



INTRODUCTION:

- How important is it, to know that your pastor is accurately teaching and preaching the Word of God?
- What can we, as individual Christians, do to ensure we have solid pastors in our pulpits?
- Agree / Disagree: *Being in the WELS fellowship is the safest spiritual place a person can be this side of glory.*
- Agree / Disagree: *God must put His weakest and most vulnerable people in solid fellowships to ensure He gets them home.*
- How could people in the 1st century church have known whether or not they were sitting at the feet of trustworthy pastors?

The Apostles and Ministers of Christ:

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

1 This is the way a person should think of us: as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. **2** In this connection, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. **3** But it is a trivial matter to me if I am evaluated by you or by a day in a human court. *Why, I do not even evaluate myself.* **4** I do not in fact know of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this; rather, the one who evaluates me is the Lord. **5** Therefore judge nothing ahead of time, until the Lord comes. He will bring to light whatever is hidden in darkness and also reveal the intentions of hearts. Then there will be praise for each person from God.

- Who is the "us" of verse 1?
- What do you think the people in this church were looking for in their pastors?
- What are people in our modern WELS churches generally looking for in their pastors?
- What, according to Paul (and to God) *should* we be looking for in our pastors?
 - What, exactly, does that mean?
- Why does Paul say what he says in verses 2-3, and what point is he making?
- What is Paul trying to impress upon them in verse 5?

- Agree / Disagree: *A faithful pastor can also be totally boring, dry, and sloppy in his work.*
- I met a man recently who said he wouldn't go to a church if the pastor was fat. Is he right to think that way? How would you respond to that?

Humility vs. Arrogance:

1 Corinthians 4:6-8

6 Brothers, I turned these things into a lesson using myself and Apollos as examples. I did this for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written. Then you will not be arrogant, favoring one person over the other. 7 For who makes you so special? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 8 Oh, you are already filled! You have already become rich! You have begun to reign without us! If only that were really true, so that we could reign with you!

- How does Paul define “arrogance” in this situation at Corinth?
 - Do we (or *how* do we) see a similar type of arrogance among us / in our time?
- What does he mean when he says, “do not go beyond what is written”?
 - How does that protect us from this type of arrogance?

- Is Paul being sarcastic in verses 7-8?

- If he is, then why?

- Agree / Disagree: *These people must have been as annoying as trying to hang out with spoiled rich Hollywood types.*
- When sinful boasting creeps in among us, what does it look like in our circles?
- Agree / Disagree: *It's inappropriate for pastors to be blunt, rude, and sarcastic.*
 - Agree / Disagree: *It's part of a pastor's job to hurt feelings.*

The Pain of Ministry:

1 Corinthians 4:9-13

9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, in the lowliest position, like men sentenced to death, because we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak—but you are so strong! You are honored! But we are despised. 11 At the present we still hunger and thirst and lack proper clothing. We are treated roughly, and we have no settled place to live in. 12 We toil, working with our own hands. When we are verbally abused, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. 13 When slandered, we speak kind words. We have been treated like the world's garbage, like everyone's trash, right up to the present time.

- How was Paul (and the other Apostles) “made a spectacle of” to the world?
 - Do you think he was speaking only of the Apostles here, or of faithful ministers in general?
- What does verse 10 really mean? Are people in the pews really so much better off than their pastors?
- Was Paul angry here? If so, explain his anger:
- Was Paul asking for / hoping for additional pay and benefits?
- Agree / Disagree: *In times of persecution, the pastors, and especially synodical leadership will get it worse. Those in the pews can fly under the radar.*
- Agree / Disagree: *Paul here says it’s ok to trash our pastors and keep them in poverty.*
- Where do we see Paul’s tender pastoral heart in these verses?
 - How could he call himself their “father”?
 - Who would the “guardians in Christ” refer to?
- What does Paul mean in verse 16? Imitate him in what sense?
 - How does that explain why he sent Timothy to them?
- Agree / Disagree: *Good solid pastors will have consistent teaching no matter where or when they serve.*
 - How can that concept help us navigate the muddy waters of our modern times?

Su:

1 Corinthians 4:18-21

18 Some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. **19** But I will come to you soon, if the Lord is willing, and I will find out about the power, not the talk, of those who are arrogant. **20** For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power. **21** What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

1 Corinthians 4:14-17

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my dear children. **15** Indeed, even if you would have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you would not have many fathers. I say this, because in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16** I urge you, therefore, be imitators of me. **17** That is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

- Put verse 18 in your own words, what was going on here?

- Explain what Paul means when he contrasts “power” with “talk”:
 - Agree / Disagree: *This congregation had a problem with politics.*
- Is “politics” in the church a problem among us here at Grace?
 - Is it a problem in the WELS?
 - How can we deal with it / fight against it?
- Agree / Disagree: *Every good pastor will get real angry with his congregation every so often.*

CONCLUSION:

- What’s the main / root problem Paul was dealing with right from the beginning of this book, and throughout this whole chapter?
- What lessons can we take from this chapter of Scripture?

CLOSING PRAYER: