

**Parson to Person**  
**1 Corinthians 4**  
**(Inexcusable Human Judgment)**

*“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 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. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing 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.*

*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 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?*

*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! 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. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own*

*hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*

*I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 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. Therefore, I urge you, imitate me. 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.*

*Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?"* (1 Corinthians 4:1–21).

## **Trafficking Those Things Unrevealed**

When believers pass judgment on one another—they create division. Division based upon opinion and speculation is egregious. On the surface, what may appear obvious, might prove to be less than fact—while things unseen may provide information needed to make sound judgment. A shortcoming of in-depth knowledge has led to the praise of those undeserving—and criticism of the worthy. It appears this problem (among others) was worth Paul's attention.

It seems there were some in Corinth who were parading themselves—with the support of other local believers. These self-

exalting, less-than-praiseworthy “leaders” were in need of humbling while Paul and those in true Biblical leadership suffered at the court of the then “public opinion.” For this reason, Paul demanded an accounting of the Church leaders and “*sent Timothy to [them], [as his] beloved and faithful son in the Lord,*” in order to “*remind [them] of [his] ways in Christ*”: humble, and as a servant leader.

## **The Source of Spiritual Gifting**

Paul was gifted by the Lord—so was Apollos, Cephas, Timothy, and others. The believers in Corinth were gifted as well! However, the gifting they enjoyed did not originate from the efforts of the flesh, nor from anthropological design (although some men and women have natural strengths and weaknesses). The spiritual gifting was from the Lord. Therefore, no man or woman should boast their gifting—or the product developed. Whether apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher, worship leader, singer, counselor, administrator, giver, etc., each one who serves must attribute to the Lord the praise for such gifting. Remember, the gifts (and fruit) of the Spirit are not your gifts—they are the Lord’s. And, for this reason, the testing/purifying fire designed to “*test each one’s work*” (1 Corinthians 3:13) will determine the nature of the product—of “*hay*” or of “*gold,*” temporal or eternal, of man or of God. “*Therefore, [said Paul] judge nothing 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*” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

## **Stewardship**

Paul made clear that the *“stewardship of the mysteries of God”* were indeed committed to he and the other apostles. They are likewise committed to us. Therefore, as stewards, we must be faithful, humble, and responsible. One must never allow his or her gifting, insight, service, or fruitfulness attribute to self. We should not allow, demand, or receive, personal praise, nor demand self-motivated privilege for the things God has done and/or is doing in and through us. We are Christ’s ambassadors—we are His servants.

### **“Mysteries”**

Of the mysteries Paul mentions, we must take some time to examine.

They are the mysteries of the Kingdom, the mysteries of God’s work with Israel and the engrafting of the Gentiles into the blessings Israel has and will enjoy, the mysteries of Gospel: the faith and godliness, the mysteries of our physical resurrection, the mysteries of the unification of all believers, the mysteries of marriage and its model of the relationship the Church has with Christ, the mysteries of the Church itself, the mysteries of Christ’s indwelling presence, the mysteries of the divine nature of Jesus—God incarnate, the mystery of lawlessness, the mysteries of God’s working to and through leadership in the Church, the mysteries of the Eschaton, and finally Mystery Babylon.

It may take a couple weeks.

I love you all,  
Pastor Paul