

Anything Good We Have Is a Gift, and This Eliminates Pride

1 Corinthians 4:6-7

This portion comes at the following point in the outline.

- II. Paul's response to reports of division (1:10-6:20).
 - A. A church divided, internally and against Paul (1:10-4:20).
 - 7. The Corinthians and their apostle (4:1-21).
 - a. On being a servant and being judged (4:1-5).
 - b. **The marks of true apostleship (4:6-13).**
 - c. Appeal and exhortation (4:14-21).

Introduction

In verses 1-5 Paul has made an application of the truth of being a servant, and shown how that relates to the Corinthians' treatment of him in his lack of appeal in what they valued. He insists that he is God's servant, not theirs, and they are not allowed to judge another's servant. In doing so, he also reminds them of the future judgment they all will face.

In verses 6-13, he emphasizes the Corinthians' pride, and his own weakness. He first, based on the truth of verses 1-5, tells them how and why their pride and favoritism is wrong in verses 6-7. Then in verses 8-13, almost in an exaggerated or sarcastic tone, he attacks their improperly upside-down view of their own status and genuine marks of apostleship.

How they perceive themselves, which he confronts, is the way they think he ought to be. But actually, the way he is should be the way they ought to be.

We will only focus on verses 6-7 for this study, looking at verses 8-13 in the next one. The reality on which Paul exhorts the Corinthians to not be puffed up in verse 7 is of great significance, and deserves our attention and discussion.

Verses

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ³ 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. ⁴ For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ 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.

⁶ 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 favor of one against another. ⁷ 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?

⁸ 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! ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹ To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ¹² and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³ when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Questions

1. General.

- a. What are your initial observations, thoughts, or questions about the whole passage, and in particular, verses 6-7?
- b. How would you briefly describe the whole passage, and verses 6-7?
 - Whole passage - It is preposterous, based on all Paul has said, and the nature of God's **grace**, to value what the Corinthians valued, and disdain the true wisdom Paul modeled. His model of Apostleship is what God truly **honors**, and the Corinthians should too.
 - Verses 6-7 - Everything said so far, applied to Paul and Apollos, and the source of anything good the Corinthians have - God's grace - must have the effect of taking away pride and a critical spirit.

2. Specific Verses.

- a. What does Paul mean in verse 6 when he says he's "applied all these things to himself and Apollos for their benefit?" What about "not going beyond what is written," and not being "puffed up in favor of one against another?"
 - The idea of being stewards in verses 1-5, the idea in 3:5-9 of being merely human servants, but God giving the increase, the idea in 3:10-17 of Jesus being the foundation and the church being the building, the idea in 3:18-23 (and elsewhere) of not boasting in men - everything that has come before - leads Paul to definitively affirm the **appropriate** view of servants, or anyone else. This is what the Corinthians need to hear and apply.
 - They should view the favoritism they show, the pride they possess, and the critical spirit they have of Paul in light of what he's said (which is Scripture), and the rest of Scripture. To go beyond that is **wrong**.
- b. What does Paul mean in verse 7 when he says, "For who sees anything different in you?"
 - The NIV's translation, "who makes you different from anyone else," captures the idea of boasting being **ridiculous**, because there are no grounds for exalting ourselves, since any differences are ultimately **attributable** to God.
- c. Paul's two other questions in verse 7 have been said to "express the central theological truth that the Corinthians, in their divisiveness, seem to have forgotten: all their abilities, opportunities, and blessings are from God, so they should not boast." How do you think this would be basic and fundamental for their issues. How is this important for us?
 - When they realized that everything is a gift of God, and of his grace, it must have the effect of removing pride, divisiveness, boasting, and a critical spirit. Further, it must create a heart of **gratitude**. The same applies to us.
- d. List some things that you have received, by God's grace, that serve to eliminate boasting and create gratitude.
 - **Faith. A new heart. Giftedness and gifts. Relationships. Position. Anything material. Countless salvation benefits.**

3. Final thoughts and application

- a. Do you have any final observations, comments, or questions?
- b. How do you think you can apply the truths of this passage to your life?