

# 1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

## **Part VIII: Countering Carnal Divisions Over God's Servants By Avoiding Worldly Evaluations Of Men (1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5)**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Functioning by means of the sin nature, what we term "carnality," is often a challenge in today's churches.
- B. 1 Corinthians was written to carnal believers (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), and 1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5 shows how the believer can counter carnal divisions over God's servants by avoiding worldly evaluations of men (as follows):

### **II. Countering Carnal Divisions Over God's Servants By Avoiding Worldly Evaluations Of Men.**

- A. Continuing his admonition against harboring divisions in the Church over which servant of God one should follow, Paul asserted that the local church, the word "you" in verses 16 and 17 being plural in the Greek text (ESV ftn. at 1 Cor. 3:16), was the temple of God, that the Spirit of God dwelt in them as a body, 1 Cor. 3:16.
- B. Accordingly, if any local church leader was to destroy (NIV, ESV) that local church temple of God in the sense of destroying its spiritual vibrancy and unity by errant ministry, him would God destroy, for the temple of God in the local church of gathered believers is positionally holy before the Lord, 1 Corinthians 3:17.
- C. For this reason, Paul directed that no local church leader should deceive himself in presuming that he was wise because he had a measure of worldly wisdom, for the world's wisdom was foolishness in God's eyes (v. 19-20) so that any church leader had to realize that any worldly wisdom he had was foolish that he might become teachable to gain God's wisdom and be truly spiritually productive in the church, 1 Corinthians 3:18.
- D. Paul then urged his Corinthian readers, be they subordinates or leaders in the local church, not to glory in men in terms of worldly evaluation (1 Corinthians 3:21), for in the believer's position in Christ, and through Christ, all things are possessed by each believer, be it every leader in the Church given to the body for its edification (v. 21b-22a), the world (v. 22b), life, or death, or things present, or things to come (v. 22c); F. W. Grosheide, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT), 1980, p. 95. Then, each believer in Christ belongs to Christ and Christ to God, that every believer ultimately might glory in God, not in anyone or anything else, 1 Cor. 3:23.
- E. Paul then applied this instruction to the apostles, showing how other believers were to view them, what acts as a pattern for how believers are to view any leader in the local church as to his ministerial role, 1 Cor. 4:1-5:
  1. Paul urged his readers to view Christ's apostles as *hyperetas*, the Greek term stressing "subordination and responsibility to a superior," Who in this case was God, 1 Cor. 4:1a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 512.
  2. They were stewards thus subordinate to and accountable to the Lord to present the "secret things of God" (NIV), "the message of the Cross known only by the Spirit's revelation (2:7-10)," Ibid.; 1 Corinthians 4:1b.
  3. "Furthermore, in this case" (*hode loipon*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 585; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 903, 481), it is required of such stewards that they faithfully discharge their duties assigned to them of the Lord, their Superior, 1 Corinthians 4:2.
  4. So, if God was their Superior so that the apostles answered to Him, Paul thought it trivial to be "judicially examined" (*anakrino*, Ibid., p. 56) by his readers ("you" is plural in v. 3, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) or by any human court, for he did not even "judicially examine" (*anakrino* again, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich) himself (1 Cor. 4:3 NIV) since he did not know anything by himself nor could he justify anything by his own judgment, but that He that "judicially examined" (*anakrino* again, Ibid.) him was God, 1 Cor. 4:4.
  5. In summation, every believer is not to judge anything regarding the ministry of God's servants before the Lord comes and administers His Judgment Seat rulings (1 Cor. 3:13), for then Christ will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and expose the motives of men's hearts, and He will then graciously praise each man for his ministry, 1 Corinthians 4:5. Thus, the hidden things of the people in the pew as well as the hidden things of God's servants who minister to them are so extensive and pervasive that the only One Who can make the proper judgment is God! We must thus wait for Him to judge such things!

***Lesson:*** (1) Paul revealed that God possesses the local church, that each church leader must thus relinquish his worldly wisdom to be taught God's wisdom in humility that he become effective for the Lord. (2) Also, every believer in the body must realize that every leader is God's servant given to the church for its benefit, that he is accountable to God and that his ministry will be judged solely by the Lord Who alone knows all things.

***Application:*** (1) May we who lead in the local church see our strict accountability to the Lord to heed and teach only His wisdom. (2) May we subordinates in the local church view these leaders as accountable to God for a balanced view of the leaders, that we not divide in the body over elevating one leader over another in value.