

Sunday, March 13, 2016—I Corinthians 4:2-4: The Requirement of a Steward

Introduction/Review

- Last week we began studying chapter 4 by looking a verse one. In summation we observed the following:
 - *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ*—the statement that Paul uses to open chapter 4 is in the imperative mood. Paul is instructing the Corinthians to account him as a minister of Christ.
 - The “us” who are to be accounted thusly by the Corinthians are Paul and Apollos at a minimum and possibly Timothy as well. We discussed multiple reasons why Peter should not be so “accounted.”
 - *and stewards of the mysteries of God*—whomever comprises the “us” is not just supposed to be accounted as ministers of Christ but also as “stewards of the mysteries of God.” There are multiple mysteries that comprise or make up the mystery.
 - I Corinthians 15:51-52—is a parallel passages with I Thess. 4 and speaks of the catching up of the saints.
 - Ephesians 5:32—the relationship between Christ and the church.
 - Ephesians 6:19—the mystery of the gospel.
 - Colossians 2:2—the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ.
 - II Thess. 2:7—the mystery of iniquity.
 - I Timothy 3:16—the mystery of godliness.
- This morning we want to move on through the passage by considering the following verses.

I Corinthians 4:2

- **Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**
- The English word “moreover” is a transition word meaning: “beyond what has been said; further; besides; also; likewise,” according to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary. Therefore, verse 2 is building upon verse 1 by offering further explanation.

- Please recall from last week the definition of the word steward: “man employed in great families to manage the domestic concerns, superintend the other servants, collect the rents or income, keep the accounts.”
 - Carson from Downton Abby
- The fundamental requirement or demand of a steward is that he be faithful in the management of his lord’s house.
- The English word “stewards” comes from the Greek word *oikonomos* which is very similar to the word *oikonomia* which is rendered as “dispensation” or “stewardship” in the King James Bible.
- Luke 16:1—the steward (*oikonomos*) is accused of wasting his master’s goods or not managing the affairs of his master’s household properly. In other words, the steward (*oikonomos*) is accused of unfaithfulness.
- Luke 16:2—the steward (*oikonomos*) called to give account of his stewardship (*oikonomia*) to determine if he would retain the position of steward (*oikonomos*). If his lord found him to be an unfaithful manager of his household the steward (*oikonomos*) would be dismissed and forced to relinquish his stewardship (*oikonomia*).
- Luke 16:3—the steward (*oikonomos*) is worried about his lord taking away his *stewardship* (*oikonomia*).
- Luke 16:4— steward (*oikonomos*) knows that he is going to lose his stewardship (*oikonomia*).
- The steward (*oikonomos*) has the responsible of properly and faithfully dispensing his stewardship (*oikonomia*). Remember from last week that Paul was a steward (*oikonomos*) of the dispensation (*oikonomia*) of God that had been committed to his trust.
 - I Corinthians 9:17—Paul explicitly tells the Corinthians that a dispensation (*oikonomia*) of the gospel had been committed unto him. What would that make Paul? The steward (*oikonomos*) of that information.
 - Ephesians 3:2—Paul tells the Ephesians that the “dispensation (*oikonomia*) of grace” was given unto him. What would that make Paul? The steward (*oikonomos*) of the “dispensation (*oikonomia*) of grace.”
 - Colossians 1:25—Paul teaches the Colossians the he was made a minister, according to (or in line with) the dispensation (*oikonomia*) of God that was given to him for the purpose of fulfilling the word of God. Once again, Paul was the steward (*oikonomos*) of the dispensation (*oikonomia*) of God committed to his trust.

- I Corinthians 4:2—Paul is talking about the requirement of stewards that a man be found faithful. As a steward of the mysteries of God, Paul had a responsibility to faithfully discharge his stewardship.

I Corinthians 4:3

- **But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.**
- As a steward of the mysteries of God and the dispensation of God committed to his trust who did Paul answer to? The Corinthians, other men, or himself? No, he answered his lord just as the unjust steward did in Luke 16.
 - The indication from this verse is that there were some in Corinth, the most carnal and spiritually immature of all the Pauline assemblies, who sought to stand in judgment over Paul's stewardship.
- Who is Paul's lord? Who had entrusted him with a stewardship/dispensation (*oikonomia*)? The Lord Jesus Christ.
- So as a steward, does Paul answer to the Corinthians or any other man including himself for his faithfulness or lack thereof in discharge of his stewardship? No. As a steward Paul is not qualified to judge his own stewardship.

I Corinthians 4:4

- **For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.**
- On the heels of saying, "I judge not mine own self" at the end of verse 3 Paul begins verse 4 by saying, "For I know nothing by myself." The question is what does this statement mean?
- Given the context, I take this statement in verse 4 to mean that Paul is not himself aware of any unfaithfulness on his part as a steward of the mysteries of God.
- *yet am I not hereby justified*—even though Paul is not himself aware of any unfaithfulness on his part his faithfulness as a steward is not ultimately judged by his own self-awareness and assessment.
- *but he that judgeth me is the Lord*—Paul's faithfulness or lack thereof is ultimately judged by the Lord and not men.

- I Timothy 1:12—just as in Luke 16 where the unjust steward answered to his lord for his stewardship, so it is here with Paul. The reason the Lord Jesus Christ gave Paul his stewardship in the first place is because he counted Paul faithful to discharge the task.
- I Timothy 1:13—in Paul’s former life as a Pharisee did he demonstrate a high level of faithfulness and zeal.
 - Philippians 3:6
 - Galatians 1:13-14
- Galatians 1:11-12—Paul did not receive his gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ but the “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The lord Jesus Christ appeared to Saul of Tarsus interrupted his wild career and committed to him a dispensation of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ afforded Paul the opportunity to take all his misguided and misdirected faithfulness and zeal and channel into making known the mystery of his will.
- I Corinthians 4:4—the one who is going to judge Paul’s faithfulness is the one who counted him faithful in the first place and made him the apostle to the gentiles.
- I Corinthians 4:5—therefore judge nothing before the time.