

## The Marks of True Apostleship and Ministry Are Counter to Prideful Favoritism and Criticism

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

*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 (1:10-4:21).
    - 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

*After Paul insists that there is no room for pride in the Corinthians, for all that they have they have received from the Lord (Vs. 7), in verses 8-13 he contrasts the implications of their boasting and his own weakness. With an ironic tone, he attacks their improperly upside-down view of their own status, and conveys the genuine marks of apostleship that characterize his own life and ministry. 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.*

### Verses

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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?

<sup>8</sup> 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! <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup> and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> 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 passage?
  - b. How would you briefly describe the passage?
    - Paul rebukes the Corinthians again for their **boasting**, demonstrating a sharp contrast with his **ministry**. His model of Apostleship is what God truly honors, and the Corinthians should seek this also.
- 2. Specific Verses.
  - a. What's the overall idea of verse 8 in the first three sentences? What do you think Paul means in the last sentence of the verse?

- Paul severely **rebukes** the Corinthians, “heaping on false praise, sarcastically suggesting that those who were self-satisfied had already achieved spiritual greatness (MacArthur).”
  - He seems to be referring to **heaven**, when we will be glorified, and experience the final outcome of our salvation. But they’re acting like they’ve already achieved this in their pride.
- b. What imagery is Paul stressing in verse 9, and why?
- He may be referring to the processions victorious Roman soldiers held to show off their prisoners who would be publicly executed, or condemned gladiators. Either way, he is stressing that God’s **way** and **wisdom**, for his glory to shine through and to build his kingdom, displays his servants as **nothing** to the world.
- c. How does Paul continue with his theme and purpose in verse 10?
- He again emphasizes how the marks of God’s ministers are counter to the world’s **wisdom**, and what the Corinthians value and think about **themselves**. He and others are fools, weak, and in disrepute (How the Corinthians would characterize him). He sarcastically says that they are wise, strong, and honored.
- d. Verses 11-13 continue the emphasis on the marks of genuine and God-honoring Apostleship and ministry - marks that, again, emphasize the contrasts of God’s “foolishness” and the world’s “wisdom.” What stands out to you? How would the Corinthians need to hear all of this, or something in particular?
- All of the imagery and phrases stress **humility**, and how the “foolishness” of God is so distasteful to the world, and the prideful Corinthians. His ministry was marked by hunger and thirsting, poverty, abuse, homelessness, and physical labor. He responded counter to the way he was treated. He was considered like garbage. Yet this is the **power** and **design** of God, which reflects Christ, and they needed to embrace. This, then, particularly would relate to the subject matter - their favoritism of ministers and criticism of Paul.
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?
- Recognize the nature of the wisdom of God in relation to suffering, humility, being disregarded by the world, etc. This is the power of God, by the Spirit, rooted in Christ crucified, and what he uses and honors.
  - Remember that we have been given everything we have (Vs. 7), so that we do not get puffed up.
  - By grace and the Spirit, resist the tendencies we all have in relation to pride.