

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

The Evaluation of a Trustworthy Servant

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

1. Think of us as Servants (v.1)

Paul has labored to show the Corinthians the sinful folly of regarding their teachers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22) in ways that they should not and which are the cause of further sin in the congregation. Regardless of the task given, a servant is expected to carry out his task faithfully with authority that has only been delegated to him from his master (cf. Matt 8:9).

2. Consider us as Stewards (vs.1-2)

The Corinthians were not to wrongly regard their teachers, but they were to have a reverent understanding of the task that they have been given. They are the caretakers and distributors of the glorious message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trustworthiness with the handling of the gospel is an essential and indispensably important quality for any who serve the church in this way (Titus 1:5-9; cf. Luke 12:41-48).

3. The Varying Significance of Evaluations (vs.3-5)

The nature of leadership, even the servant leadership of all faithful stewards, seems to invite assessments of all different types from various people. It is important that the church, both those who teach and those who do not, have a proper understanding of the relevance of these different appraisals.

A. Your Evaluation (v.3a)

Ultimately, Paul is not concerned with the evaluation of the Corinthian church. A faithful steward of the mysteries of God is not to be consumed with concerns for how the local church has assessed his performance. Character traits and spiritual qualifications laid out in Scripture are certainly to be of utmost concern for the local church and the servant minister (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1ff), but he is not to fashion his activity based upon the unbiblical criteria of the local congregation.

B. Their Evaluation (v.3b)

A faithful minister is not to be diverted in his action because of his judgment by any human court or public court of opinion (cf. Acts 5:29).

C. My Evaluation (vs.3c, 4a)

A faithful minister is not to be bound up in his own endless self-examination. He must be able to maintain a testimony that is above reproach (1 Cor. 9:24-27; cf. 2 Cor. 1:12) and ensure that his teaching is indeed faithful (cf. Gal. 2:2), but he is not to engage in endless introspection.

D. His Evaluation (vs.4b-5)

The only evaluation that the faithful servant is to concern himself with is the one that the Lord Himself will bring at the end of time (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15). Only then will the man's heart motivations be truly seen, and he will be rewarded by God for his faithful service (cf. Matt. 25:14ff).