

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. In December 1956, National Geographic Magazine released an article called “In the Steps of Paul” where they recount the amazing travels of the apostle Paul.
2. They estimated that his missionary endeavors consumed some 12,000 miles, some by ship on the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean and Adriatic Seas and hundreds of miles by land as he visited approximately 50 cities for Christ.
3. Yet within the thirteen epistles known to have been written by Paul, and penned over an era of maybe just under twenty years, there is no complaint of fatigue, no whimpering at the hardships, no disappointment expressed of

having been “crucified with Christ,” or of wasted years, or lack of family, wealth, or fame—just adulation. There was the simple joy in serving his Lord, and for the blessed hope of life to come.<sup>1</sup>

4. This was Paul.
5. A persistent, patient, courageous, humble man that God used to win people to Christ.
6. Paul describes his life in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 (NASB) as being “afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1385-some-character-traits-of-paul-the-apostle>

7. That's why he never gave up.
8. This is why his purpose was clear and steadfast.
9. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:11, "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."
10. He was Jesus to be manifested to the world in him.
11. Can that be said of you and me?
12. At this point in our first letter to the Corinthians, it was not true of them.
13. They were arrogant, filled with strife and contention in the church.

14. They were tolerant of sin, taking each other to court in lawsuits, engaging in unbiblical divorce, abusing their liberty, abusing the Lord's Supper and abusing their spiritual gifts.
15. But Paul, he saw himself as a "servant" and "steward" of the mysteries of God (1 Cor.4:1).
16. When he said he was a servant, he meant he was a huperetes, which was a third level galley slave on a slave ship.
17. Paul's desire for the Corinthians was simple.
18. He wanted them to be "imitators of me" (1 Cor.4:16) because he imitated Christ.
19. But in order for that to happen, he needed to correct their unbiblical thinking which led to their problems in the church.

20. In verses 6-21, he addresses the root of their problem, which was pride.
21. Pride had caused them to see themselves in a way that was not true or biblical.
22. So in verse 6 he says the figurative language that he had used previously of farmers (3:6-9), builders (3:10-15) and servant-stewards (4:1-5) was so that they would “learn not to exceed what is written” (4:6) when it comes to how you view leaders and so they would not become “arrogant in behalf of one against the other” (4:6)
23. Now in verse 7 he asks 3 questions:
24. He says, “For who regards you as superior?”

25. “What do you have that you did not receive?”
26. “And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you have not received it?”
27. With three questions (Who? What? and Why?) Paul launches a stern, ironic rebuke.<sup>2</sup>
28. The first question speaks in regard to...

## **LESSON**

### **I. Elevation (v.7a)**

The NASB reads “For who regards you as superior?”

The KJV says, “For who maketh thee to differ from another?”

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<sup>2</sup> Taylor, Mark. [1 Corinthians](#). Ed. E. Ray Clendenen. Vol. 28. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014. Print. The New American Commentary.

The NIV says, “For who makes you different from anyone else?”

This is the Greek word diakrino which means “to differentiate, to make a distinction, to evaluate or to judge, even to dispute with someone”

It is translated “discern” (Mat.16:3), “make distinction” (Acts 15:9), “decide” (1 Cor.6:5), “judge” (1 Cor.11:29), “pass judgment” (1 Cor.14:29)

It could be translated “Who concedes you any superiority?”

Thiselton translates as “Who defines you?”

The sense of the phrase, in context, seems to be “Who elevates you to a place of rightful

boasting? Who has given you the right to assume a position of such arrogance? Who makes these determinations about your exalted status?”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, Why do you think you are above other believers in the church?

Why do you think your group is better than any other?

You are made of the same stuff they are and have been redeemed by the same Lord. You are no better. You have nothing to boast of.”

Fee suggests that the English equivalent would be, “Who in the world do you think you are, anyway? What kind of self-delusion is it that

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor, Mark. 1 Corinthians. Ed. E. Ray Clendenen. Vol. 28. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014. Print. The New American Commentary.



allows you to put yourself in a position to judge another person's servant?"

The previous section (4:1–5) spelled out how humans are incapable of distinguishing or differentiating one's true status before God.<sup>4</sup>

But here they were doing it anyway!

Paul uses the present tense to indicate that this was an ongoing action.

## A. Elevating Yourself Makes You Blind to the Needs of Others

1. When the Pharisee was comparing himself to the tax collector in Luke 18, he never saw the reality that the tax collector needed to be forgiven of all his sin just like he did.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Taylor

2. All he could do is treat him as lesser than himself
3. The Pharisee was better but the tax collector was worthless
4. This is how pride works---it's all about self, yet we are told in Philippians 2:2-4 (NASB) to be "of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

B. Elevating Yourself Causes You to Unbiblically Judge Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ

1. So many Christians think we are not to judge but we are to judge but with righteous judgment
2. Jesus said in John 7:24 (NASB) “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”
3. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to “examine everything carefully”
4. How do you do this? (See Gal.6:1; Mat.7)

So, Mr. and Mrs. Corinthian believer, “Who in the world do you think you are?”

“Why do you think you are above other believers in the church?”

“Why do you think your group is better than any other?”

Notice the second question Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 4:7. It has to do with...

## **II. Evaluation (v.7b)**

He asks “What do you have that you did not receive?”

Paul reminds them that there is absolutely nothing that they presently have that they did not receive.

The question emphasizes the undeserved grace of God, which is the very ground of their

existence in the first place.

A. Everything You Possess Came from God  
Paul already told them in chapter 1:

1. Their sanctification came from God (1:2)
2. Their calling as saints came from God (1:2)
3. Grace and peace came from God (1:3-4)
4. Their spiritual gifts came from God (1:5-7)

B. All That You Have Comes by Virtue of Your Relationship to Christ

To the Ephesians Paul told them they were blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly places in Christ” (Eph.1:3) and then proceeds to tell them what those spiritual blessings are:

1. Election (1:4)
2. Holiness (1:4)
3. Predestination (1:5)
4. Redemption (1:7)
5. The mystery of His will (1:9)
6. Inheritance (1:11)
7. Sealing by the Holy Spirit (1:13)

They had been given all these things and much more.

Paul has transformed the slogan “I belong to Paul” (1:12) to “Paul and others belong to you” (3:22) to “You belong to Christ” (3:23) to “You don’t have anything that you did not receive!” (4:7).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Taylor.

The final question back in 1 Corinthians 4:7 that Paul asked has to do with...

### **III. Exaggeration (v.7c)**

He asked, “Why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

This goes along with the previous question.

A. If You Have Received Everything by the Hand of God, Why Do you Boast as if You Had Not Received It?

This goes back to the heart of the issue of human wisdom and the theme of boasting (1:29–31; 3:21)

B. To Boast Implies Human Achievement and Fails to Recognize the Free Grace of God<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Taylor.

John MacArthur says, “If they possessed only what someone else had given them, why were they boasting as if they had created the things themselves, or earned them? The whole foundation of their boasting was nothing more than a fabrication of their pride. Nothing is more self-deceitful than pride. We are inclined to believe almost anything about ourselves if it is favorable.”<sup>7</sup>”

Lenski says, “The Corinthians ought to praise and to thank God in proper humility instead of boasting as though what they have is due, not to a gracious gift from God, but to some superiority in themselves. It is surely reprehensible to receive something and then to act as though one had not

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<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, John F., Jr. [1 Corinthians](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.



received it. And it is more reprehensible to boast and to glory.”<sup>8</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

1. This is dangerous!
2. But that’s what pride is.
3. It is destructive to everyone it possesses.
4. How do you see yourself this morning?
5. Do you see yourself better than others?
6. Do you think you had something to do with what you have?

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<sup>8</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians\*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.

7. Do you boast about not receiving something from the gracious hand of God then acting as if you didn't receive it?
8. All of this is pride and it must be destroyed.
9. The only way to destroy this and any other sin is to humble yourself and be being kept filled with the Spirit of God.
10. But of course, you cannot do that if you're not saved by the Spirit of God.
11. Call on Jesus now as we pray.
12. Believe in your heart that He is who He said He is, that He is Lord.
13. Believe that God raised Him from the dead.

14. With a believing heart, God will save you from His wrath, your sin and from Satan.

15. Let's pray.

Evaluating the Presence of Pride

1 Corinthians 4:7

Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

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Outline:

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A. Everything You Possess Came from God

B. All That You Have Comes by Virtue of Your Relationship to Christ

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