

**I Corinthians Lesson # 9**  
**The Church Must be Pure, Continued**  
**Pentwater Bible Church**  
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We are Stewards of the Mysteries of God.

*I Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

As we learned in lesson 5 the mystery of which Paul speaks of is one of the eight mysteries stated and revealed in the New Testament. This mystery of which he speaks is not casually given in the Bible. There is great specificity regarding this term. It speaks of something quite different than our modern usage of this term. We see the word as something inexplicable. In the New Testament the word means that something was unrevealed until now, meaning New Testament times. Therefore, it is now understandable and explicable. Paul knew that he had been entrusted to open these mysteries to all who would listen. The following are the eight mysteries revealed in the New Testament:

1. The Mystery of the Kingdom
2. The Mystery of the Seven Stars and the Seven Golden Lamp stands which are the guardian angels over the Church (Rev 1:20).
3. The Body of Christ (Eph 3:1-12).
4. The Mystery of the Indwelling Messiah (Col 1:24-29)
5. The Mystery of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-23)
6. The Mystery of the Translation (I Cor 15:50-58)
7. The Mystery of Israel's Hardening. (Rom 9:1-11:36).
8. The Mystery of the Seven Climatic Judgments and the Defeat of the Two Satanic Mysteries (Rev 17:1-18; II Thes 2:1-12).

*I Corinthians 2: 8-9 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

For had the rulers of the Jews and Romans realized the mysteries that Paul speaks of they would have realized exactly who Jesus was and not crucified Him.

*I Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*

Those of us who have been entrusted in speaking these mysteries must be faithful in executing our gifts. One who teaches in the New Testament Church will be judged harsher than those with other spiritual gifts.

*James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

Christ also spoke to the concept of stewards of His being faithful when he went away.

*Luke 12:42-48 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Paul did not care if he was judged (criticized by the Corinthians).

*I Corinthians 4:3-5 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Paul is saying that the role of the teacher of God's Word must not let the court of human wisdom evaluate whether he was appropriately dispensing God's Word or not. The Corinthians were battling over whether one teacher or the other was the best and they had missed the fact that the centerpiece of any Bible message is Christ, not the teacher. Paul owed his allegiance to God entirely and it is God alone who examines his performance. When Paul looked within himself he could say with a clear conscience that he had done the right thing. Only God can discern the thoughts, motives and drivers bringing God's Word out of a teacher. Human beings cannot do this and therefore must be very cautious of jumping to conclusions about judgment on a leader's faithfulness in God's Church before He returns. This was demonstrated in the previous lesson where the Corinthians were judging by the "world's" standards. People can only see the outside

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whereas God can see the person's heart (I Samuel 16:7). This is not to say we condone heresy. We must speak out when the teaching is clearly wrong.

## We are Fools for Christ's Sake

*I Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.*

So far we can see how the apostle Paul has avoided singling out any individuals by name that were causing disruption in the Corinthian Church. He moves away from the avoidance but in the positive in this section of Scripture. He begins to use Apollos and himself as examples under the authority of God's Word and bound to obey it and not lean to their own inclinations or worldly opinions. The word learn in this passage is "mathete" and the related noun is "mathetes" or disciple. A disciple is one who practices what he is taught. The Greeks had great difficulty with humility. They thought it was a despicable trait and was characteristic of slaves and not of Great men. Plato expounded on this in his Laws at: 6.744c.

*I Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

Paul is making it abundantly clear that everything the Corinthians and we have comes from God. We can't give ourselves the Spiritual Gifts, which God bestows upon all believers at the point of belief. Some people who claim to be *self made* people fail to realize that any talents, drive and intelligence they have comes from God. We did not make ourselves! The same holds true if we are envious of another's gifts. It is God that did the gifting! Apparently in Corinth each faction that followed a different leader placed one above the other in prideful boasting. Paul only asked the rhetorical question of differing from one another to show them the silliness of their prideful pitting one against the other. No one of them was any better than any other true believer. Everything they had, accomplished and every gift they received was from God. Therefore nobody has any right to boast about anything he or she has. We didn't do anything to achieve it! To God be the glory, great things He has done!

*I Corinthians 4:8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!*

All Christians should take an attitude of humility. Paul set forth the pattern of Christ's life to the Philippians (Phil. 2:5-11). It was marked first by humiliation and then crowned by exaltation. The Corinthians had jumped immediately to exultation in a worldly sense. They wanted their exaltation immediately—no more sickness, no more suffering, no more pain. This is no more possible today than it was when Paul wrote to these self-

deluded Corinthians, but nonetheless many follow in their train. Our suffering will end with glorification, not before.

The Corinthians thought they had all they wanted (1 Cor. 4:8a), but they should have been hungering and thirsting for the practical righteousness they so desperately needed (Matt. 5:6). They thought of themselves as kings in need of nothing. Paul said let me in on this kingship because I am still suffering for the Gospel. He was being sarcastic to prove a point. Here he was; chosen by Christ and the Corinthians thought they were more spiritually mature than he was. They should have been too if they were not so attached to the world and its wicked ways.

*I Corinthians 4:9-13 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*

In order to contrast the Corinthians proud worldly ways and so called Christian spiritual maturity Paul begins to describe the life of the apostle. It is one of severe suffering unto death for Christ. The apostles lived out the message of the Cross. But the Corinthians were complacent and secure with their "theology of the palace" (Amos 6:1-7). This theology that Amos spoke of was contrasting those at ease with great wealth while many Jews were suffering during Amos' time. They did not care if the suffering went on. They only cared about themselves. Many Christians today are unwilling to give in a servant hood manner to the cause of Christ. They want their careers, comforts and money instead of the payless work for Christ, which just might cause some people they want to impress to look down on them.

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