

of his conscience as a man self acquitted, but as an ill-deserving sinner counted righteous for Christ's sake. That provided at the beginning (see Romans) will be given at the end also (v. 5).

d. Eternal. The present participle here with the definite article marks the person who is used to doing something. It is His permanent function! It is His office. It is the Lord's prerogative to examine His servants and pass on their fidelity (cf. v. 2).

4. LEADERSHIP PROSPECTS v. 5.

Judgment will come in the purpose and program of the Lord. Its details are provided:

- a. Stated time. There is no contingency as to the fact of this judgment, but there is as concerns time. "Before the time" means prematurely. Apparently the censorious habit was ruining the local assembly, as it often can do! The time for true judgment is the second coming of our wonderful Lord, not before!
- b. Specific items. Here is perhaps the critical matter. To have an infallible judgment, one must have two resources: 1) The hidden things of darkness. By this is meant the acts of life in their totality. These just are not known nor penetrable to present light. 2) The counsels of the heart. This has reference to the inner springs of the will which determine action. When the Lord comes, He will cause (the verb bring to light) and effect a result (manifest) the necessities of true examination.
- c. Special issue. Praise will be given by God at the end and not before. The individual character of this praise is noted by the word "every." The source of the praise is "God" the thought being advanced that Christ acts on behalf of the Father. Oh, to receive His accolade!

Conclusion: Today's world has much to offer. Men generally seek it with vigor. How much more intent should our concern be to hear His voice of acceptance and praise than anything else this world has to offer. Is this YOUR goal? Amen.

BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Answerable to God"

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Introduction

1. Where do leaders really fit in the program of the Gospel? Paul has noted this from a negative point of view (Chaps. 1-3). Now he turns to the more positive to speak of what they are.

2. The problem at Corinth was in a large measure linked to what they were doing and saying about the leadership which God had ordained. The present section actually shows that the church at Corinth was seeking to take the place of God! To this situation Paul now addresses himself.

3. Men who are Christian leaders relate themselves to the Gospel in three major ways. These ways had been overlooked by the Corinthians.

1. LEADERSHIP POSITIONS vv. 1, 2.

Paul's opening volley in this matter is an appeal that he and the others who serve the Lord be counted in a particular manner. The word "man" adds gravity to the situation. It is not the usual impersonal term, but the generic word for man. The Greek verb for "account" is the logical one employed by Paul in Romans for "reckon." It implies a reasonable estimate drawn from admitted principles. Being the present imperative adds the thought of a habitual estimation. What is the estimation as it relates to one's positions in the service of the Lord? Consider them:

- a. Relative to Christ. The Greek term employed here is very important. It is only found here in Paul's epistles, but is found elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 4:20; Acts 13:5). It strictly concerns a man who acts as a rower under the orders of someone. He is a man who labors freely in the service of others. It speaks here of the subordinate

position assumed by a servant of the Lord and emphasized the acting and laborious side of the ministry. Far from being a low or degrading position, it is related to the Lord Jesus Himself. Who wouldn't want to be this to HIM!

b. Relative to the Word. The word "steward" is associated with a service performed as a household slave. Indeed the original term used marked one who was a confidential housekeeper or overseer who was charged with the responsibility of provisioning the establishment and caring for the distribution of the tasks to the other slaves (Luke 12:42). He was actually a master in a sense (Luke 16:1; Matt. 20:8). Semantically the term comes from two Greek words which mean: to manage the house. In this context, however, the servant of God is charged with "mysteries of God." This marks the position of the "minister" with high dignity. Paul had a particular sense of the dignity of this stewardship (Col. 1:25; Eph. 1:10; 3:4-7).

Scripturally, a mystery is not something which is mysterious, but that which is revealed to those who are initiated or saved by the grace of God. It is used 27 times in the New Testament and 21 times by Paul. It adds to the Old Testament revelation what God wanted His own to know. What a high and holy privilege for a servant to be charged with this treasure. To whom much has been given, of him much shall be required. This ought to be sufficient to cause every true preacher to know the arena in which he is to be occupied--the mysteries of God, i.e., His holy will and Word! The genitive "of God" has the same pressing significance as "of Christ" in the previous phrase. Sermons which relate themselves to nothing but worldly wisdom or activities are hardly the "mysteries of God!"

c. Relative to service. The opening words of the second verse need real clarification. They should read: "in such cases (as v. 1), it is further sought...." Men who have the blessings of v. 1 must be found (as the result of seeking) to be faithful. It is not enough to be a steward, one must be faithful (Luke 12:42). It is not a question of eloquence, profundity, or other similar skills, but fidelity to the task committed to him! All his gifts and endowments must be devoted to the Lord and the mysteries given to him. The telic force of "that" must not be lost. A better rendering would be "in order that."

## 2. LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS. vv. 3, 4.

Four specific different judgments are mentioned in these two short verses:

- a. Ecclesiastical. As for Paul, and the matter is made personal to him, he cared not what the Corinthian's church thought about his ministry. They appraised his talents, scrutinized his motives, canvassed his administration. But Paul's conclusion--"it counts for very little with me." He denies their competency as a tribunal.
- b. Cosmical. The phrase "man's judgment" speaks of a day of human assize. The indifference that Paul felt toward the church at Corinth he feels also toward men in general.
- c. Personal. Another sort of judgment is rejected by Paul--that offered by himself. He feels that there are unexplored recesses which do not allow him to discover thoroughly the real state of things, the full integrity of his own fidelity. Indeed, he confesses that he is not conscious of anything against himself. The reflexive pronoun with the verb brings this connotation of a "guilty conscience."

Even with this conclusion by Paul, he does not claim to be justified thereby. Paul has been and continues justified (perfect tense) not on the sentence