

Carnal Corinthians

by Phil Beach Jr.

Paul addresses the Corinthians' failure to understand their Christian posture, leading to division and disillusionment, and offers a solution to regard them as servants of Christ and wait for God's judgment.

Duration: 49:46

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:1

Topics: "Carnal", "Unity in Christ", "Proper Judgment"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. addresses the issues of division and carnality within the Corinthian church, emphasizing the importance of understanding one's role as a servant of Christ and steward of God's mysteries. He highlights how the Corinthians' failure to properly examine, judge, and praise led to divisions and a loss of focus on the centrality of the cross. Paul reminds them that true judgment comes from the Lord, not from human standards or preferences. The sermon calls for believers to recognize their unity in Christ and to avoid elevating one minister over another based on personal biases. Ultimately, the message encourages a return to the core of the Gospel and a focus on Christ rather than on individual personalities.

Transcript

please, to turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 4. 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and we would like to look this evening at five verses. And after looking at five verses, we want to be able to show you why they were written, in what context they were written, and the vital, vital truth that they reveal to you and I today. 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verses number 1 through 5. Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful, or it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me, it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you. Examination! But to me, it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human core.

In fact, I do not even examine myself. This is the Apostle Paul talking. I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted.

But the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore, do not go on passing judgment. Passing judgment! Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time.

But wait until the Lord comes, whom will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives, motives of men's hearts and then each man's praise. We'll have to put that down on here too. We chopped that one up good, didn't we? Motives and praise.

We'll start from verse 5 again and let's just read the whole thing through now from verse 5. Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time. But wait until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts. And then each man's praise will come to him from God.

I would like to, if I could tonight, entitle this Bible study, this lesson, the carnal Corinthians. The carnal Corinthians. Paul penned verses 1 through 5 in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. But there is a distinct reason why he penned these five verses and this is what we want to look into tonight.

And I believe that it will be very helpful to you and to me. Now we can recognize why Paul penned these four verses and we can understand why he did it if we have a general understanding of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, 2, and 3. Because it is essential for us to understand what was going on in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, 2, and 3 before we can understand 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Because 1 Corinthians chapter 4 consummates a problem that Paul is dealing with. And contained within these five verses are in fact the emphatic solutions to the dilemma that we find in the first three chapters.

I'll say that again. The solution to the problem that is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, 2, and 3 is found in the fourth chapter verses 1 through 5. We're going to look at the problems that Paul is dealing with. But before we do, I want to bring your attention to these four words.

It was because of the Corinthians' failure to properly understand their relation to examining, passing judgment, motives, and praise. It was the Corinthians' failure to understand their relationship to examining other ministers, passing judgment on other ministers, trying to discern the motives of other ministers' hearts, and then praising certain ministers above others. It was their failure to understand their Christian posture in these areas.

And because of that failure to understand their Christian attitude in these four important areas, they blew it. Now turning your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, I would like, if I could please, to open up reading the first nine verses. And it's just a remarkable introduction.

The first nine verses, 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Sophonies our brother to the church of God which is at Corinth. Now you notice Paul doesn't say to the churches, plural. I pray God deliver us from the idea that there are churches, plural.

There's one church, there's one body, there's one Lord, there is one baptism, there is one faith, and there are local fellowships, but we all constitute one church. I like Paul to the church that is at Corinth. To those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Now we're not going to begin to dissect or we're never going to get into the message that the Lord put on my heart, so let's just go on. Colette's there shaking her head in the back. Sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus. That in everything, wow, here's

a people that were full, here's a people that didn't lack in everything.

You were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you. So that you are not lacking in any gift awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall also confirm you to the end blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful through whom you were called into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now there's a marvelous way to open up a letter, very encouraging. It's filled, this introduction is simply filled with Christ's ability, Christ's sufficiency, and Christ's power that is mightily working within those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to confirm them, to enrich them, and to keep them unto the day of Jesus Christ. Aren't you glad that Christ has the power to do these things? But surprisingly Paul goes from such a glorious tune to a practical tune.

And you know I think it's good that you and I keep our heads in heaven but understand that our feet are on earth. And this is what Paul's about to deal with. Paul praised them for their glorious fellowship with Christ and praised them because they had been enriched in him and they weren't lacking in anything.

Why weren't they lacking in anything? Because when we receive Christ the Bible says that in him we have been provided for and we have all things that pertain to life. In the person of Jesus Christ you have everything that you need pertaining to godliness and life. But they had a problem and Paul's about to deal with that problem.

Verse 10. Now I exhort you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all agree that there be no divisions among you but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you my brethren by close people that there are quarrels among you.

Now in verse 12 Paul's about to explain what kind of quarrels quibbling there are among these Corinthian believers. Now I mean this that each one of you is saying I am of Paul and I am of Apollos and I am of Cephas and I am of Christ. There's the beginning of Paul dealing with the Corinthian problem of carnality.

And once again I want to remind you the quarreling and quibbling that Paul is referring to that is manifest in I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ is a direct result of not understanding examination, judgment, motives, and praise. A proper understanding of these four truths within the believer's life will enable them to be free from the quarreling that results in division in a local body and in the body of Christ at large. Now I'd like for you if you would to turn first Corinthians chapter 1 verse 29.

Let's begin with verse number 26. For consider your calling brethren that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.

And the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen the things that are not that he nullified the things that are. That no man should boast before God. So first we see in first Corinthians 1 10 through 12 that Paul is dealing with quarreling and divisions.

Now in verse 29 he's dealing with an issue regarding that no man should boast before God. Now let's go to the third chapter of Corinthians and let's read verses 1 through 4. See this is a reoccurring problem that Paul is dealing with, a reoccurring problem. He won't leave it alone.

He won't leave it alone. And I believe the Holy Spirit today doesn't want to leave it alone until he can walk us to first Corinthians chapter 4 and write upon the tablets of our heart this important truth. Beginning in verse 1, and I brethren could not speak to you as to spiritual men but as to men of the flesh and to babes in Christ.

I gave you milk to drink and not solid food for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed even now you are not yet able for you are still fleshly for when one says I am of Paul and another I am of Apollos are you not mere men? Isn't that exactly what he said in the first chapter? Verses 10 through 12 Neil? Exactly the same thing. Now he brings it back up in the third chapter and you know what? He brings it up one more time.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established. It is quite evident that these Corinthian believers had a problem that was hindering and hurting their ongoing relationship first of all with the Lord and then with each other. Let's look at verses 18 through 21 chapter 3 18 through 21.

Let no man deceive himself if any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age let him become foolish that he may become wise for the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God for it is written he is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness and again the Lord knows the reasonings of the wise that they are useless so then let no one boast in men for all things belong to you whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come all things belong to you you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God it's obvious that in these four instances Paul is trying to lay a foundation of a problem that was plaguing the Corinthian church now let's look for a short time at the damage that was being created because of this problem the damage

that was being created because of this problem number one in first Corinthians chapter 1 verse 18 for the word of the cross is to those who perish foolishness but to us who are being saved it is the power of God for it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside where is the wise man where is the scribe where is the debater of this age has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world for since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God God was well pleased with the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe failing to understand listen closely now failing to understand our position in examination and passing judgment and motives and praise causes us to lose sight of the centrality of

the cross as the Christian message we lose sight of the cross listen we begin to go after the wisdom and the praise and the excellence and the superiority of speech rather than the cross of Jesus Christ Paul's reminding these Corinthian believers because of their failure to do this properly they lost sight of the cross and got their eyes listen on the messengers of the cross Apollos Cephas and Paul number two the second damaging result of this problem was they placed a premium on personal giftedness personal cleverness and ability personal wisdom and tact and delivery and once again their eyes drifted from the centrality of the cross their eyes drifted from the centrality of the cross hey listen isn't it easy to get your eyes on something other than Jesus what are your eyes on what are

your eyes on it's a constant struggle every day it's very easy to lose focus isn't it now let's let's keep moving along here because we're just laying a foundation for the most important part we've understood the problem we've understood the damage that it was creating now let's understand the underlining cause of the problem the underlining cause of the problem was found in the Corinthians and their eyes were set on people rather than on Christ their eyes were set on people rather than on Christ and we find that in first

Corinthians chapter 3 verse number 21 we read it so then let no man boast in men for all things belong to you so the cause the underlining cause of the problem was they had their eyes on people rather than on Christ now listen we're putting this together now when your

eyes are on people rather than Christ your examination of them becomes distorted and perverted your judgment about them becomes distorted and perverted your ideas about their motives become distorted and perverted and you either praise them and lift them up and become a personal disciple of them and become part of their fan club or you push them down and criticize them and don't think they're worth anything that's what the Corinthians were doing I'm of Paul I'm of Apollos well I'm of Cephas their eyes were on men their focus got off the cross which was God's wisdom listen somebody who has wisdom has the message of the cross wisdom is not seen in superior speech or giftedness but when your eyes get off the cross which is the wisdom of God which is the power of God and it gets on delivery

or personality or a person's giftedness in speaking then you begin to associate wisdom and power with their personality and your eyes get off what true power and true wisdom is which is the cross and you begin to single out certain ones to the point of being divisive we understand it this is what we do we examine in a carnal way we pass judgment in a carnal way we try and discern people's motives in a carnal way and then we lift one up and say I want to be in their fan club I want to be a follower of them and we put another down and that's what Paul was telling these Corinthians they were doing that was the source of division their eyes were on people rather than the centrality of the message of the cross now listen closely what's this this leads us to first Corinthians chapter 4 now we

understand Paul is penning chapter 4 with this in mind here's a people who have lost sight of the centrality of the cross and of Jesus and here is Paul's solution to refocus their eyes back on the cross let's begin reading in verse number one of second first Corinthians chapter 4 so let a man regard us in this manner as servants of Christ do you see what Paul's saying he just got done in three chapters showing the Corinthians how they were regarding ministers they were regarding ministers in a way that was causing them to be divisive they were lifting up one putting down the other becoming followers of one Paul sets the whole thing in order right here this would guard us in this manner you Corinthians believers have been praising Paul putting down the palace praising Cephas putting down

this one passing judgment trying to discern people's motives following the giftedness of Apollos looking at the superiority of one person's ability over the other process you get all messed up you're getting entangled in a web that will eventually divide you and hurt you and you will become disillusioned Paul said so therefore let a man regard us in this manner us Paul's referring to himself and the other ministers that had ministered to the Corinthians first of all as servants of Christ now I want to help you understand this because it's very significant I want to write down this word here according to Vine Greek the word that Paul used is this word right here and I'm not going to try and pronounce it hupoetes how do you say that Karen I'm just gonna put his glasses on h-u-p-e-r-e-t-e-s

huh we do yeah but anyway yep here here's what Paul's saying he said if any man wants to regard us as anything this is the first thing you regard us as ministers of Christ now here's what that word means according to the uh lexicon that I read an under roller under as distinguished from a seaman it came to denote any subordinate acting under another's direction so Paul is immediately setting in order the fact that he and all the other ministers that had labored among them were not theirs to become arrogant over or to begin to follow in a personal way but they were the servants of Christ and the analogy is they were simply men who were subordinate to Christ their eyes were on him and they were his servants now

because the corinthians failed to understand this that the ministers that

god had sent to them they began to misunderstand their purpose therefore they got divisive with each other they were ministers of christ now number two servants of christ and stewards of the mysteries of god being a steward was one who was entrusted entrusted with the mystery of the gospel so here paul is putting into perspective that they lost these men were not to be voted on by them to be elected as the preacher of the year the one that we're going to follow now these men were number one servants under christ's authority entrusted with the mystery of god and their purpose was to declare that mystery they didn't belong to them in the sense of judging the motives in the sense of the corinthians having the privilege to praise one and put down the other follow one and not follow the other,

based on those carnal reasons.

Paul says you've got the whole thing wrong, Corinthians. You regard us as God's ministers.

As men who are under His authority, subordinate to Him, entrusted with the very mysteries of the Gospel, and we are serving Him and labeling in His name, sharing with you the Gospel, we don't want to become, in your hands, people who you praise and judge and follow that would create division in the body. We don't want to be that. Verse number 2, in this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy or faithful.

But now Paul, in verse 4, or verse number 3, explains to the Corinthians that even their accountability and their faithfulness is not ultimately to be judged by them as a church. Let's read on. Verse number 3, but to me it is very small thing that I should be examined by you.

Were they examining Paul and Apollos? Sure they were. That's why they were saying, I'm of this one, and I'm of that one, and I'm of this one, and I'm of that one. They were improperly examining the ministers.

But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even examine myself. Now Paul is not saying here that he didn't keep close with the Lord and that he didn't watch his own life.

But what he's saying is he didn't examine himself and use that as the ultimate way to determine whether he was doing right or wrong. Because he said he had a greater judge even than his own conscience. He was saying, don't you be my judge and then pass this carnal judgment on me as you're doing on Cephas and Apollos and make one up here and one down here.

Because I don't even do that. But then he goes on to say, I am conscious of nothing against myself. Paul's saying, listen, as far as I know, I'm doing the Lord's will.

I mean, my conscience isn't bothering me. Yet am I not by this acquitted. So see, Paul is pointing them toward even a higher judgment than his own conscience.

Trying to take them and steer them away from their critical carnal judgments that they've been making and the ministers that were causing division. And now Paul brings them to the ultimate revelation. But the one who examines me is the Lord.

Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time. But wait until the Lord comes, who will both burn to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts. And then each

man's praise will come to him from God.

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos through you say, that in you you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. Why does Paul spend four chapters dealing with this? Here's why. Because Paul knew that if the church didn't learn and doesn't learn today, that God does not want us to sit and pass judgment on anyone that is not based on truth.

And God does not want us to examine anyone when our examination is not based on truth. And God does not want us to lift one up and one down like this when our lifting up and putting down is not based on truth. And God does not want us to scrutinize the motives of people's hearts when our scrutiny is not based on truth.

Because in doing so, we follow one and turn off another. We praise one and we disregard the other. And what we do is we prevent ourselves from receiving the freeness of God's blessing from each one of his servants.

From each one of his servants. You see these guys here in the church, one of them wanted Paul, the other one wanted Cephas, the other one wanted Apollos. And they grumbled if they didn't get Apollos, they grumbled if they didn't get Cephas, they grumbled if they didn't get Paul.

They praised Paul and they put down Apollos. So what they must have done is they must have figured out a reason in their mind why to put him down. They must have thought, well, you know, Paul's more spiritual than Apollos.

See, they're judging. They're passing judgment. And they probably tried to discern the motive of Apollos' heart too.

Well, obviously, Paul's more sincere than Apollos. See? So they passed judgment on him. They tried to judge his motive.

Then they were praising, they were lifting up Paul. Hey, you need to hear Paul. Hey, brother Apollos is speaking tonight.

Hey, did you hear about Paul? Yeah, praise the Lord. You know, hey, brother Apollos is, hmm, good. Paul said, hey, you shouldn't do that.

Your eyes are on the wrong thing. That doesn't mean that we cease from holding up the Word of God as the source of truth and that we judge what people say from the Word of God. No, that doesn't mean that.

But what it does mean is we've got to stop our carnal judgments and grow up and realize that Apollos and Cephas and Paul are all yours. And you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. And together we will serve Him and love Him and magnify Him and grow in grace and knowledge.

These things are not only applicable to ministers, they're applicable to each and every believer. You're a servant of Christ. You've been entrusted with God's mystery, the Gospel.

And He'll be your judge. He'll be your judge. Does everyone understand? Understand.

Listen to this now. Proper understanding of our call to be God's ministers under Christ's authority, subordinate to Him, each one being personally accountable to God, walking in love, will prevent the divisiveness of wrong judgment and the creation of little cliques and fan clubs in the body of Christ. And in my opinion, we're in desperate need of having the first four chapters of Corinthians so written upon our hearts that we can begin to let God enlarge us and get off our little prejudices and begin to receive one another in Christ, loving the Lord with all of our heart, loving Him.

Amen? Does anyone have a question? Made it understandable for you? I think so. We're so critical. A lot of the letters we've been getting from Christians have been written to us both in the radio industry, but we have to work with them on the filming.

Keep filming in front of us because we can't have a fire in the street. We can't. I don't think that Paul and Apollos and Cephas were all the same, do you? And John? They're all different.

Amen. That's the message, the cross of Jesus Christ. And when people bear the message of the cross, we accept them.

We hear them. We thank God for them. We don't pass judgment and end up with little private fan clubs.

This one's more spiritual than that one. I'll tell you, if Paul came back, I don't know what would happen. You think about it.

I mean, if Paul came back, I mean, he still speaks, but if he came back, I think he would I think he would be concerned. Slightly concerned. You know? George, Reverend George.

And the ultimate, as Pastor Phil has said tonight, is that we keep our eyes upon Christ. Man will let you down. Pastor Phil will let you down.

I'll let you down. Not me, but we will do it. But if you keep your eyes upon Christ, you keep peace upon Him, you're seeking Him with all your heart, He's never going to let you down.

And the ultimate is that, as ministers, and I like Pastor Phil Robinson, I said, George, you'll never be able to minister to everyone that comes down and goes, that's not your job. You're a sheepdog. He said, your job as a sheepdog is to point them to the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

And that's what our job is. You know, it sounds terrible, in the Mennonites, in the Athenians, they have two meetings every six months before they have a church. I don't know how many people cover it.

They go to their libraries and everything. But they do something that we don't think about. We've always announced that we're going to have good speakers.

They never announce it, who's going to speak at those meetings. Because they want people to come there, not to hear that man, but to hear from the man of God who has the word of God for them. And that's what we've become.

You know, we, my friend, he was having a dinner. And last year, we had a new story, the 700 Club. And the year before, we had someone else.

You know, the crowd wasn't that big. So, actually, I said, I said, I said, why don't you speak? You know the history. You know what it's about.

You know what you're doing. And then you pray the night, and the Lord spoke, and the time was full. And because of that, certain things happen at the meetings.

And we look, we look to the big person. Time is enormous. And then, Pastor Phil's job, and my job, is to go to Boston, and to emerge here, is to prepare new people who want to serve the church.

That's my job. Is to prepare new people who want to serve the church. And it's God's job.

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