

Sunday, March 20, 2016—I Corinthians 4:5-6: Pride the Source of Division

Introduction

- Last week during our time together we looked at verses 2 through 4 primarily.
- 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—as a steward, Paul does not answer to the Corinthians or any other man including himself for his faithfulness or lack thereof in the discharge of his stewardship. Paul is not qualified to judge his own stewardship.
- I Corinthians 4:4— 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. Paul’s faithfulness or lack thereof is ultimately judged by the Lord and not men. 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, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We touched upon verse 5 very briefly at the end of last week’s message. There are a few more things we need to say about verse 5 so that we can adequately understand verse 6.

I Corinthians 4:5

- **Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.**
- *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come*—the word “therefore” at the beginning of the verse signifies the conclusion to the opening section of this chapter. On the heels of telling the Corinthians that he is a steward of the mysteries of God and that no man including himself has the capacity to judge the faithfulness of his stewardship. Paul therefore tells the Corinthians to “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.”
- I Corinthians 3:13—there is a day in the future during which the nature of Paul’s stewardship will be manifest, declared, and revealed. We have identified that day to be the JCS.
- *who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness*—the Lord Jesus Christ at the JSC is going to “bring to light the hidden things of darkness.” The issue of darkness is used frequently in Paul’s epistles to speak of the flesh and the works thereof.
 - Romans 13:12—“cast off the works of darkness”

- II Corinthians 6:14—“what communion hath light with darkness”
- Ephesians 5:8—“ye were sometimes darkness”
- Colossians 1:13—“delivered us from the power of darkness”
- I Thessalonians 5:4-5—“But ye, brethren are not in darkness”
- I Corinthians 4:5—when the Lord comes one of the things he is going to do is “bring to light the hidden things of darkness.” All those works of the flesh that we managed to keep concealed and under wraps will be exposed by the light of truth at the JSC.
- *and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts*—the English word “manifest” means “Plain, open, clearly visible to the eye or obvious to the understanding; apparent; not obscure or difficult to be seen or understood.” The second thing the Lord will do when he comes is “make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”
- There are many meanings associated with the English word “counsel” most of which don’t apply to what Paul is talking about here in verse 5. In verse 5 the word “counsels” is describing “Secresy; the secrets entrusted in consultation; secret opinions or purposes. Let a man keep his own *counsel*.”
- Jeremiah 17:9—since a man is not capable of discerning his own heart one of the things that the Lord will do when he comes is “make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” The Lord Jesus Christ will expose the truth regarding our motives and motivations.
 - Ecclesiastes 11:9
 - Ecclesiastes 12:14
- *and then shall every man have praise of God*—after the hidden things of darkness have been brought to light and after the counsels of the hearts have been made manifest; “shall every man have praise of God.” Whatever is brought to light or made manifest that is negative has already been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - I Corinthians 3:15
- Therefore, it not the Corinthian’s place to be judging Paul’s stewardship they need to leave that to the Lord and his timing.

I Corinthians 4:6

- **And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.**
- *And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes*—this first phrase of verse 6 has puzzled many people. In order to understand the verse, I would like to tackle the phrase “I have in a figure transferred” first. This entire phrase in English is translation from a single Greek word which means “to change the figure of, to transform” according to *Strong’s Concordance*.
 - II Corinthians 11:13-15
 - Philippians 3:21
- I believe that what Paul is saying is that he has employed figurative language and applied it to himself and Apollos for the purpose of teaching the Corinthians. Notice how the second part of the verse begins, “that ye might learn. . .” In short, Paul is telling the Corinthians that he transferred figurative language onto himself and Apollos for their sakes that they might learn something.
- *And these things . . . to myself and to Apollos for your sakes*—the next question that arises is what things specifically is Paul talking about? Commentators have all sorts’ ideas about what Paul is talking about.
- H.A. Ironside—“That is, it may not actually have been his name or the name of Apollos or that of Cephas that was used in this sectarian way, but he put himself and Apollos, his fellow-laborer, who was thoroughly of one mind with him, to the front and used their names as illustrations in order that he might reprove this tendency to sectarianism among the people of God.” (151)
- C.R. Stam—“Thus Paul says in effect, “I have applied the things I have been writing about myself and Apollos as an illustration and a lesson to you. Do we act like rivals or competitors? Do we, either of us, seek the limelight, or try to cut each other out? You know we do not, so learn in us not to think of men above what is written.” (93)
- Harry Bultema—“When he refers here to a figure, he is thinking of the laborer and the builder referred to in the previous section. He has done this for their sake that they might learn not to assume any rivalry between Paul and his fellow workers, and their puerile party spirit, not be puffed up against one another.” (34-35)
- *And these things*—to identify what Paul is talking about here we need to look for an instance where Paul applied figurative language to himself and Apollos for the purpose of instructing the Corinthians that think soberly. The following passage comes to mind:

- I Corinthians 3:5-8
- *that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another*—this is why Paul applied this figurative language to himself and Apollos so that the Corinthians might learn to think soberly.
- *that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written*—as far as I can tell there is no direct quotation or allusion to a particular passage from the Old Testament here. That being said, the Old Testament certainly has a lot to say about what man really is.
 - Psalm 8:4
 - Psalm 103:14-15
 - Isaiah 40:6
- *that no one of you be puffed up for one against another*—according to Webster’s 1828 dictionary the English word “puffed” means: “driven out suddenly, as air or breath; **blown up; swelled with air; inflated with vanity or pride**; praised.” The expression “puffed up” is used elsewhere in Paul’s epistles and it never viewed as a good thing.
 - I Corinthians 4:18-19
 - I Corinthians 5:2
 - I Corinthians 8:1
 - I Corinthians 13:4
 - Colossians 2:18
- I Corinthians 4:6—Paul is speaking here about someone being “puffed up for one against another.” It is nothing but pure pride that was causing this sectarianism within the church at Corinth. It is interesting to consider that of the six occurrences of the expression “puffed up” in your KJB five of them occur in the book of I Corinthians.
- Paul utilized figurative language in chapter 3 for the purpose of instructing the Corinthians they should not be “puffed up one against another.” If Paul and Apollos did not function with that kind of pride toward each other the Corinthians should not one toward another.