

1 Corinthians Series #12  
"The Attitude of a Steward" - 1 Cor. 4:6-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Text

B. Pride

1. Two geese and frog
  - a. flying south for the winter
  - b. frog asked to go along
  - c. geese couldn't think how to do it
  - d. frog said to use a stick - he would hold on
  - e. people looked up and admired - said, "I wonder who was so smart to think of such an ingenious thing."
  - f. frog opened his mouth to reply - fell to his death
2. Pride is deadly
3. To be proud is to be blind to the truth about things, especially ourselves
4. It's been said that pride is the only disease that makes everyone sick but the one who has it.
5. Listen to what the bible has to say about pride . . .
  - a. Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble *is* wisdom.
  - b. Proverbs 15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud.
  - c. Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

C. The Problem In Corinth

1. This was the real problem in Corinth = Pride
2. They were divided into factions because of pride
3. So Paul goes at the root of their problem in these verses
4. He does so in a rather sarcastic way - as we'll see

II. TEXT

A. V. 6

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

1. The Corinthians divided into groups around their favorite teachers and pastors
2. Had made heroes of them
  - a. elevated them to lofty plateaus
  - b. claimed their hero was highest

- c. all others were nothing in comparison; they put them down
- 3. Paul will not be made into a hero by them
- 4. So he says, "these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos."
  - a. what things?
  - b. 3:6 = "farmers"
  - c. 3:10 = "builders"
  - d. 4:1 = "servants & stewards"
- 5. No lofty terms of praise: Simple men, common laborers
- 6. The Corinthians had made them much more than this
  - a. had elevated them to the level of stardom
  - b. why?
  - c. Paul and Apollos had not encouraged it.
  - d. by setting them up as superstars, it gave the Corinthians an excuse for elevating themselves above one another
  - e. when we begin to make celebrities out of church leaders, it gives our pride the opportunity to manifest itself - for now there is a higher level to attain

B. V. 7

7 For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

- 1. Paul asked 3 questions here
- 2. Each was meant to bring them to their senses
- 3. #1 "For who makes you differ *from another*?"
  - a. had Paul claimed to be the best?
  - b. had Apollos? No!
  - c. had either of them started a special school or group and asked them to choose sides? No!
  - d. had God called them to these divisions? No!
  - e. so, who had made them to differ from one another? Who had brought in the divisions? Satan!
  - f. and he was using the oldest of all sins, the root from which all sin rises = Pride
    - 1) pride is the sin by which Lucifer fell
    - 2) as the father of pride, he was seeking to rip off God's people
    - 3) the Corinthians had fallen for his ploy
- 4. #2 "And what do you have that you did not receive?"
  - a. this question was a sharp arrow meant to puncture their swelling pride
  - b. the essence of pride is the belief that one exists unto

- ones self
  - c. pride says . . .
    - 1) I answer to no one
    - 2) I am dependent on no one
  - d. the devils fell by pride when he said, "I will become like the Most High."
  - e. pride forgets that we are creatures; that we owe our existence to our Creator
  - f. so Paul takes out this question like an arrow, slips it to the string, bends the bow, and let's it fly straight to the heart of the matter
  - g. "What do you have that you did not receive?
    - 1) salvation?
    - 2) gifts of the Spirit?
    - 3) talents?
    - 4) life itself?
  - h. all this and more are from God
  - i. so where is the ground for pride
  - j. Augustine saw in this single question the whole doctrine of God's grace
5. #3 "Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?"
- a. a woodpecker was working away on a large tree when suddenly a bolt of lightning split the sky, hit the tree, and shattered it into a billion splinters the size of toothpicks
  - b. as soon as the lightening hit the tree, the little bird flew off and landed on the branch of another tree, next to another bird
  - c. the woodpecker looked down at all the splinters and then casually said to the other bird, "Did you see what I just did to that tree?"
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- d. can we boast in our gifts?
  - e. are we better than others?
  - f. can we brag about what we do?

C. V. 8

8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us; and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

- 1. Paul resorts to scathing irony here
- 2. The Corinthians were acting as though they had already arrived at perfection
- 3. Like the guy who says, "I used to be conceited but now I'm perfect."

4. They were acting as though they had already entered into the Millennium
  - a. that is what Paul means when he says they were reigning as kings
  - b. he says, "I wish you really were kings, cause that would mean Christ had come in glory and Apollos and I would be reigning too."
  - c. but Paul's actual experience was much different
  - d. rather than reigning, he was suffering FOR the sake of Christ

D. V.9

9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

1. He paints a picture they would all know well
2. A victorious Roman general returning from war
  - a. City would throw a victory parade - "Triumph"
  - b. he would come at the head, on a white stallion
  - c. then his armies
  - d. then the spoils of war
  - e. last came a rag-tag band of prisoners who were doomed to die in the Coliseum
    - 1) after the gladiators had battled
    - 2) as the very end to the day's entertainments
    - 3) they were brought out into the center of the Coliseum and wild animals were let loose on them
  - f. Paul says, "We apostles are not the general who comes at the head of the Triumph - we are the like the band who comes at the end."
3. Paul knew what the life of an apostle was really like
  - a. the world held them in no regard
  - b. rather, they were laughed at and scorned
  - c. in fact, like those in the arena, they had often been put to death to appease the crowds

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4. As an aside: We hear about the cruelty of the Romans with their gladiatorial contests and their delight in watching people torn limb from limb by wild animals in the arena - We think, "How barbaric! How inhuman!"
    - a. are we any better than they?
    - b. as the Romans Empire fell apart, the Emperors wanted to pacify the public, keep them docile and

- compliant
- c. so they gave them 2 things: Bread & Games
    - 1) they figured as long as they kept people fed and entertained, they would not care how bad other things got
    - 2) as the government of Rome slid into corruption and decay, the people never stood up to oppose it
  - d. I shudder as I look at our nation today: It seems we are headed down the same path
    - 1) government is becoming more and more corrupt
    - 2) yet people do not care
    - 3) as long as they have something to eat and TV, they are happy
    - 4) and TV is the Coliseum of our times
    - 5) it won't be long before the fictional murders and sex we see on TV becomes the real thing
    - 6) isn't that the way "Eyewitness" video is going?
  - e. then, another disturbing thing will take place:
    - 1) once again, as in ancient Rome, Christians will become the focus of persecution
    - 2) as IN Rome, they were herded into the Coliseum and used as entertainment as the wild beats tore them apart, so it will be again
    - 3) you see, as the Roman Empire fell apart, the leaders of Rome blamed the Christians for ever problem that arose.
      - a) they were called atheists because they believed in only one God
      - b) this made the other gods angry
      - c) they sent famines and war, and pestilence
      - d) Christians were considered a threat to the prosperity and peace of Rome
      - e) so they were arrested and executed
    - 4) we are already seeing the stage set for this in our day
    - 5) for all the talk of tolerance today, there is one group that is NOT tolerated = Bible believing, Spirit-filled believers in Jesus Christ.
      - a) we are called hate-mongering, bigoted, superstitious, uneducated, backward purveyors of prejudice
      - b) if any of these insults were directed at any other than us, they would raise a howl of protest and a call for strict censure
      - c) but nary a word of rebuke is raised when

- they are directed at Christians
- f. am I upset about this?
- 1) no!
  - 2) this is the very thing Jesus said would mark His true followers!
  - 3) Matthew 5:10-12 **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**
  - 4) John 15:18-21 **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.**
5. The Corinthians had forgotten all this
- a. they had become elevated by their pride
  - b. and had struck a position of compromise between their faith in Christ and the world.
  - c. as a result, they faced no persecution or hostility
  - d. the world has no problem with a compromised Christian
  - e. but it cannot long endure a totally sold out, blood washed, Spirit-filled disciple of the Lord Jesus
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6. Can you see the contrast between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God that Paul draws here?
- a. the true ministers of Christ have no commerce in the world's standards of success
  - b. we live in the world but we are not to be of it
  - c. the world's signs of power and affluence are not the disciple's marks of power and wealth
7. Contrast the picture of a true disciple Paul presents here to the show put on by so many of the celebrities of the Church today

- a. they flash their diamond rings
  - b. they show off their Rolex watches
  - c. they live in sumptuous homes and vacation villas
  - d. and when they minister, they draw all eyes to themselves - they live for the applause and the fame
8. The Corinthians had made Paul & Apollos superstars
- a. but they would be no party to their attempts
  - b. sad to say - many today who would gladly comply with the desire of the Corinthians
  - c. and the spirit of the Corinthians themselves is alive and well in the Church

D. V. 10-13

*10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!*

*11 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.*

*12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;*

*13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*

- 1. While the Corinthians were reveling in their spiritual pride -
- 2. Paul and the other apostles were being made the laughing stock
- 3. His words in v. 13 are quite vivid . . .
  - a. "filth" - the scum that comes from washing greasy dishes
  - b. "offscouring" - the ash that gets on a pot when you cook it over a wood fire
- 4. V. 11 flies in the face of so much of the modern gospel we hear today - "To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless."
  - a. do today's preachers of prosperity really think they are more mature or have more faith than Paul, or Apollos, or Peter?
  - b. yet Paul went hungry and thirsty
  - c. he did not own a Brooks brother toga or a Rolex sundial
  - d. he didn't own a Buick pony, let alone a Mercedes chariot
  - e. no body guard accompanied him on his travels to keep the press away
  - f. he had no home in the cool hills of Judea, and he enjoyed no villa overlooking the Mediterranean
- 5. In vs. 10-13, Paul is presenting a contrasting picture to the

- pride of the Corinthians.  
6. It is a portrait of humility to shame their pride

E. Pride Versus Humility

1. A.W. Tozer once wrote, "There are two classes of Christians: The proud who imagine they are humble, and the humble who fear lest they be proud."
2. Humility is the first lesson we must learn if we are to grow in Christ - for He was humble
  - a. if we do not learn it, then no other lesson is possible
  - b. the Christians life is a sham without humility
  - c. you see, pride and grace cannot share the same place
3. Last week;
  - a. the requirement of stewards = faithfulness
  - b. here Paul tells us the attitude of stewards = humility

III. CONCLUSION

A. Fruitfulness

1. Little tangerine tree behind the house
  - a. usually stands up straight - branches reach for sky
  - b. noticed, the branches bowed down, hanging toward ground
  - c. fruit had weighed them down
2. So it is with us
  - a. just as the laden bough is the one that hangs the lowest
  - b. the most fruitful Christian is the most humble
  - a. usually stands up

B. Some Final Words

1. 1 Peter 5:5-6 "You younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."
2. Luke 14:11 "**Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**"