

***I CORINTHIANS***  
***Chapter 4:1-7***

**INTRODUCTION:**

In *verses 1-5* – we see that stewardship is being the overseer of the goods and house of a master by a devoted servant. This was a part of the ancient culture - *Genesis 15:2; 43:19; 44:4*. Jesus Christ used that analogy to represent proper Christian services and responsibilities - *Matthew 20:8; Luke 12:42; Luke 16:1-8*. Paul now identified the minister in this manner.

***Verses 1-2:***

The word, "*account*" that Paul used is a bookkeeping term that speaks of taking inventory. Paul challenges others to take inventory of his work for God. Paul says, "*Let a man so account of us*" – *V: 1*. He was saying, "You are welcome to take inventory of my life.

As Paul found it was a good thing to examine himself, it is also good for each of us to take a spiritual inventory every now and then.

We need to examine our salvation. In *II Corinthians 13:5* - "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.*" The word "*examine*" means to put something to the test, to scrutinize." We are to put our profession to the test of the Scriptures.

We should examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and ask, "Have I done what God said to be saved? Is my salvation based on what God said? Is my life producing fruit as is commanded of a child of God?"

We need to examine our consecration. In *I Corinthians 11:28*, -"*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*" The examination that Paul calls for is in reference and relation to the taking of the Lord's Supper. He is calling for them to examine their hearts and life to see if there is anything that would cause them to take of the Lord's Supper unworthily.

We need to examine our dedication.

It is such an examination that Paul speaks of in our text. He was speaking of taking inventory of his dedication to God's work. If you were to take an honest inventory of your dedication to God, how would you answer the following questions?

1. Do I know the will of God for my life?
2. Am I doing the will of God?
3. Am I seeking to win others to Christ?
4. Have I won others to Christ?
5. Am I involved in God's work?

Someone has said that the Church is full of willing people. There are those who are willing to work and those that are willing to let them work. Which class would an honest inventory of your life put you in?

How would others *"so account of us?"* How would God *"so account of us?"*

After challenging others to take inventory of his life, Paul speaks of the areas in which he welcomes this inventory. *"Let a man so account of us"*, he wanted Apollas and himself to be known by the church in three areas of responsibility in God's work.

### **A Minister:**

Paul wanted to be recognized as the - *"minister of Christ"*. This is not the typical word for minister, but rather a word that literally means "under-rower". It was used of the slave who rowed in the lower bank of oars on a large ancient ship. Later, it came to refer to any subordinate, usually an assistant, or a helper. This was used of several in the Bible and Paul wanted to be known this way himself - *Acts 20:34; 26:16*. Paul therefore did not see himself as a man of high spiritual status, but as an assistant to Christ, a helper willing to do the lowest task.

### **A Steward:**

Paul wanted to be known as a - *"steward of the mysteries of God"*. The word steward means "house law". A steward was an administrator, a trustee, or an overseer of an estate. He was under the owner and over others within the house.

In *I Peter 4:10* - *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

Peter tells us that we all are stewards and challenges us to be good stewards. Peter also speaks of every believer being a recipient of spiritual gifts. Each believer has been entrusted with spiritual gifts by God.

To put it in simply, God has equipped each of us for some particular part of the Lord's work. To not be involved in the Lord's work is to abuse the trust God has given us. We are accountable to God for the gifts or talents He has given us.

### **A Faithful Man - II Timothy 4:1-8.**

Paul wanted to be known as a faithful steward. Faithfulness involves doing all that the master has commanded, doing it according to the master's method, and doing it in the assigned time. The sphere (place, range), of stewardship may vary, but the quality never does. *"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they shall ask the more."* - *Luke 12:48*

Whatever God has given us to do; we should be faithful to that work. As a *"minister"* we should be faithful. As a *"steward"* we should be faithful. If one has been called you to preach then be faithful to that call. If God has placed one in a position of leadership, be faithful to the responsibility. If you have a job in the church, be faithful to that work.

It is so sad that many treat the work of God like something they can fit into their schedule and drop from their schedule if there are other things to do. The work of God is to be first in our life and not treated as an option. If you have a job or responsibility in the Church, everything else should take a back seat. Your job in the church should not be something you show up for if you feel like it. It should be something that you are faithful to and faithful in. Why? It is what God requires.

Paul challenged others to take inventory of their service. Have you taken an inventory of your work for God?

### **Verses 3-5:**

The preceding verse used two key words, "*required*" and "*be found*". Who determines whether a steward has been faithful? Three options are offered:

1. By Others, *V: 3a*

Paul had earlier said that the spiritual man is not judged by anyone, *2:5*. The same verb is used here. Paul knew that the approval or disapproval of his stewardship did not rest upon their acceptance or rejection of his ministry. They had not commissioned him; therefore, he was not accountable to them. He was not bothered by the fact that they did attempt to evaluate his ministry and that they compared him to others. Notice the two phrases dealing with the judgment of believers (*of you*) and by the world's standards (*of man's judgment*). Success by the world is viewed outwardly and quantitatively.

2. By Himself, *VS: 3b - 4a*

Paul also knew that he was not capable of judging his own ministry. He clearly stated that he did not try to appraise his stewardship objectively, subjectively, or comparatively. As far as he knew, he did not detect any flaw in his ministry, "*I know nothing by* (literally - against), *myself.*"

3. By Christ, *VS. 4b - 5*

Paul knew, nevertheless, that both his ministry and himself were under constant divine scrutiny. At other times, he appealed to God as an examiner and a witness to his integrity, *I Thessalonians 2:4-5, 10*. Here he too says, "*He that judgeth me is the Lord.*" Since Christ was already judging him, Paul appealed to his readers to stop judging him about his ministry or that of others. That was not their task - *Romans 14:10, 13*.

Preliminary - "*before the time*", human judgments are invalid. When Christ returns, an accurate assessment of men, methods, and motivations will take place. Two basic facts that can not be known by outward observation will be revealed:

First, Christ, "*will bring to light the hidden things of darkness*". This probably refers to the deeds done when a person is alone, totally unsupervised or watched by men.

Second, He, - *"will make manifest the counsels of the hearts"*. This refers to the reasons why ministers did what they did. Were they selfish, did they do it for the glory of themselves, or to the glory of God? The result of this final judgment is that - *"the praise shall come to each one from God"*. The classic statement that Paul wanted to hear was - *"well done, thou good and faithful servant"*, *Matthew 25:21, 23*. This phrase is for a, completed task, *"done"*; quality work, *"well"*; constant effort, *"faithful"*; and personal integrity, *"good"*.

### **Verses 6-7:**

Before we look at *verse 6*, let's look at God says about this subject. In *Proverbs 8:13*, *"The fear of the Lord is hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way..."* *Proverbs 16:18* says, *"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."* D.L. Moody used to say, "Be humble or you will stumble." *I Peter 5:5* says, *"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."*

Pride is a very dangerous thing in the life of a child of God. Before looking at the verse we need to take a look at what pride really is.

So often we let our blessings go to our head and make us haughty, rather than letting them go to our heart and making us humble. In our text, the Apostle Paul deals with the pride problem which the membership of the church at Corinthian had. He uses a certain phrase three times in *verses 6-21* that speaks of pride. It is the phrase, *"puffed up."* (*VS: 6, 18, 19*) The words speak of something being inflated.

What Paul was simply asking was, "Why do you think you are better than others?" "What makes you think that you are different than others?" Pride is a form of thinking that you are different than others. Pride is thinking that you are above others and better than others.

Feeling like you are better than others is the heart of pride. It is an inflation of self that leaves one thinking they are better and superior.

The second question Paul asked goes to the heart of why pride is so hated and abhorred by God. Paul asks, *"What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"* Paul was asking, "What is it that you have that was not given to you?" Paul's question reminds that when we are filled with pride we become forgetful of where our blessings come from. Paul's question reminds us:

Pride forgets that who we are and what we have; we owe it to the goodness of God. We have nothing that in one way or the other, that can't be traced back to the goodness of God.

The goodness of God in our life should lead to giving God glory. But pride turns the focus on us instead of God. Instead of giving God the glory for who we are and what we have, we take the credit. Pride causes us to rob God of the glory that is rightfully His. It is this very thing that makes pride such a wicked and vicious matter. Pride makes us a thief and robber. It makes us a spiritual criminal. It robs God of His glory.

The basic problem that produced the Corinthian division was pride in self and in others. Paul wanted to show them that their opinions of themselves and of Him were just

the opposite of his. Until they saw themselves as they really were before God and men, they could not have a spirit of genuine unity.

Now let's look specifically at verse **V: 6**. Paul used the names of Apollos and himself, **1:12; 3:4, 22**, instead of the names of the schismatic leaders in Corinth in order to deal with the problem on the basis of principle, not personality. The word, "*transferred*", means to change the outward appearance or identify. He chose this method, "*for your sakes*". If he had mentioned the leaders by name, the church would have been further divided. Men like Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were above such petty differences; therefore, they were used for the object lesson, "*that ye might learn in us*". There are two purposes behind the transfer with each being introduced by, "*that*":

1. Men should not elevate other Christians beyond the Scriptural positioning of men - **Jeremiah 9:23-24**.
2. Men should not exalt themselves at the expense of others. The sandlot baseball concept of choosing up sides should not be followed by humble Christians.

Every Christian is indebted to God. Every believer should recognize that he has received his ability and influence from God. Three direct questions are asked to emphasize this concept.

1. One commentator in commenting on the first question said, "Who thinks you are better than others? Your superiority over your brethren is mere self-conceit and inflation. The difference between you and me is only imaginary".
2. The second question points out that God is the real source of difference, (personalities, abilities, appearance).
3. The third question shows foolishness of glorying in self, when the object of false glory is a gift that has actually come from God, the One who really deserves the glory.

## **CONCLUSION:**

We should recognize that pride is unjustified and without foundation. There is no reason for us to be proud. Instead of being haughty, we should be humble. Instead of pride there should be praise.

We should look at pride as nothing more than a dirty, filthy, wicked, evil sin. Instead of cockiness there should be confession. Instead of boasting there should be bowing.

The inflated need to be deflated.

*Worksheet*

1. In *verses 1-5* – we see that stewardship is being the \_\_\_\_\_ of the goods and house of a \_\_\_\_\_ by a devoted servant.
2. The word, "*account*" Paul used is a bookkeeping term that speaks of taking \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What three areas of our life do we need to examine
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
4. We should examine ourselves in the light of \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If you were to take an examination of your dedication to God, how would you answer the following questions?
  6. Do I know the will of God for my life? - Yes or No
  7. Am I doing the will of God? - Yes or No
  8. Am I seeking to win others to Christ? - Yes or No
  9. Have I won others to Christ? - Yes or No
  10. Am I involved in God's work? - Yes or No
6. Name the three areas Paul welcomed the Corinthians to inventory his life?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
7. In verses 3 – 5 three options are offered to determine whether a steward is being faithful.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When Christ returns, an accurate assessment of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ will take place.

9. First, Christ, "*will bring to light the \_\_\_\_\_ things of darkness*". This probably refers to the \_\_\_\_\_ done when a person \_\_\_\_\_ is alone, totally unsupervised or watched by men.
10. Second, He, - "*will make manifest the \_\_\_\_\_ of the hearts*". This refers to the reasons \_\_\_\_\_ ministers did what they did.
11. What does the Lord say about pride?
  - a. *Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to \_\_\_\_\_ evil: \_\_\_\_\_, and arrogance, and the evil way..."*
  - b. *Proverbs 16:18 - "Pride goeth before \_\_\_\_\_ and a haughty spirit before a fall."*
  - c. *I Peter 5:5 - "God resisteth the \_\_\_\_\_, and giveth grace to the \_\_\_\_\_."*
12. Pride is thinking that you are \_\_\_\_\_ others and \_\_\_\_\_ than others.
13. What is the heart of pride?
14. When we are filled with pride we become \_\_\_\_\_ of where our \_\_\_\_\_ come from.
15. Pride forgets \_\_\_\_\_ and what we have; we owe it to the goodness of \_\_\_\_\_.
16. The goodness of God in our life should lead to giving God \_\_\_\_\_.
17. The basic problem that produced the Corinthian division was pride in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Every Christian is \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
19. Instead of being \_\_\_\_\_, we should be \_\_\_\_\_. Instead of pride there should be \_\_\_\_\_.
20. The \_\_\_\_\_ needs to be \_\_\_\_\_.