

SERVANTS OF CHRIST
1 Corinthians 4:1-21
10/24/04

Last week we saw that what you and I do in this life counts forever.

God has entrusted every one of us with the gift of life along with numerous talents, and possessions.

Each of us is responsible to use these to serve Christ and others.

3:12-15

This morning we will see the criteria that God will use to evaluate your service.

We will also look at one of the greatest hindrances to your spiritual life and mine.

Our passage this morning is speaking primarily about pastors and spiritual leader, but it applies to every Christian.

1. The Role Of Pastors 4:1

a. We are servants of Christ

- Under-rowers
 - ◆ Lowest tier of a trireme.
 - ◇ The most menial and unenvied of slaves.
- The point is that we must always remember that life is not about us.
 - ◆ We are here to serve Christ and do what He has equipped us and placed us on earth to do.
- True servants don't use what God has entrusted to them to get personal recognition.
- True servants aren't here to parade their degrees, personalities, and accomplishments, but to serve Christ.

- ◆ We are here first and foremost to serve Christ not to impress people or promote ourselves.

b. We are stewards of the mysteries of God.

- A steward was a trusted slave who was placed in charge of a household. (Joseph)
 - ◆ Supervised property, fields, finances, food, and other servants.
- We are stewards of the time, money and spiritual gifts that God has entrusted to us in this life.
 - ◆ Jesus frequently spoke of our lives as a stewardship.
 - ◇ Luke 12:42ff; cf 19:15-19
- **Most specifically this verse tells us that we are *Stewards of the mysteries of God***
 - ◆ We are responsible for the dissemination of the word of God.
 - ◇ To tell others
 - ◆ We are also responsible to guard and defend it against those who would pervert and corrupt it.
 - ◇ **2 Timothy 1:13-14** Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*.

2. Our Evaluation 4:2-5

a. God will evaluate us by our trustworthiness. vv. 2-5a

2 faithful, reliable, dependable, loyal

- ◆ Trustworthy with the Word of God, gifts, resources, time He has given us.

- ◆ We are to use the things God has given us for his glory rather than for personal pleasure and consumption.
 - ◇ Cordell Dick: Since we are only stewards of the possessions God has seen fit to give us, every decision we make relating to our possessions has a spiritual implication. I wonder sometimes what difference it would make in our spending if Jesus had to appear in bodily form to co-sign all our checks before they would be negotiable.
- ◆ We need to be good stewards even when it comes to giving to churches and religious organizations.
 - ◇ Americans in the '80s, the last years of the cable-television evangelists, were prompted to give to the six primary cable televangelists nearly \$700 million. Besides financing the show-biz evangelists' television and promotional costs, the money didn't support very much else. Supported by this \$700 million were *four schools, one hospital, three churches, a couple of ministries for needy children, one home for the poor--and six television shows.*
 - ◇ One denomination also received that year about \$700 million. With that same amount of money, local churches sponsored some *3,700 foreign missionaries, 3,600 home missionaries, about 1,000 state missions, 67 colleges, 6 seminaries, and 23 hospitals. The list goes on and on.*
- ◆ **Luke 16:10-13** "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? 12 "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will

hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

◇ The world asks, "What does a man own?";
Christ asks, 'How does he use it?

◆ God stewardship doesn't just involve money, it involves our time and talents also.

◇ We are to redeem the time God has given us rather than wastes it on meaningless activities.

◆ *God is not so much looking for ability as dependability.*

◆ *God is not looking as much at the fruit as the faithfulness.*

3a We need to be careful about trying to judge the faithfulness of others.

◆ We can't accurately evaluate one another person's faithfulness.

◇ I don't know their hearts

◇ I can't evaluate another person's motives.

◆ Likewise we shouldn't be too concerned about the praise and criticism of others.

3b-5a We can't even accurately evaluate ourselves.

◆ Though I may have a clear conscience, my final judgment rests with God.

◇ It easy for us to justify our shortcomings.

◇ It is also easy for us to be overly critical of ourselves.

b. God will evaluate our motives and things that others can't see. v. 5b

- Our thoughts, motives, attitudes, and secret behaviors.

I believe that a major stumbling block to our faithfulness is pride.

3. The Motivation Of Pride 4:6-13

- a. Pride was a major problem in Corinth. 3:21; 4:6,7,18,19; 5:2,6**
- b. Proud people don't see themselves as God sees them. v. 6**

exceed what is written.

- ◆ Proud people think too highly of themselves.
 - ◇ They don't think of themselves as servants or stewards.
- ◆ Proud people often go beyond the authority that wasn't given to them?
 - ◇ They lord it over God's people.
- ◆ Proud people tend to promote their own opinions over the Bible.
 - ◇ Personal speculations
 - ◇ Additional restrictions
 - ◇ Or they teach license and Christian hedonism
- c. Proud people take credit for what God and others have given them. v. 7**
 - 1 Chronicles 29:11-16
 - ◆ Life, looks, intellect, natural abilities, spiritual gifts, education, possessions, and accomplishments.
 - ◇ Fritz Kreisler, the great violinist, once said that he considered his ability to be a gift of providence, too sacred to be sold. He added that he never looked on the money he earned as his own.

◇ For two months in 1988 Orel Hershisier was perhaps the best pitcher ever. From late August through the World Series, he had an ERA of 0.60 and led the Dodgers to an improbable world championship. A Christian for only a few years, Hershisier spoke of his Savior in interviews and knelt on the mound in thanks after one World Series victory. But this wasn't the first time Hershisier had thrown so well. While pitching in the minor leagues at San Antonio a few years earlier, he had also fashioned a 0.60 ERA going into June. *"I got caught up in the scouting reports, what I read in the papers, and the phone calls from the Dodgers," he recalls. "I stopped praying. And I stopped listening to God. I started going out with the guys and not really having a focus on what I was supposed to be doing." By the time he was done with his next three pitching assignments, Hershisier's ERA had ballooned to 8.60. "It was like God had come down from heaven and hit me over the head and said, 'You dummy. Remember Who got you here. Remember where your abilities come from.'"*

d. Proud people have a false view of self-importance. v. 8

- They see themselves as better and more important than others.
- filled, rich, kings
- ◆ They act like they think they are hot stuff.

e. Proud people value the wrong things. vv. 9-13

9 The apostles were considered last of all, condemned to death, spectacles to both angels and men

10 Paul reveals their wrong sense of values by comparing how they view themselves with the apostles.

fools

prudent

weak

strong

without honor

distinguished

11-13 The apostles represented everything that the world views as contemptible.

♦ hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, toil, working with hands, reviled, persecuted, slandered, scum, dregs

◇ Worthless teachers teaching a worthless message.

◇ 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

♦ But look at their humble responses v. 12-13

◇ bless, endure, try to conciliate

4. The Admonishment Of A Father 4:14-17

Paul was their spiritual father.

- He lead them to Christ.

He admonishes them to follow his example.

- cf vv. 11-12
- 1 Thessalonians 2

So far we have seen three things.

1. Every one of us has been entrusted by God with the stewardship of the life He has given us.

- He has given us our time on earth, our treasures, and our abilities.
- He has also entrusted us with His Word.

2. Every one of us will be evaluated by two criteria.

- Our faithfulness
- Our motives

3. Our pride is a major hindrance to our being faithful stewards.

5. The Warning Of An Apostle 4:18-21

The problem with spiritual adolescence

- They know more than their spiritual father.
- They no longer respect nor honor him.
- A little knowledge made them think that they knew more than they really do.

♦ cf 8:1

Paul gives them the choice.

- Paul warns of using severe measure in dealing with their sin.

♦ cf Acts 5

- He will come with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness.

♦ With harsh judgment or with tenderness.

♦ The choice is theirs.

The same is true with Christ.

- You will either stand before Him as Savior or you will stand before Him as judge.