

1 Cor 4 pt. 1 v.1-2 - the state of stewards

-We are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building.
(3:9)

-Fellow workers ought to take care in building upon God's real estate for their work will be tried by fire whether or not it will endure.

In chapter 4 Paul confronts the Corinthian churches perception, attitude, and interaction with Christ's apostles. They had become wise in their own estimation. They had promoted themselves to the position of judges in their own minds - weighing the merits of God's servants in their own unbalanced scales - deciding who was to be taken seriously, who was the coolest, the funniest, whatever - and then choosing sides to align with their favorites.

In these next several chapters Paul is going to call them to the carpet for the behavior and attitude - certainly not a task to be taken lightly. But in it we will see the fullness of God's grace and Paul's paternal care for God's children. He always keeps a careful eye on his interactions - keeping in mind - you are God's field, you are God's building, you are God's precious treasure.

How ought the church consider Paul and his companions?

v.1 - a man - anybody, people, you...the church at large

consider - account, measure, calculate (you do the math) - it's easy to arm chair quarter back it's hard to put on the pads and hit the field.

us - the apostles, ministers of Jesus Christ - God's fellow workers.

as servants (as opposed to diakonos, or doulos) - under rower - a subordinate rower - but rowing for a captain and with a team of other under rowers

AND stewards - one to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age

a steward is one who is entrusted with the care of their master's interests.
what is God most interested in? YOU!

This is the good news of it all! [Jhn 3:16 NKJV] 16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Paul says that he and his fellow workers are stewards of the mysteries of God. Doesn't God still blow our mind? Aren't there mysteries out there?
-the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly

In a general sense - God's plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed.

[Col 1:26-27 KJV] 26 [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

*This is what we are doing as stewards, servants of Jesus Christ. Carefully keeping the interests of our master in mind we are keepers of the gospel, declaring it as God wills, with grace and by His Spirit.

v.2 - moreover - more than that! in addition to that

it is required in stewards - not optional

that one be found faithful -

The theme of this year's deep south pastor's conference is Found Faithful

Sandy Adams writes this about these two verses.

In those two sentences the apostle describes what we are, and what is expected from us. We're servants of Christ and caretakers of God's mysteries. Today, many of His mysteries have been revealed, and He expects us to proclaim them to the world. And church leaders will be judged not by large crowds, big budgets, or sprawling campuses – but by our

faithfulness to the Lord and His people as we handle those mysteries properly. In the end our goal is to be found faithful.

It is important that we see this as REQUIRED as a steward of Christ.

While this is not the ONLY requirement

the gravity of FAITHFULNESS cannot be understated.

I would like to present to you two alternatives in the multitude of other possibilities and combinations that stewards can fall into.

First of all, these are bonafide stewards, falling into these conditions. This will help us check our own pride when considering whether or not we are susceptible to these traps.

[1Co 10:12 NKJV] 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

First example: the abusive steward

Turn to: [Luk 12:35-41 NKJV] 35 "Let your waist be girded and [your] lamps burning; 36 "and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 "Blessed [are] those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down [to eat], and will come and serve

them. 38 "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find [them] so, blessed are those servants. 39 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." 41 Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable [only] to us, or to all [people]?"

[Luk 12:42-47 NKJV] 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom [his] master will make ruler over his household, to give [them their] portion of food in due season? 43 "Blessed [is] that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for [him], and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint [him] his portion with the unbelievers. 47 "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare [himself] or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many [stripes].

*Expound - those who watch and are prepared to serve are considered faithful

those who consider the time too far spent - the Lord is delaying - get into trouble by their complacency and begin to beat the other servants they become abusive they start to become drunk and binge on the masters

food, in their minds they are the lord of the house, they have fallen from their faithfulness.

The Lord will punish them - even to the point of being cast off as an unbeliever

That's why we said last week - take this seriously you who put your hand to the plow. Take heed with how you care for God's treasures - His people.

The second example is an unprofitable steward:

Turn to [Mat 25:13-30 NKJV] 13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. 14 "For [the kingdom of heaven is] like a man traveling to a far country, [who] called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 "And likewise he who [had received] two gained two more also. 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 "His lord said to him, 'Well [done], good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you

delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 "His lord said to him, 'Well [done], good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, [there] you have [what is] yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give [it] to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Now, we have discussed God's property, his treasures, his most cared for possession. There are some teachers who teach this as the very practical application regarding finances, or property, or resources, etc.

AND, there is definitely wisdom in that. People who commit to being wise stewards normally reap the benefits of applying God's wisdom to their everyday practical lives - we all should apply God's word and wisdom practically everyday!

BUT, what is God's most treasured possession? What is God's most valuable property?

His people! God is not overly concerned with the material - it was spoken into being by his word! It is all under his sovereignty to do with as He pleases.

He is most concerned with YOU - his pearl of great price, His greatest treasure - YOU and every human soul upon planet earth.

So as he entrusts his servants with his talents, his treasures, we could easily replace talent with - disciple

I gave you 5, and you made 5 - well done

I gave you 2 and you made 2 more - well done

1 gave you 1...and you buried it and hid it and it never grew into anything. Shameful.

[Mat 7:19-23 NKJV] 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

We who are entrusted with the mysteries of God are required to demonstrate faithfulness towards HIS treasures.

Here's the application, the so what - answer the question "Am I abusive, unprofitable, or am I faithful?" Examine your hearts.

Help us to be faithful Father. Spark a fire of faithfulness in our hearts by your Holy Spirit. We can be faithful only by Your Spirit.