

The Lord Our Judge – 1Corinthians 4:1-5

Bible Study ~ 1/4/16

Grace Church of Lockeford

Oftentimes when this passage is taught, the emphasis is on being faithful stewards or on the mysteries of God. What struck me as I read through it recently was the idea that we are only judged by the Lord. Even more astounding is that the purpose of our judgment is not condemnation, but praise. There are three truths about judgment revealed in these verses. **First we see that we are...**

1. Judged For Our Stewardship vv. 1-2

Ch. 3 ends with the idea that we are not to have worldly wisdom or boast in men but to remember that everything is about Christ and God the Father. *Ch. 4* then opens with Paul's exhortation that they live in such a way that people can see they are about Christ. That to us have been entrusted the mysteries of God. If we are stewards of Christ, we must be faithful. We are stewards because we have been entrusted with the mysteries of God. There are several mysteries mentioned in the NT. The national salvation of Israel is called a mystery in *Romans 11*. The transformation of believers from mortal/corruptible to immortal/incorruptible is called a mystery in *1Corinthians 15*. The joining of Jew and Gentile in Christ in *Ephesians 1*, and the church being the bride of Christ in *Ephesians 5*. Paul essentially defines what a mystery is Biblically speaking in *Colossians 1:26*. It is something that was previously unrevealed, but is now made known. There are several other mysteries we could mention but the bottom line is that they are all linked to the gospel of Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross. As those who have been placed under the headship of Christ we are to live as faithful stewards of the gospel. This word "Faithful" is essentially a person who can be counted on. We are to be dependable as stewards of the good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. There is a key word in *verse 2* that is easy to miss. Found – εὐρίσκω *heuriskō* *To be discovered (found) – to be or become encountered in a specific state or condition.* This word implies an analysis. It implies that we are investigated and proven to be faithful. That is what the next 3 verses are talking about. **We will be judged for our stewardship when we are...**

2. Judged By The Lord vv. 3-4

"A very small thing" is the idea of insignificant. The judgment of others and even of a human court is insignificant to Paul. He goes farther and states that he doesn't even judge himself. It is important to understand exactly what Paul is talking about here. This word "judgement" is ἀνακρίνω *anakrinō* *examine; question; judge. To be evaluated – to be subject to the critical scrutiny of another.* The idea is one of evaluation. Paul is not interested in the examination and scrutiny of this world or even of fellow believers. There is only one person whose evaluation matters to Paul and that is Christ's. We have to consider the context here. The context is of believers being the stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe it is Paul's stewardship of the gospel to which he refers here. In that regard Paul states in *verse 4* that he knows of nothing against himself. Paul is not talking about being sinless. He is very clear in other passages that he is not sinless. He even goes so far as to call himself the chief of sinners in *1Timothy 1:15*. What Paul is saying is that no one can judge him on how he has performed as a steward and a servant of Christ but Christ Himself. Even though this is true, Paul doesn't know of any accusation that could be made against his stewardship. Yet even as Paul has been a faithful steward, that is not what justifies Him. We are justified by Christ and our faith in Him, not by our works! Paul states that the only one who will evaluate Him is Christ. This is clearly declared in *Romans 14:10-12* and *2Corinthians 5:9-10*. This judgment is not for the purpose of punishment. **Paul declares that we are...**

3. Judged For The Purpose Of Praise v. 5

Paul indicates here that there is a specific time in which we will all face evaluation. We will be examined by the Lord at His return. Until that time, we are not to be fruit police. We are to be aware of, and address sin in one another's lives, but we are not to seek to evaluate the performance of our brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a razor's edge of balance here. What helps us to achieve the proper balance is knowing that the Lord will bring hidden things to light and reveal the counsels of the heart.

That is His job. It is our responsibility to address sin, he is the one who will evaluate performance. This evaluation will have three parts.

1 – Exposure. He will bring hidden things to light. These are simply things that have been done in secret, good or bad.

2 – Revelation. He will reveal our motivations and thoughts. This is simply the display of our inner thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

3 – Praise. He will praise the believer for faithfulness.

The things mentioned in this verse are often viewed with a negative connotation. “Shape up or your dirty secrets will be exposed.” But that doesn’t actually fit the context. Remember, the context is about being faithful stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The purpose of Christ’s evaluation of the believer is to expose how we have been faithful! Now, it is true that there will also be some unfaithfulness exposed, but that will serve to highlight the importance of the faithfulness. What is amazing is the end of the verse. “Each one” is the idea of every single believer considered individually. Paul is saying that every believer will receive praise! Each of us will be approved and commended by God! This is only possible because of the righteousness of Christ that has been credited to us!

This is a great blessing and a huge cause for rejoicing. As we are faithful in declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ we do not have to be worried about the evaluation of others or even of worldly courts and judges. We live for the approval of Jesus Christ! We have the confidence that when He returns and we are evaluated we will be met with approval and commendation. What incredible blessings are ours in the body of Christ!

CHALLENGE: May we be faithful stewards as we await our time of evaluation and praise!

V. 1

Consider – λογίζομαι *logizomai* *consider; count; credit. To hold (deem) – to keep in mind or convey as a conviction or view.*

Servants – ὑπηρέτης *hypēretēs* *servant; assistant; officer. Subordinate – any person subject to the authority or control of another; perhaps connoting mentality.*

Stewards – οἰκονόμος *oikonomos* *steward; manager, Administrator (supervisor) – one who supervises or has charge and direction of.*

Mysteries – μυστήριον *mystērion* *mystery. Divine secret – a secret whose concerned party is a deity alone and whose to whom he chooses to share the information; especially concerning the method and history of God’s redemption or the other supernatural information.*

V. 2

Required – ζητέω *zēteō* *desire; seek; look for. To be sought (state) – to be or become that which is looked for.*

Found – εὐρίσκω *heuriskō* *find. To be discovered (found) – to be or become encountered in a specific state or condition (as if being discovering as such).*

Faithful – πιστός *pistos* *reliable; faithful; believing. Responsible – worthy of or requiring responsibility or trust; or held accountable.*

V. 3

A very small thing – ἐλάχιστος *elachistos* *insignificant; least; trivial. Least – a superlative quantifier meaning smallest in amount, extent, or degree.*

I should be judged – ἀνακρίνω *anakrinō* *examine; question; judge. To be evaluated – to be subject to the critical scrutiny of another.*

V. 4

Know – συνοράω *synoraō* *share the knowledge of. To be conscious – to have a realization or recognition of something; often relating to moral knowledge.*

Justified – δικαιώω *dikaioō* *justify; declare righteous. To be vindicated (state) – to be or become shown to be right by providing justification or proof.*

V. 5

Judge – κρίνω *krinō* *judge; pass judgment on. To evaluate – to form a critical opinion of something (either positive or negative) by examination or scrutiny.*

The time – καιρός *kairos* *season; time. Occasion (event) – the time (or period of time) of a particular event.*

Comes – ἔρχομαι *erchomai* *come; arrive. To come – to move toward, travel toward, or approach something or somebody; whether physically or as an abstract location.*

Bring to light – φωτίζω *phōtizō* *give light to; enlighten. To illuminate – to cast light upon something so that it becomes illuminated.*

Hidden things – κρυπτός *kryptos* *secret; hidden. Secret – something (whether information or object) that remains hidden from others.*

Darkness – σκοτός *skotos* *darkness. Darkness – the absence of light or illumination.*

Reveal – φανερώω *phaneroō* *reveal; make clear. To reveal – to make visible.*

Counsels – βουλή *boulē* *plan; purpose. Thought-out plan – a series of steps to be carried out or goals to be accomplished; especially as the result of intent consideration.*

Then = at that time.

Praise – ἔπαινος *epainos* *praise. Praise (approval) – an expression of approval and commendation.*