

# **Servants of Christ**

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## Introduction:

A. I want to deal with how Paul wanted to be regarded, as a servant of the mysteries of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

1. He didn't want to be known as an apostle.
2. He wanted to be known as a servant.
3. Paul saw himself as accountable to God.
4. The word for servant in Greek is usually "slave" but here Paul uses a word that means "under ruler."
  - a. This refers to galley slaves in war ships that powered the boat by rowing.
  - b. They were chained to the boat and obeyed the commands of their commander implicitly.
  - c. Jesus used this word for "under ruler" when he told Pilate that his servants would fight for him if he so desired.
  - d. Paul and Barnabas took Mark on their first missionary journey as an "under ruler" to care for the administrative details of the trip.
  - e. Paul calls himself an "under ruler" of Christ, to obey him implicitly.

B. To whom is the pastor accountable?

1. There are hundreds of volunteers in church and everyone expects the pastor to be accountable to them.
2. This can result in much pressure on a pastor.
3. Paul said that he is not judged by any human court but by the Lord only.
4. The Lord would bring to light the things hidden in darkness and bring commendation.

I. There are four possible pressure points on a pastor.

A. Congregational pressure.

1. Paul says it is a small thing for him to be judged by other people.
  - a. This was probably not a popular thing to say.

- b. I hope to ask him some day why he said it.
- c. Other's opinions are not important to a pastor.

d. In some areas Paul was very sensitive to others, but in other areas he did allow them to affect him.

2. I have a British friend who told me that in America, when you have a British accent you don't need proper theology. He taught me three kinds of pressure a congregation can place on a pastor.

a. Adulation that swells the head.

1. In every church some will nearly worship the pastor.

2. A lady who came to Christ under my ministry thought much of me and she was very generous.

i. She often rebuked me for preaching on suffering.

ii. I found myself avoiding passages dealing with suffering.

iii. Christ reminded me that I am his servant, not hers.

iv. I have seen pastors who ruin their ministries by serving people in this way.

b. Manipulation that ties the hand.

1. Every church has a power structure where people suggest changes the pastor ought to make.

2. This can place pressure on a pastor.

3. They might even be kind in their suggestions but this can pull a pastor apart.

c. Antagonism that breaks the heart.

1. Many pastors leave the ministry because of opposition from church ministers.

2. 60 % of a congregation will not grow but will oppose a pastor in following the Spirit.

3. A young pastor was called in by his elders to tell them that the church was theirs, not his, and that he was merely a hired man.

i. They need to be reminded that the church belongs to Christ.

- ii. They need to be reminded that a pastor cannot see himself as a hired man; Christians are brothers together, laboring for the kingdom.
- iv. This pastor told the elders this and they fired him.
- v. The Lord led him to another church.

B. Societal pressure.

1. Paul says it is a small thing to be judged by any human court.
  - a. This societal pressure causes one to crave acceptance.
  - b. This is not necessarily wrong but it can be abused.
  - c. Jesus sought the acceptance of Israel but he was rejected.
  - d. Popularity is a trap for any pastor.
    1. Love of prestige seeks approval of many, which is wrong if it drives a ministry.
    2. Prominence is also wrong if it drives a ministry.
    3. Power is also wrong if it drives a ministry.
2. Fame has been defined in three ways.
  - a. Visiting with the president in the Oval Office.
  - b. Visiting with the president when the hot line rings but he doesn't answer it in order to keep talking with you.
  - c. Visiting with the president in the Oval Office when the phone rings and the president says, "It's for you."
    1. This appeals to us.
    2. Jesus' followers sought fame.
    3. Jesus didn't rebuke them but said prestige doesn't come this way.
    4. If God gives fame and prestige walk in humility.

C. Self pressure.

1. Paul did not even judge himself.
  - a. He was not aware of anything against himself.
  - b. He was not exonerating himself but just leaving judgment to God.

- c. Success sometimes turns out to be self-deception.
- d. Apparent failure sometimes turns out to be our greatest achievement.
- e. We are sometimes blind to the true nature of our achievements.
- f. My pastoral staff helps us to honestly evaluate one another.
- h. Others can see you better than you can yourself.
- i. Mutual evaluation is an important part of spiritual life.
- j. Congregational, societal, and personal approval or disapproval does not define a ministry.
- k. Only the Lord's judgment defines a ministry.
- l. When the Lord comes he will bring to light the things hidden at the judgment seat of Christ.
  - 1. We misunderstand this judgment seat.
  - 2. Some think of it as a tribunal where our dirty linen will be exposed.
  - 3. Paul says this judgment is already on going.
  - 4. Lord continually shows us more about ourselves so we can grow.
  - 5. Paul saw himself as chief of sinners. (2 Timothy 1:15)
  - 6. Grace is revealed as God doesn't reveal all our carnality at once, but gradually brings this to our understanding.
  - 7. He also causes us to realize that in moments when we thought we were failures we actually were pleasing to him.
  - 8. When we perceive the unloving tones in our lives we grow and this is a result of the Lord's work in our lives.
    - i. Some college students went to a party dressed as blue devils.
    - ii. They arrived at the wrong room, into a prayer meeting.
    - iii. A woman cried out in horror but said she had been on the side of the devils for years.

2. The Lord is the judge.

- a. He takes us through memory lane to realize that he was working in us all along.

b. He redeems our mistakes if we just continue walking with him.

## II. Conclusion.

A. We are stewards of the mysteries of God.

1. When I graduated from Dallas Seminary I met with some men who had begun a fellowship.

a. I traveled with Dr. Ironsides who had invited me to this fellowship.

b. He was a very fast eater and told me stories as I ate.

c. As a boy he worked as a cobbler's assistant and would beat the water out of leather in order to make it soft. Another cobbler didn't pound the water out of his leather because his customers would return quicker that way. So the cobbler told Dr. Ironsides that he believes the Lord Jesus will judge his leather work.

d. Dr. Ironsides admonished me to make my sermons acceptable to the Lord Jesus.