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## 1 Corinthians 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# 1 Corinthians 4.

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## Topics.

- Do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes.
- It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you.
- I judge not my own-self.
- I am not aware of anything against me.
- Do not pronounce judgment before the Lord comes.
- Already you have become rich! You have become kings!
- I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all.
- I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.
- The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

**The previous chapter:** the previous chapter is for me is a fabulously awesome and majestic chapter since it is practical and covers common problems that are often seen in churches even today, reading it is enriching and I am without doubt will reward whoever reads it since it shares godly principals that apply to church leaders, congregations and brothers and sisters in Christ.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian Church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-4

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### **Do not Pronounce Judgment before the time, before the Lord Comes.**

- **1 Corinthians 4:1-4:** This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup>But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup>I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

**Judge:** in this context carries the idea of examining the qualities of a person and making a judgment to either exalt, praise or idolize them or to criticise and scorn or disapprove and condemnation them.

**NOTE:** to understand these verses is it helpful to know beforehand that Paul asks the Corinthians, "Why do they boast" (v7) and to know that Paul says, "When slandered, we pray, since we have become like the scum of the world the refuse of all things" (v13). Thus, the focus of judgment in this chapter is not about outward sin, but boasting and exalting others and what people think of our character (i.e. slandering).

**How brothers and sisters are to regard each other:** Paul tells the Corinthian brothers and sisters that they should regard Paul and Apollos and by extension any Christian leader simply as servants of Christ sharing the word of the Lord in contrast to esteeming them as great men of God (see 1 Cor. 3:3-5, 21). Paul considers it a matter of no concern what others think of him or whether they are esteeming him (as in the previous chapter) or showing him contempt since his principal responsibility and aim is to please Christ who appointed him to his ministry and not to win man's favour or praise. As much as Paul loved the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church his main desire was not to secure their approval, admiration or esteem or to avoid their criticism, scorn, disapproval or condemnation, but to please his master the Lord Jesus Christ and secure his approval.

**It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you?** The words, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court (v3) means that Paul considered their judgment (i.e., whatever their opinion of him might be) to be a matter not worth regarding. This attitude might seem to look like arrogance, or appear as if he looked upon the Corinthians with contempt, but this is not the case since he had this same attitude in regard to all people, regardless of their rank, character, talent, or learning, he considered their judgment of him (good or bad) as a very small matter because he was answerable not to them, but to Christ and as long as he was faithfully serving Christ and approved of by him it did not matter to Paul how others might judge his conduct and his ministry.

**I judge not my own-self:** Paul's statement, "I judge not my own self" (v3) means he does not attempt to pronounce a judgment on himself since he is conscious of his own imperfection and of being biased by self-love in his own favour and therefore does not feel that his judgment of himself would be strictly impartial nor could it in all respects be trusted. It is quite likely that Paul is also pointing this out so as to soften what he had just said about the Corinthians judging him since by showing that if he puts very little value on his own judgment of himself then it is hardly likely that he would set a high value on the opinions of others.

**I am not aware of anything against me:** it was of no account with Paul what judgment and criticisms were passed on him by men with regard to his faithfulness in the ministry not even by the Corinthians themselves since his words, "I am not aware of anything against me (v4) shows that he examined the state and condition of his own heart and ways and even though he was not aware of anything others or even a human court could accuse him of nevertheless he not only chose not to stand or fall by his own judgment but also the judgment of others whether it be in regards to any unfaithfulness in his service for the Lord or to their praises of him.

**NOTE:** this does not mean that Paul despised the judgment of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ meeting together to judge (prove, and test) his ministry and his loyalty, faithfulness and trustworthiness in serving the Lord, but in the context of these verses the Corinthians judgment is firstly about exalting Christian leaders and secondly it appears they have been influenced by certain men who had insinuated that Paul was untrustworthy thus the reason he rejected their judgments and rightly refused to submit to it.

**God the only infallible judge:** even though Paul is not aware of anything that could be held against him by the Corinthian's he says, "That does not make him innocent" (v4) since he knows we are all liable to be biased in our opinions of ourselves and others because of friendships, envy, ignorance or self-love etc., and therefore we should regard the praises or judgment of the world as of very little value and trust that God the only infallible judge will judge us all in love and grace since only He knows the true intent, motivation and purposes of the heart,

## Do not pronounce Judgment before the Lord Comes.

- **1 Corinthians 4:5-6:** Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. <sup>6</sup>I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favour of one against another.

The focus of judgment here is on two things:

1. It is about judging the purposes, intent and motivation of the heart. Paul is saying, "We cannot not judge the hidden things of the heart since we cannot know a person's true motives."
2. The judgment in focus is on exalting brothers and sisters because of their gifts, spiritual knowledge or their abilities etc.,

Thus, the words, "Not to go beyond what is written" means don't exalt a person as being more important or valuable than another since in doing this there is the danger of becoming prideful and equally as bad can result in brothers or sisters showing favour to one over another. These verses are teaching those in the body of Christ to leave exalting others and judging the hidden things of the heart to God and treat everyone in Christ's family with equal worth.

**I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos:** Paul's statement, "I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos" (v6) means neither he nor Apollos judge the motives of each other's hearts nor do they exalt each other because of their gifts, abilities or success in the ministry, they do not consider one better or of more value simply because one might have greater gifts or much greater success in saving the lost and establishing God's Kingdom.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 4:7-8

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### Already you have become Rich! you have become Kings!

- **1 Corinthians 4:7-8:** For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? <sup>8</sup>Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!

Paul is telling the Corinthian believers that there is nothing different in the character or personality of the one with the spiritual gift? They are still human sinners as are all of us since the one with the spiritual gift didn't do anything to get or earn the gift, they are still full of human weakness. Having a gift does not change human character thus the reason Paul asks the Corinthians, "Why do they boast as if the one with the gift did something to earn it?" (v7).

**God's riches:** Paul tells the Corinthian that even without Paul Apollos and Cephas they have all they want for salvation; they have become rich. It should be noted that rich in this context applies to their salvation, their inheritance and the gift of eternal life and the fact that in Christ they have become kings since they will rule the world.

**We might share the Rule with you:** notice the beauty of these words of Paul, "So that we might share the rule with you!" (v8) here Paul is making the Corinthian equal to himself, rather than saying he desires that they would share the rule with him he reverses it telling them that he desires to rule with them making them equal with Paul in Christ's Kingdom. From this we learn that if Paul was with us today, he would not want any brother or sister in Christ exalting him above themselves but rather see themselves as sharing in the service of the Lord together as equal partners in Christ.

**I think that God has exhibited us Apostles as Last of All.**

- **1 Corinthians 4:9-13:** For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. <sup>10</sup>We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak but you are strong. You are held in honour but we in disrepute). <sup>11</sup>To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup>and we labour, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure <sup>13</sup>when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

The Old Testament prophets were the first to come with the light of God's word and be a showcase on the stage of the world to shine forth God's glory until John the Baptist and the moment the promised Messiah the Christ appeared to the world as the Lamb of God to be slain. Now the apostles are the last prophets of God to proclaim the final message of God's New Covenant of grace and the eternal Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the cross until the Lord Jesus Christ returns as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

### **The Corinthians lifestyle contrasted to Paul, Apollos and Cephas:**

Paul feels that God has shone a heavenly floodlight on the apostles making them a spectacle a wonder and exhibition to all of creation. He contrasts the lifestyle of Corinthians to that of, Apollos, Cephas and himself. Paul Apollos and Cephas are not concerned about their own well-being or about their social standing or importance, they are weak, meaning they are feeble in strength and wealth (probably not eating or sleeping much), they do not speak with pride or arrogance neither do they manipulate people for their own gain. Added to this they are slandered and held in disrepute and despised by others. Whereas the Corinthians are concerned about their well-being, their social standing and their importance, they are held in honour, healthy and strong (probably have plenty to eat and time to sleep). Added to this they speak from pride and arrogance manipulating people for their own gain and exalt and boast of their gifts and their successes.

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## **1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-21**

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### **I became your Father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.**

- **1 Corinthians 4:14-21:** I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup>For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup>That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. <sup>18</sup>Some are arrogant as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup>But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. <sup>20</sup>For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. <sup>21</sup>What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Fathers in this context carry the following two ideas:

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1. That Paul gave birth to the Corinthian church and as such is raising them as a parent would raise a child.
2. That he loves and cares for them as a father does his own children, in contrast to the many teachers who are able to proclaim the word of God, but have no love or care toward those they are teaching.

Paul's intention is not to make the Corinthian brothers and sisters feel embarrassed or regretful since he loves them as his own children, but rather his intention is to encourage them to be as he is in Christ

**The Kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power:** though the word power can refer to the working of miracles that the first preachers of the Gospel had by which the Gospel was greatly confirmed, in this context it is more likely to be referring to the power Paul speaks of in the book of Thessalonians when he made the statement:

- Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5)

Referring to the quickening, converting, influence and power of the Holy Spirit on the heart in converting spiritually dead sinners to Christ, enlightening spiritually blind eyes, unstopping spiritually deaf ears and softening the hardness of a person's heart and delivering them from the kingdom of darkness into the glorious Kingdom of God, transforming them both inwardly and outwardly toward the things of the Lord and through their faith carrying on and finishing the saving work of grace keeping them for eternal salvation. In contrast to the religious, arrogant and egotistical men Paul refers to who lack the convicting and transforming power of the Holy Spirit and therefore enforce upon their followers through clever speech and persuasive and intimidating language their morals, laws and traditions.

**Shall I come to you with a rod or with or with love in a spirit of gentleness?** Paul's question, "Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (v21) means that it depends on the Corinthians themselves in what manner Paul comes to them, if they do not put aside their boasting, contentions and strife etc., Paul will come to them with severity and the language of rebuke, but if they do put these things aside he will come to them in the spirit of meekness and of comfort.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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