

Studies in 1 Corinthians-03 1 Cor 4:1-13

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness in ministry and the need for God's judgment, rather than self-judgment.

Duration: 44:13

Scripture: Matthew 5:11-12, Matthew 7:15, Romans 12:14, 1 Corinthians 4:10, 2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Peter 4:14

Topics: "Judgment Seat", "Faithful Stewardship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and specifically discusses the judgment seat of Christ. He explains that when the Lord comes, there will be a judgment seat where hidden things of darkness will be brought to light and the counsels of the heart will be revealed. The preacher also mentions four important judgments in the New Testament, including the judgment of the believer's sins. He emphasizes the importance of being faithful stewards of the mysteries of God and warns against thinking beyond what is written in the Bible to avoid pride and division among believers.

Transcript

Today our lesson is in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and we're going to read a portion of that together. It's not too bright, I assume. How dark is it? 1 Corinthians chapter 4, beginning with verse 1. Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

It might help a little to darken it. You might be able to see it a little better. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

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 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 heart. And then each one's praise will come from God.

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sake, 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. And 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 glory as if you had not received it? You are already

full. You are already rich.

You have reigned as kings without us. Indeed, I could wish you did reign. We also might reign with you.

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. Even to this present hour, we both hunger and thirst.

We are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless.

Being persecuted, we endure it. Being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

Now, this chapter isn't what you'd call a rousing, evangelistic chapter. But every word of God is pure. And all scripture is given by God and is profitable, Paul the apostle tells us.

And whenever the word of God is ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, it produces results in heart and life. And although you might read that chapter and say, what is in it for me? The fact of the matter is, there is something in it for each one of us. And I hope we'll see that as we go along.

Now, just a little by way of background. Paul had gone into the city of Corinth and he had preached the gospel and people were saved. And a local assembly was formed there.

And then, of course, as was his custom, Paul went off to plant churches in other areas. Paul was an itinerant evangelist, an itinerant apostle. He was not a stayer, he was a goer.

Always on the move. And wherever he went, he started a revolution of sorts. The old bishop in England said, wherever Paul went, he started a revolution.

Wherever I go, they serve me tea. And that's about the size of it. Well, after Paul left Corinth, some other teachers and preachers came into the assembly there.

And they started sowing disaffection against Paul. Now, it's a sad thing to say, but there is such a thing as jealousy, even among Christians still. Christians are new creatures in Christ Jesus, but they still have the old Adam, don't they? And so these people were forming parties around themselves.

It was a form of sectarianism. And people were following them. The saints in Corinth were following them.

And they were becoming prideful over which party they belonged to. Disgraceful. Absolutely shameful that that's what was going on.

And in the last part of the last chapter, which we saw a couple of months ago, Paul said, you don't have to say, well, he's my favorite preacher, or he's my favorite evangelist. You don't have to. He said, they all belong to you.

All things are yours. And you are Christ. And Christ is God.

If you are a Christian, you don't have to choose favorites. Just say, well, thank God they all belong to me. Billy Graham belongs to me.

John MacArthur belongs to me. Chuck Swindle, they all belong to me. That's the right attitude.

And so now he's going to go on and explain that a little further. And he says, now, when you think of servants of the Lord, don't think of them as exalted demigods. And you know, that really does take place in the world today.

There are people who look upon their priest and upon their pastor as just a little god. They practically worship them. Paul says, well, that's really not the right attitude.

Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ. Good word. Servants of Christ.

And that word that he uses here for servants, it's rather interesting. If you go back to the derivation of the word, it has to do with those slaves that were down below in the ship pulling the oars. I mean, it's not the captain up on the bridge.

It's the slaves down below rowing to keep the boat going. That's the derivation of the word he uses here for servants. Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Steward. What's a steward? Well, a steward is a man who is taking care of the property and person of somebody else. He's an assistant in a way, isn't he? Not a very prominent figure necessarily.

Not somebody you should dote over. Although there is a certain honor to it, I admit. Stewards of the mysteries of God.

What are the mysteries of God? Well, don't think of it in the way that we think of mysteries. We think of mysteries as a fiction story with a surprise ending. Whodunit, you know.

But that's not what it means in the New Testament. A mystery in the New Testament is a truth that was never known from the beginning of creation, but now has been revealed by God through the saints, through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament period. So Paul says when you think of us, don't think of us as men that you want to form a party around.

Christ is all. Christ is the center of attraction. Christ is the head of the church.

Just think of us as under rowers or stewards of the mysteries of God. And he says a great thing in a steward is not that he be a great orator. Not that he be noted for his rhetoric or for the kind of a crowd that he can draw.

The great thing in a steward is that he be found faithful. And here, of course, faithful to the Lord. Not success even.

Man has his own ways of measuring success. By the amount of money he earns or by the number of people who follow him. He says that's not what counts here.

What counts in a steward is that he be found faithful to the Lord. And that means faithful to the word of God. Means when he takes the word of God in his hand, he doesn't try to explain it away.

He doesn't try to water it down. He takes it at his face value and says Jesus knew what he meant. That's what it means and that's what I'm going to do.

A disciple is a person not only who learns the word of God but obeys the word of God. A real disciple. Good to remember that.

A lot of people think that just head knowledge is what counts. It isn't head knowledge that counts. It's heart knowledge and obedience to the word of God.

And obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. The more we obey, the more God entrusts us with his word. So, evaluating our leaders, the proper estimate is that we think of them as servants and as stewards.

And the responsibility of stewards is that they be found faithful. Now Paul speaks of the inadequacy of the judgment of others. They were obviously hurling a few barbs at Paul from the sidelines there in Corinth.

Some of these men who had fought. That's pretty hard, you know, to be used of God to start a work, which Paul was. He was the founder, humanly speaking, of the work in Corinth.

It's a pretty tough boy to have that happen and then have men come in and start shooting at you from the sidelines. And he's not even there to defend himself. He's off planting churches somewhere else.

This is what was happening. Now, he's going to talk about judgment in the verses that follow. But it's very important to know that it's only judgment with regard to faithfulness.

When you first read these verses, you might think, well, we must never judge a servant of the Lord. We must never criticize a servant of the Lord. You'd think that when you read it, wouldn't you? But there are times when we have to judge a servant of the Lord.

Here's a man and he gets up and he preaches something that's not true to the word of God. You're going to sit there and take it? I should say not. You have a right to judge him.

The judgment Paul is, or here's a man who professes to be a Christian and he's involved in some scandal. You're not supposed to judge him. Of course you have to judge him.

You have to judge him according to the standards of the word of God. What is in view here is the judgment of the servant of the Lord's faithfulness. And we're really not the ones who are qualified to make that judgment.

It's required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me, it's a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. Something nice about that.

The same faith that enables a man to walk with God enables him to think lightly about the opinions of others. Let me say that again. The same faith that enables a man to walk with God enables him to think lightly of the opinions of others.

In other words, if you're walking with the Lord and you're obeying the word of God and somebody comes along with some carping criticism, it doesn't bother you. It doesn't bother you. Mind you, if they come along with a criticism that's valid, you want to do something about it.

But you know, in the Christian life, you mustn't be thin-skinned. Because if you're going to walk with God, you're going to be criticized. I promise you that.

They that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. And part of the persecution today is not stones or even the gallows, but just carping criticism. With me, it's a very small thing I should be judged by you or by a human court.

They were obviously doing that. They were judging his faithfulness in his service for the Lord. In fact, he says, I don't even judge myself.

The inadequacy of self-judgment. And that's true. We're not the ones even to judge ourselves as far as faithfulness is concerned because we're all biased in our own favor, aren't we? Our own judgment is affected by the interests of sin.

And so, really, I often think of this. God is the only one who's qualified to judge, isn't he? You ever think about that? God is the only one who's qualified to judge. But he is qualified.

He knows not only the outward acts, but he knows the inward thoughts. He knows the motives of the heart. And so, it's a wonderful thing to leave that judgment with him.

When Paul says in verse 4, I know nothing against myself, he doesn't mean that he doesn't know a failure in his life. Of course he knew a failure. We all do.

Every one of us has enough failure to think of battleships, if truth were known. He's talking about faithfulness. And he's saying, in the area of faithfulness, I don't know any charge that can be sustained against me.

But he said, even that doesn't justify me. He who judges me is the Lord. And I can understand that.

I can understand that I might think that all outward appearances, I'm just being faithful to the Lord. But see, I'm looking at it through human eyes. And if I could see myself in the light of the holiness and the glory of God, I'd probably shrivel up and die.

It's true. And really, it's God's judgment that counts, isn't it? Not my judgment. It's true, too, before I was saved.

You know, I thought, alright. I've never done anything outwardly, you know, base or vile. But then God reveals to me what I was in His sight that sent me to the cross in a hurry for salvation.

It isn't what you think about yourself. It's what God thinks about you. And one day, men are going to stand before God, before God's horoscope.

And it'll judge not only the outward acts, but what we are inside. And what we are inside is a lot worse than anything we've ever done. So, please remember that when you come to verse 4, I know nothing against myself.

Paul isn't pleading sinless perfection. He's the last one in the world to do it. In fact, he spoke of himself as the chief of sinners, didn't he? Paul knew that there was failure in his life, even after he became a Christian, there was failure.

But this isn't a matter of faithfulness as a steward of the Lord. And he's saying, I know nothing against myself. Even that isn't adequate.

The inadequacy of self-judgment. The true judge is the Lord. You can see this was all going back to that party spirit that prevailed in Corinth, wasn't it? It's a terrible thing.

Praise God for an assembly where the people are going on in happy fellowship with one another and their eyes are upon the Lord Jesus and not on their fellow men. If you want to get stumbled, get your eyes off Christ and get them on men. Occupation with self brings distress.

Occupation with others brings despair. Occupation with Christ brings delight. That's the secret of the Christian life, to be occupied with the Lord Jesus and don't be occupied with others or with yourself.

And so Paul says, don't get up on the judgment throne and make judgment before the time. Premature judgment forbidden. Therefore, judge nothing before the time.

What time? The time when the Lord comes. It says that. What happens when the Lord comes? The judgment seat of Christ.

What is the judgment seat of Christ? He goes on to explain, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart. And then each one's praise will come from God. Speaking of the area of Christian service.

Perhaps I should just pause here and say that I'm sure we're all aware of the fact several different judgments in the New Testament. I'd just like to list four of them, although there are more. The four most important judgments that you read about in the New Testament.

First of all, there's the judgment of the believer's sins. That took place at the cross of Calvary 1,900 years ago, almost 2,000 years ago. The judgment of the believer's sins.

What does that mean? It means that the sins of believers were placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And God judged them there. As the Lord Jesus bore the full penalty for our sins in his body on the tree.

That's what we mean by the judgment of the believer's sins. So that when a person trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he can look back to Calvary and say all my sins were placed upon the Lord Jesus and he bore, he paid the full penalty for those sins and I'll never have to pay it. He can say death and judgment are behind me.

Grace and glory lie before. All the billows rolled toward Jesus. There they spent their utmost power.

I think that's wonderful, don't you? He can say there is no condemnation, there is no hell for me. Why? Because the Lord Jesus bore it all for me as my substitute on the cross of Calvary. The judgment of the believer's sins.

Wonderful, those words, it is finished. What does he mean when he said it is finished? He meant that the whole work of redemption had been completed and that because he paid for our sins, we don't have to pay for them. Of course, that doesn't mean that everybody's saved.

God doesn't save people against their will. The human will comes in. Both the Bible and experience teach me that I must make a personal decision for the Lord Jesus Christ.

There came a time in my life, I was 18 years old, and I realized I had to make that decision whether I would accept the value of his work for me at Calvary's cross. And when you do, you can look back and say the sin question is settled. God will never bring it up before me again.

That's what it says in John chapter 5 and verse 24. It says, verily, verily, I say unto you, listen, he that heareth my word. And that doesn't just mean hear with the ear, it means hear receptively.

He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me. Who sent him? God sent him. Why did he send him? To be the sin bearer.

To bear my sins in his body there on the cross. And believeth in him that sent me. Hath everlasting life.

Not will have. Not hopes he has. Hath everlasting life and shall not commit a judgment.

There it is. Shall not commit a judgment but is passed from death unto life. Link three things in that verse and you've got the whole thing.

Hearing, believing, having. Just as simple as that. Don't make it more difficult than it is.

Hearing receptively, believing by a definite act of faith. Hath everlasting life. Shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.

That's the first judgment. The second judgment is what you have here in verse 5 and that's what we call the judgment seat of Christ. This is the judgment of the believer's service.

Not his sins. There'll be no question about sins at this judgment. But the judgment of the believer's service.

You see, and I'll point this out. There are two kinds of judgments going on in the Bay Area at the present time, I'm sure. There'll be judgment down at the criminal court.

There's a judgment of sinners. There might be a flower show or a horse show or something else going on in the Bay Area too. It's not a question of judging sin.

It's a question of giving out rewards, isn't it? Giving out first prizes, second prizes, honorable mention. They're both judgments but they're quite different. This is that second kind.

When the believer's service and here particularly steward's service will be brought out, the thoughts and intents of the heart will be made known in that day And everyone who deserves it will get praise from God. That's what it means here. Then each one's praise will come from God.

And Paul is saying that's really what counts. The praise that comes from God, not the praise that comes from some party leaders in the church in Corinth. I don't think it means that everyone will get praise.

But everyone who deserves it will get praise from God. If you have built with gold, silver, precious stone, you'll be rewarded. If you've built with wood, hay, stubble, you'll suffer loss as a believer.

But you yourself will be saved, yet so as by fire. So that's the second judgment, the judgment of the believer's service. Then there's a judgment of the nation.

At the end of the tribulation period, the end of the Great Tribulation, God is going to gather the nations together. And the Lord Jesus will sit upon the throne. And he'll judge the nations.

And they will be judged on how they treated Christ's Jewish brethren during the tribulation period. Judgment of the nation. You read about that in Matthew chapter 25.

If you're interested, just turn to Matthew 25. The whole story is told there. Jesus says, I was hungry and you didn't feed me.

I was naked and you didn't clothe me. And they'll say to him, well, you weren't even here on earth. How could we feed you? How could we clothe you? You were in heaven.

You weren't here on earth. He'll say, inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me. He's referring there primarily to his Jewish brethren during the tribulation period.

Although, of course, a verse like that has a message for us today as well. Judgment of the nations. Then the fourth judgment is the judgment of all unbelievers.

From Cain right down through the sweep of time, this takes place at the end of the millennium in eternity. Because John tells us in Revelation chapter 20, I saw a great white throne. And him who sat upon it from whose face the heavens and the earth flowed away.

And John saw the dead, small and great, standing there. Unbelievers. Only unbelievers.

And the books were opened. And they're judged out of the books. And whosoever whose name was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is the judgment of the unbelieving dead. Not only the judgment of great criminals. The judgment of people who were fearful, who were afraid to trust Christ, who were ashamed to trust Christ.

They'll all be there at that judgment. Revelation chapter 20. The important thing here in verse 5 is that this has to do with the judgment of the service of stewards of the Lord.

And it's not a judgment of condemnation at all. No thought of that. It has nothing to do with the salvation of the soul.

It has to do with our service for the Lord. And so this is the time and nature of the ultimate judgment as far as her faithfulness in service is concerned. That brings us to the next section which is the prideful situation in Corinth.

By the eagle eye that he had, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, Paul realized that the root of the problem was pride. Pride is the parent sin. The first sin that was ever committed was pride.

And it happened not on earth but in heaven. Where Lucifer, star of the morning, said, I will be like God. He wanted to dethrone God and take the throne.

He was only a created being, an angelic being, but he wanted to take the throne from God and sit upon it himself. Pride. Pride is a terrible thing.

And every one of us has it in us. Those of us who are believers have to fight it all the time. I was interested to read the other day about a Cambridge undergraduate, undergraduating Cambridge University in England.

And this guy was talking about himself. Whenever any conversation took place, he had a marvelous way of bringing the conversation right around to himself. This went on the whole first year he was at Cambridge.

And it continued the whole second year he was at Cambridge. His friends were getting a little bit bored by-laws. They like to get their own oar in once in a while.

And by the time they came to the senior year, they thought, really, if we loved that guy, we'd say something to him about it. And so they took him aside and they said to him, look, really, there's something in your life we'd like to talk to you about. And that is you're so prideful.

You're so self-centered. And every conversation, it revolves around you. He was like the king of Prussia.

The valet of the king of Prussia said that, he said, I cannot deny that my master is a prideful man. He said, at every christening he wants to be the baby. At every marriage he wants to be the bride.

At every funeral he wants to be the corpse. That's pride, I'll say. Well, anyway, they talked to this fellow.

And you know what he said? He said, I know what you say is true. And he said, but no student at Cambridge could have ever taken it the way I've taken it. You talk about self.

You talk about pride. That's what he said. Acknowledge the truth of what they were saying, that no student at Cambridge could have ever taken it the way he took it.

Well, Paul traces the problem down to pride. These things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred, verse 6, 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, what? Puffed up. That's it, pride.

Puffed up on behalf of one against another. What Paul is saying here is Paul and Apollos weren't the culprits. But he's going to put his name and Apollos' name in there, going to transfer their names into the picture.

In other words, he's not going to name those who were causing the trouble. Sometimes he did. You go to some of Paul's epistles, he didn't hesitate.

Say, Alexander the coppersmith has done me much evil. He didn't hesitate to mention Phygellus and Hermogenes, who probably couldn't be blamed for their horrible names, but they could be blamed for their horrible characters, and Paul did that. He mentioned others.

Hymenaeus. But here he said, I'm not going to mention those that are causing this party spirit in Corinth, or those that are causing the sectarianism in Corinth. He said, I'll transfer it to myself and Apollos for your sake.

Why? So that people don't get puffed up. Pride always wants to have something that other people don't have. Or to belong to a party that you don't belong to.

Or a club. Or a fraternity. Or a social order.

Or something like that. That's what Paul says we want to avoid. Learning us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against another.

And then he asks some very discriminating questions. Who makes you differ from one another? It's really a joke, isn't it? We do everything we can think of doing to make ourselves different from others by stickers on our cars. Maybe by white wall tires.

I don't know. It's goofy. The way we try to engage in one upmanship over others.

The fact of the matter is we're all made of the same dust, aren't we? We're all made of the same dust. And he said, what did you have that you didn't receive? That's absolutely true. You and I don't have anything we didn't receive.

Everything we have was given to us. I often tell our interns I never had an original thought. Everything I know I got from somebody else.

My mind's like a trawler and I go trawling in the ocean. That's good. I'll get that, you know.

I do. And everything I got, I got from somebody else. Maybe sometimes the combination of ideas.

Well, I thought I had that once. And then I read Ephesians 1 by Ironside and there it was. And then I knew where I had got it.

Yep. What do you have that you didn't receive? Didn't Jesus say that to Pilate? Pilate, the pompous judge sitting there. Jesus said you could have no power against me at all unless it were given to you from above.

Boy, that was telling him off in a few well-chosen words. So, it's good to have this proper estimate of ourselves. What do you, who makes you differ from one another and what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? People say, well, isn't faith a gift of God? Well, everything's a gift of God in that sense.

The air I breathe is a gift of God. But when it says that we're saved by grace through faith, it doesn't mean that God gives faith to some and he doesn't give it to others. It doesn't mean that at all.

Actually, everybody has faith in a sense. And I think as wickedness increases more and more in the world, you have to have more and more faith. Drive down that highway with all the dope heads driving and, you know, drunkards driving and everything.

It takes a bit of faith. All the catastrophes that are taking place, it takes a bit of faith. But people say, well, I wish I could believe in Jesus.

You can believe in Jesus. There's nothing about Jesus that makes it impossible to believe in him. It's a question of the will, isn't it? It all goes back to human will.

Jesus said that to the Jewish people of his day. He said, you search the scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life and these are they that testify of thee and you don't want to come to me that you might have life. That's true.

Trouble isn't in your mind. Trouble is in your will. There's nothing about Jesus that makes it impossible to believe in him.

The most rational, sane, reasonable thing in the world is for the creature to believe his creator but the will. Our fellows were over in Market Street in San Francisco this last week. There's some here this morning

who engaged in that.

It's really quite a study to be there. Just stand in the crowd and hear people come along. And when it comes to the sin of God or Christ, they let out just a string of profanity and move on.

Isn't that amazing? Hearts that are steeled against the thing, the will. Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? And then he gives really an amazing picture here. And that is, he's picturing the Corinthians swimming along in full celestial state while the apostles were suffering persecution and maltreatment and all the rest.

The glory of the Corinthians contrasted with the shame of the apostles. Verses 8 through 11. It's really quite a portion of the word of God.

You are already full. And what he's going to picture here is, and the best way to describe it is to think of yourself in a coliseum. And the Corinthians were sitting up in the box seats in the coliseum.

The very best seats in the coliseum. And the apostles were down there on the ground being thrown to the animals. And he was saying, look, friends, you've got things a little bit backward.

You think you're reigning now. Lifetime isn't reigning time. Lifetime is training time for reigning time.

Now we suffer, then we reign with him. You already have your crowns on your head, you think. I wish it were so.

If it were so, that meant that the Lord would have come. But it isn't so. Let's read how he handles that.

You are already full. You are already rich. You have reigned as kings without us.

That is, without us, the apostles. They were following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. They were taking up the cross and following Christ, the apostles were.

Not the Corinthians. No, no. The Corinthians, I think, believed the health and prosperity doctrine that you hear sometimes on the radio and the television today.

Which is just a lie of the devil, you know. I don't see much health and prosperity in this portion of Scripture that we're reading. You have reigned as kings without us, and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you.

But the idea is the time hasn't come yet. If we suffer with him, we will reign with him, the Scripture says. But first the suffering, then the reigning.

This was the pathway of the Lord Jesus. He left the glory above. He came down, down, down.

Became a servant of men. Went to the death of the cross. Wherefore, God has highly exalted him.

And he says, now come, take up your cross, and follow me. I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, life, as men condemned to death. So we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

It wasn't an easy path that they trod. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. They wanted respectability in the community, didn't they? That isn't the way the Lord has ordained it.

Years ago when the ferries operated between Oakland and San Francisco, there was a man who used to get on every morning at rush hour. And he had a sandwich board, part of it in his front and part in the back. And the front said, I'm a fool for Christ's sake.

And the back said, whose fool are you? He was there every morning with his sandwich board. But Paul says here, we're fools for Christ's sake. That is in the eyes of the world.

The world looks down its nose, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are distinguished, but we are dishonored.

Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands, being reviled we bless, being persecuted we endure it, being defamed we entreat. We've been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

We use the expression, the scum of the earth. That's what's meant here. The scum of the earth.

Are you ready to take that? That's what the Lord invites you to. Not to health and prosperity, as some of the radio preachers say today. It is the way the master went.

Shall not his servant credit still? And so Paul draws this very dramatic picture, as I said, of the Corinthians reigning in glory and in splendor there in Corinth, while the apostles, faithful to the teachings of the Lord Jesus, were being treated as the scum of the earth. I don't know if you noticed it, but there's an increasing tempo, especially in the media, of hatred against anything to do with Christ. The media today never misses an opportunity to take a jab at the things of the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes may be justified in the weakness of his service, but whether it is or not, there's an increasing tempo of opposition to anything that's of the Lord. We who are Christians, we are believers in the Lord Jesus. What do we do? Do we try to avoid that shame? No.

The thing to do is to be proud of it. The early Christians, when they were persecuted, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians had things a little bit balled up.

They were reigning before the time. They wanted a place in the world that gave their Savior nothing but a cross and a grave. They wanted respectability in the community.

But God chooses the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, those who love him. He chooses the poor, the weak, the base, the despised, the things that are not, things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. So Paul says, look, the root of your trouble is pride.

The trouble. Pride and following certain leaders. Deal with it.

And deal with it ruthlessly. And take your place with true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffering reproach for his name. I've often said, the only kind of a prophet that the world likes is a dead prophet.

They'll take and put a wreath on the grave of the dead prophet. They'll kill him if he's alive. Shall we pray? And then our brother Tom will come in.

Father, we thank you for your word, for its timelessness. We thank you too for its power, because no book ever exposes us to ourselves the way the Bible does. And we thank you most of all for the way of salvation

that is set forth so clearly in it.

Salvation given to the unworthy, received by faith, and including the promise of the forgiveness of sins, freedom from judgment, and a home in heaven for all eternity. Bless your word to all of our hearts today. We ask it in the Savior's name.

Amen.

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