh, are you already a king? Or do you already have all the wisdom you need? You don't need anything more?" And of course, you're going to have to back up and say, "Well, no, I can't really say that."

[31:54]

You know, when a person feels they have all that they need, that they don't need anything more—remember the example in **Revelation chapter 3** that talks about the Church in Laodicea? And it describes them, their attitude, as: "We are rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing."

There's probably some historical reference there to earthquakes that took place. There was at one time a great earthquake in Laodicea, and the Roman Senate offered to send money to help rebuild, and the Laodiceans said, "No, we're fine. We can take care of ourselves. We are rich and increased with goods, and we don't need anything." That may be a part of it. You think of that example—there are people who have that approach, and when you think you've already got it, you tend to not recognize what your needs really are.

In the field of education there's kind of a maxim that says: "The biggest barrier to learning is when you have the idea you already know," because when you think that way, you tend not to learn very much. So, that's one of the things that we need to recognize.

Now obviously, none of them were literally reigning as *kings*. So Paul is talking about an attitude that a king might have, an attitude of superiority. And, that's not what we're supposed to have within the Church.

Now, again, I think it's fascinating to see how Paul approaches this. Paul could have been very blunt. He could have been very, very strong in his correction, but instead he invites them to think.

You know, many years ago there were times when people thought that individuals needed to be humbled, and therefore they would do things to them supposedly to "humble them." You really

can't humble somebody else. Humility is an attitude that we each have to choose on our own. You can embarrass someone. You can make them feel bad. You can discourage them. You can dishonor them and disrespect them, but you can't make someone humble. You can only humiliate. And that's not God's way. Paul doesn't humiliate these people. He does get a little strong here in saying, "Oh, you need to look at yourself a little more. Do you really think you're in a position where you don't need anything more yourself? You're not there."

[34:11]

So Paul goes on to say, as far as his own role, he says, **verse 9**:

*For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.*

Now, what do we mean by that? Well, we can derive things just from reading it along, but I like *Barclay's* comment here because he explains this concept of "those who are *displayed last, condemned to death.*" He writes it this way:

When a Roman general won a great victory, he was allowed to parade his victorious army through the streets of the city with all the trophies that he had won; the procession was called a Triumph. But at the end there came a little group of captives who were doomed to death; they were being taken to the arena to fight with the beasts and so to die. The Corinthians in their blatant pride were like the conquering general displaying the trophies of his prowess; the apostles were like the little group of captives doomed to die. To the Corinthians the Christian life meant flaunting their privileges and reckoning up their achievement; to Paul it meant humble service and a readiness to die for Christ.

So Paul uses that metaphor that, again, these people would've recognized. We don't have that same thing today. So it's important to understand what was taking place then.

He said, "This is what we were. We were put on display." In other words, Christianity is not something private and hidden away, but "we were put on display in front of man, and not in some great way of honor." That's not what we find in the Church today. We don't find that people bow down when one of us comes by. They don't have great respect and awe for those that God's called out. We don't have a great show, display. We don't have any thrones to sit on today. Mr. Franks has an office chair just like mine in his office. He doesn't have a throne. We don't go in and bow or anything like that when we come in. None of us are that way. You don't have to go to your minister and treat him like royalty. He's your friend, we hope, your co-servant, an individual there to help and to be a brother to you. That's what we're supposed to be, elder brothers, yes, but brothers nonetheless. So we don't have this kind of great display. We're just like normal everyday people.

And he says: *we have been made a spectacle to the world.* The word here, *world*, is a word that basically describes "all that goes into making up man's world, leaving God out of the picture"—all that makes a part of the world that you and I dwell in—in the midst of it unfortunately—in our world

today.

So, Paul is saying, “That’s what we are.”

[36:52]

[1 **Corinthians 4**] **verse 10** (He says) *We are fools for Christ’s sake, —*

In the eyes of many people, *we are fools*. And I think most of us understand that there are many ways in which you and I are seen as *fools* today. Anybody who believes in ‘creation’ as opposed to ‘evolution,’ you must be a *fool*. Anybody who believes that a man is supposed to be the head of his family—oh, what a foolish idea! You’re still living back in the 1700s. What’s wrong with you?

And many of the beliefs that we have— “You believe God heals? You believe that prayer has an importance in your life, and it’s not just some kind of a psychological boost, but God actually intervenes? You believe God places angels around people to protect them? You believe there is a supernatural being out there who’s trying to destroy what God is doing? Oh, what’s wrong with you? You may as well be living in the Middle Ages, when people believed in demons.” Oh, yeah, we believe in those too!

Yes, we can be seen as *fools*. And, if that’s going to be a problem to you, Christianity is probably going to be a problem to you.

**10** *We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! —*

Oh, you can come across as “just holding your own with the world around you.”

—*We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!*

And Paul goes on to describe:

**11** *To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.*

Now again, Paul is not saying this is his constant way of life, but it is pretty frequent, and there are many ways in which he has to present himself in these ways.

We don’t find here in the Scriptures what today is known as “the health, wealth, prosperity gospel.” That’s a lie. That’s not what God is offering. Sometimes we have great blessing. Sometimes we have great need. And Paul is saying, “Okay, you think you’re all set? Well, we’re not. We go through difficult times.”

It’s interesting as well that all of the verbs that are used here in this are what are called “present tense.” So, in other words, they indicated an ongoing condition. It isn’t like: that is the way it used to be and God’s brought us through it. We have ups and downs in life, and sometimes it’s difficult.

[39:02]

He says, **verse 12**: *And we labor, working with our own hands. —*

And the word there for *labor* is a word that means “hard, exhausting work.” He said, “That’s what we do. We do it with our own hands.”

—*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;*

So *being reviled* here has to do with “being abused.” It means “to say harsh things; to make verbal assaults on someone; to spew bitter, tasteless statements, mean-spirited, and insulting words designed to demoralize.” He said, “Yeah, those are—we encounter that. And when we encounter that, [when] we receive this kind of treatment,” he says, “what do we do? We speak well. We respond kindly.”

One of the phrases or one of the definitions of this word *to bless* means “to confer benefit on someone.” We treat someone nicely. It is so common for us in our world to want to lash back, to want to get even. But, that’s not the approach a Christian’s supposed to take. Now it doesn’t mean we just lie down and let people walk all over us. But, trying to come back at them and put them down or make ourselves look better—that’s not what a Christian does.

*Barclay’s* puts it this way:

He says, “When we are insulted ... we bless.” (That’s the word that’s used there.) We probably do not realize just how surprising a statement this would be to a pagan. Aristotle (describes or) declares that the highest virtue is ... great-heartedness, the virtue of the man with the great soul; and (Aristotle) defines that virtue as the quality which will not endure to be insulted. To the ancient world, Christian humility was a virtue altogether new.

It’s not something they knew. That was totally separate from new—from that world.

He goes on to say:

**13** *being defamed, we entreat.* —

Now the word that we used there earlier, *reviled*, refers to kind of a “personal, private abuse that takes place almost one on one.” Being *defamed* is “publicly slandered,” where in public people despise, and put down, and say evil things. He said, “That’s the way it is in this world.”

—*We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*

What’s most obvious is not—

(Again, I’m recording from one of the resources.)

—is not the difference in work or position but the difference in spirit. The Corinthians were motivated by a selfish, “get all” spirit. (We’ll see that more as we get into **chapter 6**.) The apostles and messengers of the gospel were motivated by a selfless, “give all” spirit.

And I know there are many of you who will note that contrast between “give and get.” We were taught many years ago about two ways of life: “a give way and a get way.” And what we were taught was absolutely true. And Paul is carrying that forward here.

[42:12]

Now he goes on. He's been very strong here in talking about some of these problems, and he knows that there are people in Corinth who are somewhat resistant. We know when you get pride, it gets insular, really begins to be difficult to deal with. So, Paul is addressing it, but he doesn't want to make them feel like somehow he's rejected **them** because there's a problem.

So he says in **verse 14**: *I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.*

It rarely produces good results to try to shame or embarrass someone. Basically, it makes them feel like they have to defend themselves. If someone in authority has shamed them or embarrassed them, well, they may not be able to respond. They may have to just kind of swallow it and keep it down, but the resentment is still there. It doesn't produce a good result. We don't help people by embarrassing them.

At the core of the problems in Corinth was this sense of pride. You can't humble a prideful person. You can shame them. You can humiliate them. You can embarrass them. But that's not going to produce the right result. Humiliation is not the opposite of pride. Humiliation is simply another form of pride. That's not what we're striving for. Humility is something very different. To be genuinely humble is a decision that each individual has to make. Now ultimately, will God humble mankind? Yes, He will. But God can approach things in a different way than you and I do.

So, Paul says, "I'm not doing these things to embarrass you or to shame you, to put you down, to make you feel bad. But like my beloved children, I do warn you." And the word there means "to admonish." It's a word that's used of a father speaking to his son. *Admonish you*—there's a love, but there's also a great prodding and a recognition that we can't just simply sit back and accept something.

[44:12]

He goes on to say in **verse 15**:

*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

Paul's talking about a very special relationship he feels toward these people, because, after all, he is the one that God used—that Jesus Christ used—to bring the gospel to Corinth. He was the first one these people ever met who taught the good news, the Kingdom of God and the fact that you can be part of it, who taught them that there is actually a way of addressing sin and taking away the penalty and giving you a promise of eternal life. This was a brand-new message, really to the whole world, but especially to the gentile world. And, as Paul sees those individuals who respond—now, believe me, Paul fully understood he wasn't calling anybody; he wasn't opening anyone's mind. He had just come from Athens, and he saw what it was like when those minds were closed like a door. But here, in this place of profligate living, in this place of all kinds of vice, God was opening people's minds, and Paul knew what the source was.

So, he said, “When I look at you,” he said, “I see you like my children. I saw you come from where you were into this brand-new relationship with God. I saw you before you had God’s Spirit, and I saw what the Spirit of God has done in you.” And he said, “I feel, in that sense, like a father.” He’s not claiming “fatherhood” in the sense of “God as our Father.” He’s not even beginning to do that, but he’s saying that: “My relationship with you is unique. Now there are all these other ministers who will come along, who will be teachers, who will instruct you. And that’s wonderful. Instructors have a very important role to play in our lives. But,” he says, “I have a unique role with you. I’m the one who brought the truth to you in the first place, that Jesus Christ used to bring the gospel to you. So I see you in a very special way.” And there was nothing wrong with that. Basically, he is saying, “I see you like my children. I view you in that way. You’re my kids. You’re the ones I care about as if you were my own family.” And, we would hope that they saw him in a similar way.

[46:36]

I think for many of us who go back many years, Mr. Armstrong fulfilled a similar function in a sense. We learned the truth—probably for many of us—through radio or maybe television or printed material. But Mr. Armstrong was behind much of that. Was he perfect? No, not by a long shot. But God used him. He used him in a way to bring the truth to us.

Was my physical father perfect? No, but he was my father, and there’s a special relationship there. I look forward to seeing him again in a resurrection as many of you probably have very similar feelings about your fathers. So, there’s a special bond there. It isn’t the same as just [what] we have with each other. It’s a little more. And that’s what Paul is saying: “You have a lot of instructors, and they’re wonderful people, and you need them. They bring you through life. But we have a special relationship here. Isn’t that special to you too? Doesn’t it mean a lot to you too?”

So he says: *Therefore (verse 16) I urge you, imitate me.*

The word that’s used there for *urge* is translated several ways in the Bible. It’s *parakaleō*. Some of you may remember that in **John 14** where Jesus Christ talks about, “I will send you another comforter,” the word there is *paraklētos*—same root word. *Para* means *beside*; *keleo* means *to call* or *to summon*. So the word that’s translated *comforter* there means somebody that’s “called to your side.” You’re going through a difficult time, and they can’t go through it for you, but they can be right there with you. They can be by your side, shoulder to shoulder and helping. That’s kind of the sense of it.

Here we find the same root word in a verbal form, meaning “to urge.” So basically, Paul is saying, “Look, I’m like a father to you. You’re like my children. Come here, come here beside me, come beside me and watch what I do, so I can show you how to do the things that need to be done.” That’s a great role. That’s a function parents carry out for their children. And that’s a role that even, where we are in the Church, that there’re different ones who can likewise be, in that sense, almost like a father to us or ones who show us how to do it—“Let me show you how to do it.” And that’s what he’s doing.

[48:54]



Now he goes on to say:

**[1 Corinthians 4:17]** *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

So, Paul says, “Okay, I’m sending Timothy.” Timothy is a very kind person. Timothy grew up, probably his father had very little role in his life, probably was dead relatively early on. His father was Greek, but Timothy’s mother and grandmother raised him. He was taught from a very early age the truths of God. And, he was an individual who was brought up in an environment of being very sensitive and caring about people. So Timothy is one of those individuals.

Paul could’ve sent someone else. Paul could’ve sent someone to be very strong. Later on, he sends Titus, and Titus is a different kind of person.

But in this case, he sends Timothy, and there’s a message there. “I’m sending somebody that’s gentle, somebody who will treat you with the gentleness that I myself would treat you with. So I sent him, and he’s going to remind you. He’s going to remind you of my ways, the way that I do things, the way that I live, the things that I’m wanting you to imitate, as I just said in that previous verse. He’s going to remind you of those things. And, those are the things I teach and do in every Church, everywhere I go. I’m not teaching different things to you—different values.”

Now he goes on to say in **verse 18**:

*Now some are puffed up, (There’s our phrase again.) as though I were not coming to you.*

Probably there were a few individuals in this local congregation who were thinking, “Well, Paul, yeah—” we’ll see in **2 Timothy**, or excuse me, **2 Corinthians**, he says, “Oh, well, those individuals say, well, yeah, his letters are weighty, but he’s nothing much.” There may have been some of the beginnings of those attitudes here, and Paul is saying, “Okay, there are some who begin to exalt themselves: ‘Yeah, Paul is making all this great sound, but you know he’s not even coming. He’s sending Timothy to do the dirty work. He’s sending Timothy to take care of this. Paul’s afraid to come here among us where we have to face him face-to-face.’ ” And Paul is saying, “Okay, you may think that if you want.”

*But (he says, [1 Corinthians 4] verse 19) I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills (if this is what Jesus Christ desires), and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.*

It’s very easy to have big words. It’s very easy to talk big, but he said, “I’m going to come and see, where is the power?” Because the power that you and I would be looking for is the power of God’s Spirit, what God’s Spirit is doing in someone’s lives. He said, “Okay, let’s see. We will come and see—is God backing you up?” That’s a good principle to keep in mind in a lot of different ways.

[51:45]

Through the years there have been a number of different heretical ideas that seem to go through cyclically in the Church of God community, and very often, it may be something like “sacred names”— “Oh, we have to pronounce this Hebrew name to be pleasing to God.” But, if you look at

the history of all of those who have tried to do that, you'll find that God has never blessed their efforts, **ever**. That ought to mean something. That ought to tell you something. If God's pleased, the power of the Spirit of God would be there. And that's kind of what he's saying to the people here. "Okay, you think you know better than I do? You think you should be in charge? 'And who is this Paul who's coming over here—this little Jew coming to Corinth and telling us how we ought to live?' Okay, I'll be there soon if Jesus Christ wills, and, we'll see—we'll see what the power of Jesus Christ backs."

*For— (he goes on to say in **verse 20**) For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.*

So, then he asks them a question:

**21** *What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod (of iron), or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*

*Barclay* again makes this comment:

The love of Paul for his children in Christ throbs through every letter he wrote; but that love was no blind, sentimental love; it was a love which knew that sometimes discipline was necessary, and he was prepared to exercise it. There is a love which can ruin a man by shutting its eyes to his faults; and there is a love which can mend a man because it sees him with the clarity of the eyes of Christ. Paul's love was the love which knows that sometimes it has to hurt in order to amend.

So Paul was willing to address that.

Now, in saying that, Paul moves forward in the next chapter, **chapter 5**, to a very specific situation. Now we won't have time to finish it today, but we'll get started. And let's notice what's going on because this was a very serious issue here in the local congregation.

[53:44]

**1 Corinthians 5 verse 1** He says: *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!*

Now what are we seeing here? The phrase *actually reported* seems to imply that this was very much common knowledge, not just in the Church, but even outside—that there were people who knew that this terrible relationship existed.

Now who was this woman? Well, it wasn't his mother—don't misunderstand that. And it appears that this woman was either the widow or the divorced mate of his father. It doesn't tell us which it was. And, she is not directly addressed. So that would kind of imply that she's probably not a Church member at all—because there is no action taken concerning her. But he is in this relationship, apparently even married—that's hard to say, but I would think it was—to what might have been his stepmother, his father's widow, or again, a second wife that his father may have had, or divorced from his father.

This is something that is condemned in Scripture. And, even in the gentile world it wasn't

something that would be viewed upon—or viewed favorably. If she had still been married, the word that is used here for *sexual immorality* would have been *moichaó*, which is specifically “adultery.” But the word instead is *porneia*, which is the broader Greek term to describe *sexual immorality* in all of its forms.

She is literally referred to here as the *woman*. There’s no name given. There’re no specifics given in that way. Probably, again, as *Expositor’s* says:

It indicates it was the man’s stepmother, and he had married her. The sin of incest, Paul says, is not even practiced among non-Christians. *Cicero* states it was an incredible crime and practically unheard of. (And of course it was strictly forbidden in Scripture.) **Leviticus 18:8, Deuteronomy 22:30**. There was even a curse with it, in **Deuteronomy 27 verse 20**.

Now, we also should note it doesn’t say “he had”; it’s “he *has*.” This is an ongoing problem in the congregation. It’s continuing to be. This isn’t a one-time terrible, but serious, misstep that a person repented of and continued on. This was something that continues, and the brethren in the Church are aware of it!

[56:28]

Now, why does it come up here in the context of what Paul has been talking about? We have a Church that’s been divided. We have a Church where these people have determined that their judgment is better than that of Paul, that they see what’s the right thing, and Paul, “Well, he’s a nice guy, but you know, I prefer Apollos,” or “I prefer Peter,” or “I think I’m a little bit better than some of those people there.” So instead, Paul is saying, “Okay, let’s consider the kind of judgment you’re showing.”

It’s going to be here in the **5th chapter**. It’s going to be continuing into the **6th chapter** as well: “Let’s consider what kind of judgment you’re showing.”

Now remember, at the beginning we said Paul is—he’s received some questions. He hasn’t addressed any of the questions yet. That’s going to be **chapter 7** when he begins that. So these are issues that Paul is aware of, and he says, “Look”—in a sense, he’s telling the Church: “I know what’s going on. I’m aware of things. This isn’t something that’s hidden away.”

And he goes on to say, and he begins to show us here what the problem is.

**[1 Corinthians 5] 2** *And you are puffed up (There’s our puffed up again.), and have not rather mourned (grieved), that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

So, Paul says: “Here’s the problem. Here is this blatant sin going on in the congregation, and you’re not doing anything about it. You’re just letting it continue as if it’s okay to have sin, active sin, in the midst of a congregation.”

Now again, we all know that individuals commit sins. They make a mistake, and they repent of that. They turn from it. They try to do things the right way. Some of those sins are very, very serious matters. Well, I suppose we can’t say any of them are not serious because the wages of

sin is death. But we do recognize that some of these things are very blatant and just really are out in front of everyone. But people can repent when they've slipped.

But that's not what we're talking about here. He's talking about an attitude. The sexual sin that was taking place was serious, but in fact it really only directly affected one person. The more serious problem was the congregation's willingness to tolerate, to accept, this ongoing sin right in their midst, and apparently, they felt pretty proud about their ability to tolerate these things, to put up with it. "So that's not what you should have done. You should have *mourned*, and," again, as he says here, "this individual should have been *taken away from among you*."

[59:12]

The Corinthians' pride— (This is a quote.) The Corinthians' pride had reached such a point that they considered themselves above the standard of God. Perhaps they considered themselves broad-minded. They were not sorrowful over their indifference and reproach. They were blinded to what should have been their response.

You know, it's very common in evangelical circles to make a statement like: "The church should be a hospital for sinners, not a museum for the righteous." And the idea seems to be that: "You should just accept everything, no matter what someone's doing. Why, they should feel comfortable and accepted in the church." This is the philosophy that today has allowed many churches to accept homosexual behavior. Again, we're not talking about someone who has been involved in homosexuality and seeking to leave that and do things in God's way. We're talking about an individual who is just blatantly, openly, homosexual. They intend to continue to be homosexual. They intend that to be their lifestyle. "But we should open the doors and make them feel welcome." That's not what Scripture teaches.

We are not to have continuing sins. The idea that the Church should be a hospital instead of a museum is a false dichotomy. There is no place in Scripture that says the Church should tolerate and accept sin over a period of time.

If you think about the metaphor of a "hospital," individuals with physical diseases—yes, they can come to a hospital, but they're quarantined and put in a ward where we can deal with them directly and not expose other people to it. The Church certainly will be willing to help anyone who's coming. But that doesn't mean you bring them in among the whole population when they're involved in something that's a very serious problem.

[1:01:08]

Paul says: **3** *For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.*

It's interesting there, I might add, that the Greek is actually present tense. He *who has been doing this deed*. It is an ongoing thing.

Paul is basically saying: "This isn't a difficult judgment to me. I don't need to come there and be

present to make sure I got all the facts and to consider what the individual's attitude may be, if it's a good attitude or not." He wasn't interested in hearing any of that. All those things were arguments to justify sin. If it was this obvious to him in Ephesus, why was it so hard for people who are right there in Corinth to recognize it and address it?

Well, there are a lot of possibilities there. This man may have been the nicest man in the local congregation. He could have been very giving. Perhaps there were many people in the congregation that he helped out. He may have been very friendly, wonderful personality. We're not told any of those things. We don't know anything about it. But all those things are certainly possible. Because after all, when people are involved in sin, they don't suddenly become terrible people to be around. So he may have been a really nice guy. And that may have affected people's judgment. But it's not supposed to!

Positive traits cannot offset sin. It's not simply a judgment that the actions are sinful. Paul has judged this man to be a "practicing sinner," and therefore he disqualifies himself from assembling with the saints of God. Paul makes that very clear, and he says, "I recognize this, and I don't know why you're not."

He will tell us a little bit more about it and how it should be addressed as we move into **verse 4**. But we've used up our time today, and I think it's a good time for us to stop. We will pick this up next time because we need to spend a little time understanding what is supposed to take place in the Church of God when continuing sin is coming into our midst. How are we supposed to deal with that? What do we do? What is our attitude toward the person who is involved in this?

We'll address all of those next time as we see further on in **chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians**.

Thanks for joining us. I look forward to seeing you next time.

[1:03:43]