

## Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

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**Introduction:** In 1 Corinthians 1:1-4:21, Paul is discussing the great problem that that church faces, division among themselves. In chapter 3:1-10, he explains that these divisions come from their failure to think spiritually. They are not mature in their faith and as a result do not think with the mind of Christ. They do not know or act on the basis of God's word. In chapter 4, Paul gives practical advice about how the church should regard its leaders and how its leaders should act.

### 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

#### Verse 1

***This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.***

- Given all that Paul has said in chapters 1-3, how should the Corinthian Christians regard their pastors? He says that the pastors of the church should be regarded as "servants." The Greek word is the word which describes the third rower of a ship rowed by banks of oars. This is the most subordinate of the rowers. He must do his part, but he determines nothing.
- But, in this case, this insignificant rower is entrusted by God with the precious mysteries of His word which he must handle faithfully so as to please God (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-23).

#### Verses 2-3

***<sup>2</sup> Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. <sup>3</sup> I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.***

- Pastors have been given a great trust which they must handle faithfully to please Christ.
- They must not seek to serve any human being or institution. They must not seek to please themselves. They will not be judged in any court but God's court. Their job is to please God.

## Verses 4-5

***<sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.***

- Paul says that his conscience is clear in this matter. It has been, and it remains his goal to please his Master, Jesus Christ. But that does not mean that he has done so perfectly. He may have made mistakes. But his goal has always been and remains to please his Master. He knows that he will be judged by his Master as described in chapter 3. His work will be tested by God.
- At any given moment in history, humans may not be able to see how the plan of God is unfolding. With time the purposes of God will be revealed, and God's people will see how it all worked together, even the trials and mistakes, to bring them good and to accomplish God's purpose.
- This is also true of God's servants. God will expose the motives of their hearts. Each will receive their due reward.

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