

## I Corinthians

### Chapter 4:1-21

<sup>1</sup>Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

**Barnes** > This chapter is a continuation of the subject discussed in those which go before, and of the argument which closes the last chapter. The proper division would have been at **1 Corinthians 4:6**. The design of the first six verses is to show the real estimate in which the apostles ought to be held as the ministers of religion.

**Regard** > (Strong's) Middle voice from *logos*; to take an inventory, i.e. Estimate (literally or figuratively)

**Servants** > (Strong's) From *hupo* and a derivative of *eresso* (to row); an under-oarsman, i.e. (generally) subordinate (assistant, sexton, constable)

**Clarke** > The (Greek) word means an *under-rower*, or one, who, in the trireme, quadrireme, or quinquereme galleys, rowed in one of the undermost benches; but it means also, as used by the Greek writers, any inferior officer or assistant.

**Constable** > Paul used a different word for servants here (*hyperetai*) than he did in 1 Corinthians 3:5 (*diakonoi*) ... The other word (*diakonoi*) is the normal word for a servant.

**Stewards** > (Strong's) From *oikos* > *house* and the base of *nomos* > (to parcel out, especially food or grazing to animals); **law** (through the idea of prescriptive usage); a house-distributor (i.e. Manager), or overseer, i.e. An employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher (of the Gospel)

**Constable** quoting **Keener** > A steward ("those entrusted with," NIV) was a servant whom his master entrusted with the administration of his business or property. His job was to devote his time, talents, and energy to executing his master's interests, not his own. The figure stresses both the apostles' humble position as belonging to Christ and their trusted yet accountable position under God.

**Constable** > Constable (vs 2) The most important quality in a steward is that he manage his master's affairs so the desires of his lord materialize

**Mysteries** > (Strong's) From a derivative of *muo* (to shut the mouth); a secret or "mystery" (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites)

**Required** > (Strong's) to demand back

**Vincent** > Lit., *it is sought for*; thus agreeing with *found* in the following clause.

**Trustworthy** > (Strong's) objectively, trustworthy; subjectively, trustful (From a word meaning *to persuade, to have confidence*)

**Wuest** > *In this manner let a man measure and classify us, as servants of Christ and as those who have been entrusted with the mysteries of God and their disposition. Under these circumstances it is further sought in stewards that a man be found to be faithful*

<sup>3</sup>*But to me it is **a very small thing** that I may be **examined** by you, or by any **human court**; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup>For I am conscious of nothing against myself, **yet I am not by this acquitted**; but the one who examines me is the Lord.*

**A very small thing** > (Strong's) least, very little, smallest. Superlative of *elachus* (short); used as equivalent to *mikros*; least (in size, amount, dignity, etc.) ("A grain of fine beach sand is about 90 microns")

**Examined** > (Strong's) (This is the same Greek word that was translated as *discerned* in chapter 3 > to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine objectively, trustworthy; subjectively, trustful (From a word meaning *to persuade, to have confidence*)

**Human court** > (Strong's) Two words in the Greek. One meaning *human* ...the second meaning *day*.

**Clarke** > literally, or of man's day: but (the Greek words) signifies any day set apart by a judge or magistrate to try a man on.

**Swindoll** > The phrase translated "human court" literally says, "human day," intentionally contrasted with the coming day of the Lord (3:13), in which all people will be held accountable for their faithfulness to their God-given tasks. With this future evaluation

**Yet I am not by this acquitted** > (Robertson) Failure to be conscious of one's own sins does not mean that one is innocent.

**Psalm 19:12** > *Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.*

**Wuest** > *But with me it is a very small thing that I am being put on trial by you by the day of mankind. In fact, I do not even put myself on trial, for I am conscious of not even one thing against myself, but not by this means do I stand justified. Indeed, He who puts me on trial is the Lord.*

<sup>5</sup>Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

**Do not go on passing judgment** > (Robertson) Stop passing judgment

**Utley** > This is a present (*now*) active (*going on*) imperative (*a command*) with the negative particle (*Stop it!*), which usually means to stop an act already in process

**Bring to light** > (Strong's) to shed rays, i.e. To shine or (transitively) to brighten up (literally or figuratively) -- enlighten, illuminate, (bring to, give) light, make to see.

**Before the time** > (Robertson) The day of the Lord in 1 Corinthians 3:13

**Disclose** > (Strong's) to render apparent

**And disclose the motives of men's hearts** > (Utley) This is crucial. This is why only God can judge fairly.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

**Figuratively applied** > (Barnes) - The word used here denotes, properly, to put on another form or figure; "to transform" (**Philippians 3:21**, "*who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory*,"); to "disguise" (**2 Corinthians 11:13**, "*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ*") ... for it is evident from 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, that there were parties in the church at Corinth that were called by the names of Paul, and Apollos, and Peter; and Paul's design here was to show the impropriety of this by mentioning himself, Apollos, and Peter, and thus by transferring the whole discussion from inferior teachers and leaders to show the impropriety of it.

**Clarke** > Bishop Pearce paraphrases the verse thus: "I have made use of my own and Apollos' name in my arguments against your divisions, because I would spare to name those teachers among you who are guilty of making and heading parties; and because I would have you, by our example, not to value them above what I have said of teachers in general in this epistle; so that none of you ought to be puffed up for one against another."

**Utley** > The basic idea is to transfer a set of circumstances from one group to another group. Paul is using himself and Apollos as examples for all leaders.

**Arrogant** > (Strong's) *phusioo* > to puff or blow up > from (NAS Concordance) *phusa* > bellows (Collins dictionary > bladder)

<sup>7</sup>*For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

**For who regards you as superior?** > This is a dynamite question that needs to be followed by silence.

**Wiersbe** > A young preacher once said to a friend of mine, "Please pray that I will stay humble." My friend replied, "Tell me, what do you have to be proud about?"

**If** > (Strong's) ei

**Wuest** > *For who makes a distinction between you and others? And what do you have which you did not receive? But since also you received it, why are you boasting as though you did not receive it?*

<sup>8</sup>*You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.*

**Filled** > (Strong's) A primary verb; to cram, i.e. Glut or sate

**Utley** > This term "filled" is normally used of physical eating (cf. Acts 27:38), but here is it a metaphor (cf. Matt. 5:6) of spiritual pride.

(Utley > Verse 8 can be three questions ... or three statements.)

<sup>9</sup>*For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.*

**Exhibited** > (Strong's) to show off, i.e. Exhibit; figuratively, to demonstrate,

**Condemned** > (Strong's) doomed

**Vincent** > doomed. Only here in the New Testament. Probably an allusion to the practice of exposing condemned criminals in the Amphitheatre to fight with beasts or with one another as gladiators. (Multiple commentators mentioned that these individuals fought again, and again, until they died)

**Spectacle** > (Strong's) *theatron*: a theater, a spectacle

**Robertson** > The word, like our theatre, means the place of the show. Then, it means the spectacle shown there, and, as here, the man exhibited as the show like the

verb *made a spectacle*. Sometimes it refers to the spectators like our “house” for the audience.

(5)

**Constable** > Paul may have had the Roman games in mind here, specifically the battles between condemned criminals and wild beasts in the amphitheaters.

<sup>10</sup>**We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.**

**We ... you ... we ... you ... you ... we** > (Robertson) Triple contrast in keenest ironical emphasis.

**We are fools for Christ's sake** > (Clarke) Here he still carries on the allusion to the public spectacles among the Romans, where they were accustomed to hiss, hoot, mock, and variously insult the poor victims. To this Philo alludes, in his embassy to Caius, speaking of the treatment which the Jews received at Rome: "For, as if exhibited upon a theater, we are hissed, most outrageously hooted, and insulted beyond all bounds."

**Prudent** > (Strong's) practically wise, sensible

**Distinguished** > (Strong's) held in honor, glorious

<sup>11</sup>**To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;**

**Present** > (Strong's) just now

**Roughly treated** > (Strong's) to strike with the fist

**Wuest** > *To this very hour we are hungry and thirsty and scantily clothed and maltreated and, going from place to place, we have no fixed home,*

<sup>12</sup>**and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;**

**Wuest** > *and we labor to the point of exhaustion, working at our trade with our own hands. When insulting abuse is being heaped upon us, we invoke blessings upon those who are mistreating us. When we are being persecuted, we patiently bear it.*

<sup>13</sup>**when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.**

**Conciliate** > (Strong's) *parakaleo* > to call to or for, to exhort, to encourage

**Scum** > (Strong's) that which is cleaned off, refuse

**Robertson** > Literally, sweepings, rinsing's, cleansings around, dust from the floor,

**Dregs** > (Strong's) something brushed all around, i.e. Off-scrapings (figuratively, scum)

(6)

**Wuest** > *When we are publicly slandered, we pleadingly admonish I beg of you, please. We have become in the estimation of the world as the filth discarded by humanity as the result of cleansing one's self, dirt scraped off of all things, to this very moment.*

<sup>14</sup>*I do not write these things to **shame** you, but to **admonish** you as my **beloved** children. <sup>15</sup>*For if you were to have countless **tutors** in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.**

**Shame** > (Strong's) to invert, i.e. (figuratively and reflexively) in a good sense, to respect; or in a bad one, to confound -- regard, (give) reference, shame.

**Vincent** > The verb means to turn about, hence to turn one upon himself; put him to shame.

**Constable** > It was not Paul's purpose in writing the immediately preceding verses to humiliate the Corinthians. Other congregations would read this epistle. However, he did want to admonish them strongly as their father in the faith.

**Admonish** > (Strong's) to put in mind, i.e. (by implication) to caution or reprove gently

**Beloved** > (Strong's) *agapetos*

<sup>15</sup>*For if you were to have countless **tutors** in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*

**Tutors** > (Strong's) a boy-leader, i.e. A servant whose office it was to take the children to school; (by implication, (figuratively) a tutor ("paedagogue"))

**Constable** > They had many "tutors" or "guardians" (Gr. *paidagogoi*) who sought to bring them along in their growth in grace, but he was their only spiritual father.

**Bruce** > "The *paidagogos* was the personal attendant who accompanied the boy, took him to school and home again, heard him recite his "lines", taught him good manners and generally looked after him; he was entitled to respect and normally received it, but there was no comparison between his relation to the boy and that of the boy's father."

<sup>16</sup>*Therefore I exhort you, be **imitators** of me.*

**Imitators** > (Strong's) *mimetes*

*<sup>17</sup>For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.*

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*<sup>18</sup>Now some have become **arrogant**, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup>But I will come to you soon, **if** the Lord wills, and I shall **find out**, not the words of those who are **arrogant** but their **power**. <sup>20</sup>For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.*

**Arrogant** > (Strong's) *phusioo* > to puff or blow up > from (NAS Concordance) *phusa* > bellows (Collins dictionary > bladder)

**If** > (Strong's) *ean*

**Constable** > However, Paul did plan to return if God allowed him to do so. Evidently he was not able to return for some time.

**Robertson** > He changed his plans to spare them, not from timidity. It will become plain later that Timothy failed on this mission and that Titus succeeded.

***II Corinthians 7:5-9** > <sup>5</sup>For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. <sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; <sup>7</sup>and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. <sup>8</sup>For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it — for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while — <sup>9</sup>I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.*

**Find out** > (Strong's) *ginosko* > to come to know, recognize, perceive

**Power** > (Strong's) force (literally or figuratively); specially, miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself)

*<sup>21</sup>What do you desire? **Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?***

***Shall I come to you with a rod ...*** > (Robertson) Paul gives them the choice. They can have him as their spiritual father or as their paedagogue with a rod.

**Wuest** > *What are you desiring? With a stick shall I come to you or in a love that has as its impelling motive the benefit of the one loved, the exercise of which love demands self-sacrifice, and in the spirit of meekness?*