

## Confidence in Judgment

### I. Begin by reading I Corinthians 4:1-4

A. Here Paul describes himself as both a servant, and a steward of God's mysteries:

1. His stewardship was to make these mysteries known...
  - a) To Kings and Israelites (Acts 9:15)
  - b) And to the gentiles (Acts 22:21)
2. In verse 2 he states that the success of his stewardship requires that he be found trustworthy; faithful in completing the commands:

B. This is all fairly straightforward-- what is truly interesting about these verses begins in verse 3: Paul states that he has supreme confidence that he will be found faithful:

1. So sure is Paul, that it doesn't bother him in the least to have his stewardship placed on trial
  - a) By the Corinthian brethren... (who he would indeed defend himself before)
  - b) By any human court
2. But he takes it further moving into verse 4 by stating that it is not either of these, or even his own conscience that gives him this courage and conviction-- he states in v 4 that he is acquitted by the Lord who examines him!

C. That is a bold statement indeed! To have such confidence in your service to the Lord that you can say: "I'm ready! put me on the scales and weigh me; I won't be found lacking"

1. This is a confidence that we should desire and pursue, and it is also a confidence that we can make our own:
2. It is a confidence that can only be found by making sure that we as servants meet the master's standard:
  - a) Paul didn't find confidence in:
    - (1) The Corinthian's judgment... we can fool fellow brethren
    - (2) Any court... we can fool those set over us
    - (3) Or his conscience... we can fool ourselves
    - (4) Paul's confidence in being judged came from knowing he offered faithful service to the master... because we can't fool Him:

D. Spend the rest of this study examining a few parables that Jesus told that communicated what He expected over His servants and stewards.

- i. Take stock as servants on what we are doing or may need to do, so that we too can have that confidence to be judged before the master:

**i. Parable of the Talents: Matt. 25:14-15; 24-29**

a. **In this parable**, all three servants were called into judgment for their work in the master's absence

- i. All three had the results of their work reviewed, yet only two of these were found faithful:
- ii. We might ask: why did he stand condemned if he didn't lose the money? He didn't waste it.. he didn't steal it.. it wasn't invested poorly
- iii. The focus is not on what the man chose to *do* with the talent, but what he *didn't do*

b. **There are** a lot of misconceptions about the "One Talent Man"

- i. This parable is often used by some who want to say: "I can't really do that much"
  - i. What they really envision themselves as, is the now talent man.. they can't do anything
  - ii. But a quick reading of **25:15** dismisses that idea by telling us there is no such thing as a no talent servant in God's kingdom:
    - i. Each servant was given a task according to their own ability:
      - a. Every servant, and we are all servants, has work to do:
      - b. Further more, this parable lets us know that there are no excuses for failing to do what it is God has enabled us to do:
        - i. It didn't matter that he had less than the others:
        - ii. It didn't matter that he felt inadequate to the task
        - iii. Or even that he was afraid:
          - i. All that mattered was that he had been given a charge to do, and did nothing

c. **And so we ask...** Are we using what God has given us... "according to our ability"?

- i. regardless of our relative amount of skill?
  - i. Servant wasn't judged in relation to others.. neither are we: see a task, do it

- ii. Are we working regardless of if we don't feel up to it?
  - i. Careful that we don't insult God with what we may think of as humility:
    - a. Moses riled the Lord in Ex. 4:1; 10-11
    - b. Don't insult the master who equipped you for work!
- iii. Are you looking for places to invest your talents?
  - i. Are you willing to branch out into new areas: teaching a class? leading a study? giving a lesson?
  - 2. Looking for work in other places? Opening our homes for hospitality and fellowship?
  - 3. Visiting those in need, or those who need encouragement?
  - 4. Whatever the deed, great or small, God supplies that charge according to our individual ability:
    - a. Are we, like Paul, willing to step on the balance and have our talents judged?
- d. Let us continue this thought from a little bit different perspective:

## **2. The Unwatchful Steward: Luke 12:42-48**

- a. Often times when looking at either parables or just apostolic teaching in general, that deal with the Lord coming back, there is a certain area I place the emphasis: what we shouldn't be caught up in while He is gone:
  - i. Look at passages like 2 Peter 3:10, emphasize that the Lord is coming like a thief, so i don't want to be caught doing anything wrong
  - ii. But that's only getting half the picture: Peter goes on to say in v 11 that his point is that we should be doing... active.. living lives of godliness: The two go hand in hand
- b. The emphasis in Luke 12 is not just that we avoid being caught up in worthless servants, but that when the master returns in v 43 we will be found *doing*
  - i. A trustworthy steward is a servant who is in action:
- c. We know that we each have been given respective talents: are we making consistent and unwavering use of them?
  - i. Ask the question: Does my use of these talents look like I'm waiting on someone to return?

- i. Could someone make the accusation against you of being *too spiritually active*?
- ii. This was the trap of the one talent man: It isn't acceptable service to say that we have avoided unrighteousness, if we have not practiced righteousness in its place

### **3. Parable of the Unforgiving Servant: Matt. 18:23-35, or 28-30**

- a. The main application of this parable is forgiveness, but there is a chain of events that lead up to its telling:
  - i. The chapter begins by the Disciples once again arguing among themselves about who was the greatest in the kingdom: v 1
  - ii. This leads to Jesus talking about how careful we should be about causing others to stumble, and avoid causing ourselves to stumble as well v 6-14
  - iii. But if you or someone should fail in this effort, there is a certain way that you should treat that person:
  - iv. And so it is after Jesus has taught on repairing the relationships between those who serve Him, Peter asks in v 21, How often should I forgive my brother?
- b. And so this parable of the unjust servant teaches forgiveness, but it also shows several other characteristics that the Lord wants out of His servants that are rooted in what was happening in this chapter:
  - i. Compassion... on those who are in an impossible situation.. those who don't deserve forgiveness
  - ii. Mercy... because of the immense amount that we've been shown
  - iii. Patience... for fellow servants
  - iv. Love.. for fellow servants
  - v. Sympathy and understanding
- c. All of these are aspects that Jesus desired define how His servants worked together:
  - i. Can I apply Paul's attitude in keeping this charge? Am I working together with my fellow servants, using my talents, with the attitudes God desires?
  - ii. This very point was part of Paul's ultimate application in **1 Cor. 4: 5-7**
    - i. Servants should be actively pursuing using their talents in the services of their master, working in harmony with each other, with confidence to be judged by the master.