



## 1 Corinthians 4:1-6 The Coming Judgment: Some Unity Perspective

August 4, 2013

### Scripture Text: 1 Cor 4:1-6

- Having put the nail in the “don’t play us off each other” coffin, Paul, in my opinion, now seeks to bury this issue in the ground by framing in light of coming **judgment**.
- As we’ve said before, this appeal to the judgment to come is a VERY useful tool for Christians in a variety of situations:
  1. Obviously, the Lord is coming. SOOOO, don’t fight over which apostle or pastor did what, because as we saw last week, they (and us too) are just planters, waterboys, workers, one in purpose, and ultimately, nothing compared to Christ! (1 Cor 3:5, 7, 8, 23)
  2. Don’t fret over circumstances . . . the Lord is coming to judge! All of these afflictions are “light” and “momentary!” (2 Cor 4:17)
  3. What should I do in a certain situation? Well, go to the judgment and make a God-honoring decision from there!
  4. What do I do with my time? Well, how would you want this day . . . judged? ☺
  5. Should I speak the truth? Well, will it matter on that Day? Yes! Not much else will!
  6. Should I serve and be faithful to the church? Hmmmm, what do you think HE will say on THAT Day? ☺
  7. Should I preach the Gospel, even when people bring out music to drown me out? (*Shout out to Minister Harry!*) Yes, you should. On that Day it **will** matter:

*Eze 33:7-9 ESV "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. (8) If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. (9) But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

8. **On that Day, it will matter if your loved ones are saved. On that Day, it will matter if your friends are saved. On that Day, it will matter if you’ve worked to build up the church. On that Day, your Dging of your children will matter. As we read last week:**

*1Co 3:13-15 ESV each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

9. Should I glorify God today with joy and refuse to walk in depression, refuse to be downtrodden, and refuse to allow unnecessary strife? YES . . . because He is coming.
10. Should I pray, fast, cry out to God, fight evil, and overcome evil with good? Yes . . . because He is coming.

### Some Unity Perspective:

Verses 1-2

1. Again, Paul is saying to the church don’t trip over us. Regard us as **servants** and **stewards**.

2. This has the dual purpose of building both a right view and right respect level. Servants are just sinful men discharging a duty. But stewards imply the special nature of the apostles' ministry, and those who assisted them in this phase of the church. So, many people want to call themselves *apostles*, but they should be careful there.
3. Paul is also reminding the Corinthians that they (the apostles and Apollos) have been "faithful" or trustworthy in their ministry, and deserved to be listened to as **correction** is brought to bear. (v2) Does this apply to us as well? YES! And it fosters unity.
4. Understand, church, that although we are not on the same level as Paul, as Christians, each of us are in some sense a steward and we too (all of us) have the call to be "found trustworthy" with what we have been given and assigned to do.

#### Verses 3-4

1. Now, please catch this heart. In verse 3, Paul puts the bickering and thoughts of men into perspective: NO judgment outside of **Christ's** truly matters!
  - a. Now of course we do care about what other people think to a degree. We are called to, "*walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*" (Col 4:5 ESV)
  - b. And of course there is much "judgment" that must happen inside the church as we'll see in upcoming chapters.
  - c. But as an apostle, Paul is saying that his communications are judged by God and he is exhorting the Corinthian saints to live by the Lord's Commands like they will also be judged by God.
2. Paul wasn't saying he was perfect in his personal behavior; he was saying that even though he wasn't aware of a wrong, Christ was His Judge. (v4)
3. At first glance, one might think this mindset lends itself to disunity: "*I don't listen anyone but Christ!*" But can you imagine groups of Christians SO SOLD OUT to Christ and His word that they don't care if they are judged by men, by a court of law, or by extension, if they live or die?
4. In other words, a church that rallies around the Word (remember, Paul was communicating Scripture), becomes committed to the Word, and refuses to make excuses that exalt worldly wisdom. This church lifts up precepts, principles, and patterns! This is a church that will be unified!
5. This mindset should not result in a "spiritual rebellion" but should result in what Paul was asking this church to do: obedience to the Word and authority.
6. If we, CRCC, decide to live like the Lord is our Judge . . . BAM . . . UNITY! All principles come to the table. Then, we commit to Christ and one another. We fight for the glory of God's Name together. We exhort, correct, and walk with one another in brotherly **love!**

#### Verses 5-6

1. Understand that Christians are called to "make judgments" but not to judge. There is a difference!
  - a. Making a judgment is simply determining **right** from **wrong** according to Scripture.
  - b. Unbiblical judging is putting oneself in the place of **God**.
2. We must test all things (1 Thes 5:21) by the Scriptures and made decisions thereby (making judgments), but we don't know the heart of a person or the finality of the Lord's judgment (judging).
3. You get the sense here that Paul is defending himself against an unbiblical sort of judgment. Whatever judgments the Corinthian church made towards Paul or his ministry were improper, "out of their lane," and detrimental to them.

4. Setting himself (and Apollos) up as examples to them, he exhorts them to “not go beyond what is written” that they might LISTEN to him.
5. It is important to note that up to this point in the letter, Paul had himself been quoting the Scriptures to make his case:
  - a. Isa. 29:14 -->1 Cor. 1:19; Jer. 9:24-->1 Cor. 1:31; Isa. 64:4-->1 Cor. 2:9; Job 5:13--> 1 Cor. 3:19; and Ps. 94:11-->1 Cor. 3:20
  - b. This is SO important for unity! In order to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) we must love the Word of Christ! We must learn to think biblically!!
  - c. *2Ti 3:16-17 ESV All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*
6. So, Paul’s understanding that he would be judged by Christ pushed him to walk according to the Word and attempt to lay a foundation of The Word (Christ!) in this church. (1 Cor 3:11)
7. **Friends, placing God and His Word as the “final court of arbitration,” and knowing He himself will judge us all fosters unity, keeps strife to a minimum, and focuses the church on its true Head, Jesus Christ.**

### **The Coming Judgment**

*Will judge our actions, thoughts, and deeds by the Word*

- *Jas 1:21-25 ESV Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. (24) For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. (25) But the one who looks into **the perfect law, the law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*
- *Jas 2:10-12 ESV For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (11) For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (12) **So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.***

*And yes, our Christian work matters as well:*

- *1Co 4:5 ESV Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*
- The Corinthians were not to sinfully judge Paul, but to listen to him. Similarly, we dare not make selfish judgments concerning the Scriptures, but obey them, refusing to “go beyond what is written.”
- Just as they thought they knew better than Paul, we can sometimes think we know better than the Scriptures. But we will be judged by those same Scriptures.
- James sums it up perfectly: ***“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. (12) There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” (Jas 4:11-12 ESV)***

**In Summary:**

1. Be a **servant**; unity is a result. (4:1)
2. Be **faithful** (trustworthy) to the Scriptures (mysteries of God); unity is a result. (4:2)
3. Care more about Christ's judgment than **man's**; if done right, unity is a result. (4:3)
4. Be **self**-effacing; unity is a result. (4:4)
5. Realize that the Lord is **coming**; unity is a result. (4:5)
6. **The coming judgment should be enough for every God-fearing believer to say "Yes and Amen" to the Word of God and walk in a high level of biblical unity. From there, we can reform, confront sin, preach the Gospel, raise up Godly generations, and encourage one another. Unity is a result! (4:6)**

Let it be so Lord Christ. Amen.