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Father, we thank you for this day that you have given us. Lord, we thank you for your goodness and your blessings and your mercy and all things that you have done. Father, we just worship you and praise you for that. Father, I pray that as we come now to this hour before you, that our mind will be focused on you, that our hearts and our ears and our spirits will be open to receiving what you have for us in your word today. And I pray that we will glorify you, Father, as we internalize it and as we live it out. And we thank you for these things. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Okay, welcome back, everyone. It's good to be back and just good to be worshiping with you. Continuing our study in the book of Corinth, or first corinthians. So we began one corinthians, and when I first began, I gave you guys a kind of an outline of the way the book will be. We had the introduction, and then we spent the last, if we include this week, four weeks on issues of immaturity and the foolishness of human wisdom and the wisdom of the cross.

Today, Paul is going to conclude his writings on both the immaturity of man and the folly of human wisdom. So next week, as we begin in chapter five, we'll move on to issues of impurity. But we're going to finish this week with the folly of human wisdom. Just a reminder, last week, because last week's message and text plays heavily into this week's, we'll just remind you that Paul had talked about the fact that the Corinthians were still worldly people and they were behaving like mere humans, not like christians or spirit filled people. He also had touched base on the folly of their wisdom.

Though they had knowledge, they were enriched in all ways of knowledge. They did not know how to apply it. And he had to give them milk to drink rather than meat to eat. But then the rest of that sermon, we really focused on the church itself. Paul laid the foundation that is Jesus Christ.

And he says, if anybody builds upon that foundation, their works will be tested. So all of our works, when we stand before God, will be tried by fire. And if our works survive, we will receive a reward. And if our works do not survive, they'll be burned up, but we will be saved. And then Paul gave that warning.

We saw two weeks in a row to let no one be deceived of himself who thinks he is wise in the. So that's going to bring us to the start of today's sermon. We're going to begin in chapter four with verses one through five. It says, a person should think of us in this way as servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God. In this regard, it is required that managers be found faithful.

It is of little importance to me that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I don't even judge myself, for I am not conscious of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this. It is the Lord who judges me. So don't judge anything prematurely before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then praise will come to each one from God.

When I first read this, or not even just this passage, but the whole chapter, I initially said, how am I going to get an hour message out of this? Then as I sat down and studied it, it became clearer. So he begins, a person should think of us in this way all the way from chapter one through now. Now we have seen a little bit of issues where there seems to be strife between different leaders, people unable to work together, and other various issues of immaturity in this church. So as Paul has addressed it, he now comes to the way that he wants us to think of the leaders, he says, as servants of Christ and managers in the mysteries of God.

Now, this is interesting, because in chapter two, Paul said that they were servants of Christ. And he said that he and Apollos were one, that they had the same goal and the same intent. So if he already identified themselves as servants of Christ, what is with the repetition in verse I in verse one here? And the purpose of it is found in the greek language. We've touched based on this a few times.

Greek often has words to describe things in more detail than English with love. Greek has seven words for the english word love, so they can describe in detail what it is. We see the same thing here more than one word for servants, where in English we would translate all of it just to say servants. So the servants that we see used by Paul earlier in this message, and we see him use it in Romans and Galatians and everywhere else, is what we would think of a servant, an attendant, somebody who's doing things on behalf of.

In one corinthians, chapter four, verse one, though this is the one and only time that Paul will use the greek word for servants that he uses here. And it has a different meaning. Specifically, the word for servant that he selected here is that of the attendant of a king. So the way that we can think of this in modern terms, when he says servants of Christ and his manager is the people in the cabinet of our president, right? Those who serve the president in his cabinet, in those highest of offices.

That is the equivalent of this word. This word would be when you read in the Bible or you see on tv or you read in ancient texts, when the kings call all of his advisors to advise him, those who serve him in those capacities. Now, that's not to say that we advise God. We do not. Rather, Paul selected this word to convey the way in which we serve Christ, the way in which leaders serve Christ.

Now, when Paul says, think of us, I don't even believe that he is talking of all leaders in general as much as he is talking the apostles and those laying the foundation there at the beginning. But they are the servants of Christ, not just in that general capacity, but they were serving Christ as his right hand men, laying the foundation, taking his gospel, telling people what they saw, what they heard, and preparing the world for what we now have today. Now, in verse two, he says it's required that managers be found faithful.

I mean, I don't know how to say anything more than it's required, but it's required. God has placed leaders in charge of his church, whether it was the apostles 2000 years ago, or the pastors or the deacons or pastors and leaders today.

He has placed us in control of portions of his church to lead, to teach, protect God. And he says we must be found faithful in that. So if God is to give anyone an allotment, a task to do, that person should be found faithful to complete that task with great care and great diligence.

That goes back to what we talked about a few minutes ago. In chapter three, he says that each one's work will become obvious, right? The day will disclose it, when fire will test the quality of each one's works.

We want to be found faithful on that day, because Jesus will test our works. Jesus will put them through fire, and he will test to see if our fruits were fruits of the spirit, of gold and silver and precious stone, or if it was works of the flesh, wood, and straw. And Hayden, he says in verse three, this is important. It's of little importance to me that I should be judged by you.

So remember, there's a lot of issues going on we've already seen. He says, some people say, I'm with Paul, and some say, I'm with apollos, and some say, well, I'm with cephas. And we have all this going on. All this. They're boasting in who they follow and lifting them up.

And Paul says, look, I don't care if I'm judged by you. I don't care what you think of me. You can like me. You can hate me. You can.

He says, I don't care. It's of little importance to me. I think this verse is often understated, right? We just kind of glance by it without really allowing the fullness of what he said right there to set in Jesus on the sermon on the Mount. In fact, in our morning service, we read a part of the sermon on the Mount today in Matthew six.

In the first two verses, twelve verses of Matthew six, Jesus says twice, when you do this, don't be like the hypocrites. He says, when you practice your giving your own, don't be like the hypocrites and do it to be seen by men. And then he says, when you pray, don't pray like the hypocrites to be seen by men who pray on the street corner and in the synagogues to be heard.

The reason this is such a big statement from Paul is humanity strives for recognition. We strive for the praise of our fellow. But remember what Jesus said in the sermon on the Mount. He says, you have your reward.

But here's the thing. If I strive to be praised by you, well, not only am my heart not right with God, but what will I do if I strive to please you? I will compromise the gospel. I'll compromise scripture. I'll compromise doctrine.

I will allow things that ought not to be to come to pass so that I could have the praise of you. Right. Or I will not teach things because it offends someone else, or I will. Or I will introduce false doctrines to appeal to you. When we

as leaders, or not even just leaders, but anyone, try to do things for the praise of Mendez, we compromise our integrity.

Many of you have heard me say this before. Over the years, I've said it many times. I don't work for you. Right? I don't work for you.

I'm not here to please you. I work for God. And that is the attitude that Paul takes here. Paul says, I don't work to please you. You can be pleased with me, me.

You can be upset with me, and it doesn't matter one way or the other. And that's the attitude that every leader should take. But not just every leader. Every Christian should take that attitude. Whether our neighbors or coworkers or friends or family agree with what we do or disagree with what we do or like, that we follow God or dislike that we follow God, whatever it is, is of little consequence to us.

Now, Paul takes us a little bit further, and I want you to understand what he's doing here. He says, in fact, I don't even judge myself.

Well, that's taken it to an extreme. It's one thing for me to judge someone else and be like, oh, this guy isn't doing what he should be. Or, I don't like what this guy preaches or what this guy does. But Paul says, I don't even judge myself. He expands on that in verse four.

He says, I'm not conscious of anything against myself. So he says, I'm not aware consciously that I've done anything wrong. To my knowledge, everything I've preached is solid, is foundational, is in line with God's word. But he also says, I'm not innocent. By that, Paul recognizes I may have preached something wrong.

I may have taught. My motives may have been off. It's easy to say, hey, my motive is right and fool myself, when in reality my motive is really, really selfish or dark, and I comfort myself by lying to myself about my motives. So he says, I'm not conscious of anything against myself, but I'm also not innocent. Paul is a sinner just like we are.

And so Paul recognizes here that he cannot read his own heart. And that's something I think we all need to recognize. It's hard to recognize because we all like to say, well, I know my heart pretty well. In fact, people get offended when you start telling them they don't know their heart. They get all up in arms and worked up over it.

Because who are you to tell me what I truly believe or don't believe or think or don't think? But the reality is the prophet Jeremiah told us this about our heart. It is deceitful beyond anything else.

So there to contextualize that there is nothing or no one more deceitful to you than your own heart. Your heart will lie to you. Your heart will cover things up. Your heart will have one motive but make you think you have another. Your heart, your human heart, is wicked and evil.

And that is why Paul recognizes, while he's not conscious of anything against himself, he's also not innocent. He says, instead, look, he says, he says, I'm not justified by this. It's the Lord who judges me. So Paul says, I'm going to work for God. I will represent God, I will preach his message, and humans will judge me or they won't judge me.

But in the end, it is the Lord who will judge me. And he leaves it at that. Then he summarizes this. So don't judge anything prematurely. Has anyone made a premature judgment?

I think we all have, right? And we pass judgment and we get all upset with someone or something. And then on the other side, when it all comes to light, you find out you were totally wrong about why you were mad. It happens.

How many people have left churches because something happened and they took it the wrong way? And if they had stuck around for a little bit and talked it out, they would have found out it was just a misunderstanding. How many relationships end over misunderstandings?

A lot. Because human nature is. We don't automatically assume there's a misunderstanding.

We perceive if someone says or does something that affects us or hurts us, us, we perceive that they meant it. Right? They meant it the way that we think they meant it. That's how we perceive it. When in reality they likely, and this is 90% of everything, they likely either didn't mean it in that way, didn't realize what they said or some other form of misunderstanding.

Right? You walked in and you heard the last sentence of a three hour conversation, and what you heard made you angry and upset, and you'd think that you fully understood what that one sentence meant without the context of everything else, right? So Paul says, don't judge prematurely, because that's what we do. We see or hear or experience just a very tiny piece, the overall thing. And then we jump to judgment and we cut off relationships or we strain relationships, or we leave churches or we condemn leaders or we condemn people to hell or whatever it is.

And Paul says, don't do that. Any judgment, especially when it comes to condemnation, any judgment that takes place before the Lord comes is premature.

When the Lord comes says that he will both bring to light what is hidden and reveal the intentions of the hearts. Only Jesus is fully qualified to judge all things. Only Jesus is qualified to determine if I have given my best as a pastor. But I'm not even qualified to determine that. Only Jesus is.

Only Jesus is qualified to determine. To judge if my motivations and my intents were righteous or not righteous. And only Jesus is qualified to determine if I'm saved or unsaved. Jesus is the judge of all these things.

Alright, let's look at verses 613, he says. Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and apollo for your benefit so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying nothing beyond what is written. The purpose is that none of you will be arrogant, favoring one person over another for who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn't receive? If in fact you did receive it?

Why do you boast as if you hadn't received it? You are already full. You are already rich. You have begun to reign as kings without us. And I wish you did reign so that we could also reign with you.

For I think God has displayed us, the apostles in last place. Like men condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people. We are fools for Christ, but you are wise. In Christ.

We are weak, but you are strong. You are distinguished, but we are dishonored. Up to the present hour. We are both hungry and thirsty. We are poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless.

We labor working with our own hands. When we are reviled, we blessed. When we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered, we respond graciously. Even now we are like the scum of the earth.

Like everyone's garbage.

This is kind of a tangled mess here. This passage. Like, what is Paul saying? When I first read through it, it seemed plain what he's saying. But then it's like it's not quite so plain.

Especially it sounds like at times he's given compliments. And he's not actually giving compliments. But let's break it down. He says, I've applied these things to myself and to Paul for your benefit. Now, when he says apply these things, he's referring to chapters one through.

Okay? And what he means is when he uses himself as an example over and over again he says in chapter one, some say I'm with Apollos. Some say I'm with Paul. Some say I belong to Cephas, right? But then he will later say, who is Paul?

Who is Paulin? So he'll later be like, I'm no one. He applies these things as Paul and Apollos and Cephas, not as in they are the cause of contention. He does not apply these things to themselves to say, we're the ones at fault, but look at the maturity and what they do. They do it to set the example and not call out by name the ones who are guilty.

It's the leaders who are guilty of these things are actually local leaders to Corinth. Neither Paul nor Apollos nor Cephas actually live, reside, or teach in Corinth. He used their names as examples so that he's not calling out by name the leaders there and putting them to shame.

And he says he did this for their benefit. Now, the next thing that he says here, he gives two reasons why they should benefit from this. The first reason, he says, so that you will learn the meaning of the saying nothing beyond what is written.

This is a weird, weird phrase, particularly because I can't figure out exactly what it means.

And I've done research on it, I've read commentaries on it, consulted other pastors on it, and there's no. There is no agreed upon consensus anywhere as to what Paul is referring to with the statement. Some people think it was accidentally added, and I don't believe it was accidentally added. So I believe there's meaning there that we just don't know. Some people believe that there's something else missing from the statement that through the millennia, there was something with that that we don't have.

And others believe that Paul is referring when he says, beyond nothing, what is written, just as a general, so that you will learn to live within the confines of the scriptures.

I believe that Paul definitely wants us to live within the confines of the scriptures and learn how to do that. But I also don't know that's what he means in this. There's no other context. So you've heard kind of all the different theories out there, but we can take a moment and look at that third theory, nothing beyond what is written. Learn to live within what the scriptures tell us to live.

The scriptures lay out the entire blueprint for life. And if we can learn to live within that blueprint, we would be happier people, more productive people, more fruitful people, more godly people. The world would be a better place. And if you look at the attitude of the Corinthians, they are not living within the confines of the scriptures. They are arrogant, they are unwise and foolish.

They are sexually immoral people through and through. They have issues with sleeping with people who are married, sleeping with unmarried people, sleeping with family members, sleeping with animals like these people are so sexual, immoral.

It's not funny at all. So he could mean that. But look at the second purpose. He says, the purpose is that none of you will be arrogant favoring one person over another.

So he does this. Paul goes through all of this to say, look, stop favoring me over Cephas or Cephas over Apollos or Apollos overdose, Joe. Right. He says, we are all Christ. He said that in chapter one, where is Christ?

They're saying, I belong to Paul or Cephas or Apollos, but where is Christ?

I saw someone else summarize everything that Paul said here, and I think that their summarization is the best way to say it. He said, stop exaggerating human leaders.

If we would quit exaggerating human leaders, these problems would go away. And the church of Corinth is not the only church to have this issue, okay? I've seen this issue myself with humans exaggerating my leadership. I've had people in the our church do that, and I've talked with them about it independently. Right.

That it's. It is not me who saves. It is not me who causes growth. I can't give you faith. It's Jesus who does all that.

I am merely a mouthpiece. Jesus does all the work. Now look what Paul. Now Paul rebukes them. So Paul spent a long time teaching them.

Now he's going to outright rebuke them. Look what he says. Who made you superior? Who do you think you are? You are boasting so much.

Who made you superior to me? Or superior to Jerusalem or superior to Rome? Who do you think you are? We are. I am not better than you.

And for me to think so, who would I think? Who do I think I am if I were to think so? He says, what do you have that you didn't receive? Now, this is a great question. What do they have that they didn't receive?

Where did their knowledge come from? From God. Where did their faith come from? From God. Where did their salvation come from?

From God. All things that they had, they received from God. But look what he says. He says, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

That there is a good question. Why did he boast? If I went out and I lived a perfectly righteous life, I never sinned, never did anything wrong, and I went to heaven on my own accord, I would have room to boast. But I didn't. I sinned and I defiled God and I mocked him.

I do things wrong even today, and yet I have received heaven it was given to me. Me. So what then, do I boast? I cannot boast that I'm better than you because I'm going to heaven. I cannot boast that God loves me more than you



because he saved me.

I cannot boast in my own works because my own works condemned me. But there's a problem in Corinth, and not just in Corinth, but in the entire world today, where we receive these gifts from God. And then we boast.

We portray ourselves to be that which we are not.

Paul continues his rebuke. He says, you're already full. You're already rich. You've already begun to reign as kings without us. So this is how they're acting.

He's telling them the way they're portraying themselves. But then you can see that, that when he's saying, you're full and you're rich and you're reigning as kings, it's a rebuke, not a compliment, because look what he says. He says, and I wish you did reign so that we could reign with you. So they're put in this image of some. They're portraying themselves as one thing when they're really another thing, and Paul is calling them out on it.

Paul is telling them, you stop living a lie. Stop making yourselves to be better than you are. Stop boasting in what you're doing. Remember, in chapter one, let me scroll back. I'm going to have to find my place again.

The very last verse in chapter one says this. If you are to boast, boast in the Lord. That is how chapter one ends. We're not told that we can't boast. We're just told that if we do boast, it has to be in the Lord because he did everything.

And he is telling them now in a very strong rebuke that they are boasting in themselves. He says, the Lord has displayed us, the apostles, in last place. He says, look, we're the servants of God. We're doing all of this, and we stand at the end of the march. We stand condemned to die.

Look what he says. He says, we are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ. Now, if you read this as it's written in the greek, or you can even see the sarcasm here, Paul is not saying that they are wise in Christ.

If you remember last chapter, he called them outright fools. So read this phrase. He says, we are fools for Christ, and you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. We are dishonored, and you are distinguished.

If you see what he is doing, he is being sarcastic about it. He is telling, you, portray yourself to be wise, you portray yourself to be strong, and you have human praise. That's why he says at the end, you are distinguished. They were highly praised by humans, and they led their lives to get that praise.

Meanwhile, the apostles were dishonored, and they were, they were all murdered brutally, up to the present hour. Paul says, we are hungry and thirsty. We are poorly clothed. We're treated poorly. We're homeless.

We labor and work with our hands. But look at how they act. He says, but when we are reviled, we bless. When someone comes at me and curses me and calls me names and mocks me, I give them blessings. When someone comes and throws stones at me, me and throws me in jail or kills my family, we endure it.

When someone comes and tells lies about me, that when we are slandered, we respond graciously.

And even now we are treated like the scum of the earth, everyone's garbage.

And he tells them this not as a you don't get any sense of pity me in this. What you get the sense of is how we are to live. Jesus says, bless those who curse you. Pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you. He says, love your enemies.

And if we are to walk in the spirit of God, we will walk as weak people. We will walk as fools for Christ. We will be dishonored by the world. If you have the honor of men, the praise of men in the world, something is, has horribly gone wrong. Wrong.

Let's look at the end of this chapter. He says, I'm not writing this to shame you, but to warn you as my dear children, for you may have countless instructors in Christ, but you don't have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord.

He will remind you about my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in the church now. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk, but the power of those who are arrogant. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but a matter of power. What do you want?

Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

His rebuke continues. But as his rebuke continues, he takes a moment and becomes kind of gentle with him. He says, look, guys, I'm not trying to shame you. I'm not trying to make you feel bad. I'm not trying to, to tear you down.

He says, I'm trying to warn you. Now, we've had, we've all known leaders who, their way of leading is to tear people down and make them feel bad. And we've had leaders who don't do that. In any case, should a leader warn someone that they're sending? Yeah, we should.

Should a leader warn someone if they're walking a path to destruction? I think that if I loved anyone and saw them going down a path of destruction, I would call out to them. But can you, can you call someone on a path out to destruction in a way that will shame them and make them not want to listen to you? You can. Or you can do it in a way that they can hear you.

And Paul says, look, I'm not, you know, he says, I don't want to tear you down. I'm not trying to do that, but I want to warn you. He says, you need to learn to imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ. And he says, for this reason, I've sent someone to you. I've sent Timothy to you to teach you, to remind you about how to walk in Christ.

Now, as we end this, the last three verses here, there are people in Corinth who are arrogant, as Paul says. They do not believe that Paul will come back there. So they believe that they can do what they want. They believe that they can continue to receive the praise of it and continue to do the false teachings, continue to do these things. And Paul says, look, I know that you're arrogant.

He says, but I am coming back. How many people have, you know, as kids? Your dad was out, you know, at work, and you were disobeying your mom, and she just said, look, your father's gonna come home.

And you knew that when your father got home, it was gonna be, but it was going to be bad. Paul is telling them right now. He's saying, look, I know you're arrogant and think I'm not coming back, but I'm coming back to you. He says, and I will find out who these people are. And he asks them a question.

He says, what would you prefer? Should I come to you with a rod to discipline you, or should I come in a spirit of gentleness?

I think while Paul is not going to come to us, I think we need to examine our own lives as well. Do we walk in arrogance? I can tell you one of the biggest sins that I fight today is a sin of pride.

But that's myself. I fight the sin of pride to have pride. There is an element of arrogance that I have to have.

But while Paul is not coming to us, Jesus is.

And he will test our works and he will know our heart, and he will know our thoughts and our motives.

And if you recall in the first chapter, Paul told these people he knew they were saved. So he's not talking to unsaved people, he's talking to saved people. And even in our sense, we were saved. But how do we want our first encounter with the Lord to be? Do we want it to be a shameful encounter where all of our works burn up and we have nothing left but our life?

We escape by a thread? Or do we want the Lord Jesus to find us faithful, good stewards of what he has given us and hear the words, well done, my good and faithful servant. The message that Paul spoke to Corinth some 2000 years ago is just as meaningful to us here today. The warnings apply. And we need to make sure that we don't belong to Matt or to Shane, or to Mike, or to church of the Bible, or the baptist faith, or the pentecostal faith.

But we belong to Jesus Christ and walk in that same maturity as we come to an end. Tonight, I want to invite anyone listening to this message. If you don't know Jesus, if you don't know who he is, if he has not saved your life, he can do that today. Jesus is God in the flesh, who came here and walked perfectly among us, died in the flesh and rose again the third, so that if any of us would profess him, he would give us eternal life. And if you're ready to believe those things and to admit that you are a sinner, you can have this gift.

Today, as we go to our closing prayer, I'll invite you to verbalize that to God with me. Immediately after closing prayer, we will have the Lord's supper. We didn't miss that next week, so we'll get that this week. And I invite everybody to stay and partake of that with us. And then I'll see you all again Wednesday evening, 630 as we finish our study in the letters to the Thessalonians, let's pray.

Father, I admit that I am a sinner. And I admit, Lord, that I cannot save myself, that my ways are wrong and that yours are right. And Father, I believe that Jesus is God in the flesh, creator, who stepped into creation to die for me, and that he rose again the third day, and I confess you, Lord Jesus, as my God and king, as my savior, and I ask you for this free and precious gift. Father, I pray as we come to an end of this section in the book that we will walk in maturity, in unity, in oneness with you. I pray that you will be glorified, as we do not boast in ourselves or our wisdom, but we become fools to truly become wise, and that we shine your light for the world to see.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.