

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 3:5-15

Session Fourteen: Building on Paul's Foundation

As we are only going through the education in a foundational way in this first pass, we are going to focus on the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSOC) aspect of the passage.

As we prepare to read the passage for today, remember that Paul has declared the Corinthians to be carnal, for there are divisions and strife among them, choosing those whom they follow.

1 Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Paul starts off by talking about himself and Apollos. He asked the question, "Who is Paul and Apollos," and then he answers his own question; they are "ministers."

As ministers, they all have a part to play in laboring with God. Notice that as this starts out, the analogy is agricultural.

1 Corinthians 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Looking at the agricultural analogy, we know that God's ministers are the ones planting, (I take that to be the gospel which results in salvation, but it doesn't have to be limited to that. It can be the "planting" of certain doctrines in the minds of those who are already saved. But I do think it includes salvation for Paul says in vs. 5 that he and Apollos are ministers "by whom ye believed.")

Paul says he planted, which is the first step to getting a crop. There is a reason Paul says he planted, and not Apollos. It is because the mystery of Christ was first revealed to Paul, not Apollos. The gospel of Christ was first revealed to Paul.

But then he says Apollos watered, which is necessary for a crop to survive and grow. So, you need all of them, right?

But, let me ask you a question, "If Paul plants the crop, and Apollos waters the crop, who or what is the crop?" The crop would be the members of the body of Christ.

Since the Corinthians are so focused on certain men, Paul uses this analogy to say that the planter or the waterer are not who is important, but the one who gives the increase. And who is that? Paul says God is the one who gives the increase, so all the glory goes to Him, not to God's ministers.

We really need to understand that without God, there would be no increase; the crop would fail. Or, to say it another way, without God doing the spiritual work in the inner man, Paul and Apollos can preach the gospel but no one would be saved. And for the saved, they can teach all

they want, but without God, there would be no effectual working to edification. So, God is the essential part of the process.

That is not to say that God dismisses what Paul does or what Apollos does (or any other minister, for that matter) as insignificant or unimportant, but it is to say that the Corinthians lost sight of God as they focused on the men and created divisions among themselves.

Do I dare make a present day analogy? I love the folks who are part of our assembly, both who show up physically and those who attend remotely. And I am constantly assured of your love for me. Thank you for that. But I do not think I am the only person you can learn from. I am not a fully-educated son and I do not have all the answers. I am sure there are plenty of good, godly men who have more knowledge than I have. Can you learn from someone else while you are part of this assembly? I certainly hope so. So, who among us is the important one? Is it the guy with the biggest church? The guy with the biggest school? While I thank God for all of my brothers who are laboring faithfully in the word, I want to tell you who are listening that, just as in the words of Paul, our apostle, none of us are anything, but it is God who giveth the increase. He is the one who gets the glory.

We ministers should be “one” just as Paul said he and Apollos were in vs. 8.

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Do you see that? We are all involved in a work together, or at least we should be. We are members of the same body, after all.

That is the way it is supposed to be. To be honest, that isn’t how it is too much of the time. But I am going to do my part to change that by treating my fellow ministers as one with me.

When I say we should be “one,” I’m not saying that I am the pastor to any other assemblies, or that I should have the primary influence in someone else’s assembly, I shouldn’t. In this assembly, I should. But if someone from another assembly watches us, I hope it reinforces what they are learning in their own assembly.

Here is something to recognize. We can’t make a one-for-one comparison to how things were back in Paul’s day to how things are today. Who would have preached to the Ephesians in Paul’s day? It would have been the pastor of the local assembly (like Timothy) and occasionally some others (like Paul and Apollos) who would show up there from time to time.

Today, we can look on the Internet, YouTube and other media platforms and see hundreds if not thousands of people preaching and teaching. (I would say that you need to be careful not to expose yourself to doctrine which is contrary to Paul’s. Be encouraged by other preachers who rightly divide the word (RDW) and understand the programs, but don’t spend so much time apart from the doctrine of your own assembly. There is an order to what is taking place.)

By the way, just so you know, when Paul says that “he that planteth or he that watereth is not anything,” he is not saying that what he and Apollos are doing is not important or necessary, because he is going to talk about a reward that God is holding out for them at the JSoC.

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Notice the context beginning vs. 8 is regarding ministers, those who “plant and water.” Then Paul says that “every man” shall receive his own reward and that reward is according to his own labor. If we keep to the context, the “every man” would refer to every minister and his own labor. But if Paul means to confine this to ministers, why not just say “we” as he does in vs. 9? So, there may be a broader contextual change to include every member of the body of Christ starting here in vs. 8.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry...

Notice the pronoun change. Paul starts off with “we” and then following the colon, he says “ye.” The “we” is a reference to ministers like him and Apollos. They are laborers together with God.

But then, following the colon, he changes to “ye” which is a reference to the Corinthians in particular; but to the body of Christ in general. The body of Christ is God’s husbandry. So, what is husbandry?

OED: husbandry

The business or occupation of a husbandman or farmer; agriculture, cultivation; (deployment of) farming methods and techniques.

This goes back to the “plant and water” agricultural analogy. So, again, “ye” (the body of Christ) is what God is growing; we are all part of God’s crop!

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Suddenly, in vs. 9, Paul changes analogies from agriculture to construction or building terminology. Now he says that “ye (members of the body of Christ) are God’s building.”

In the past, God’s temple was constructed by Solomon. Today the temple is the body of Christ collectively. Notice in vs. 9, the “ye” which is plural. Here, Paul is not talking about individuals being the temple of God (although He will do this later in chapter 6), but he is talking about God dwelling in His church corporately, as a single body.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Paul calls himself “a wise masterbuilder.” This term refers to being skilled in the art of building, like an architect. It can also refer to that person as one who employs or is in charge of other workers. As an apostle, Paul is certainly “in charge” of how the building of the body of Christ ought to be done.

Paul is careful to note that he is a wise masterbuilder according to the “grace given unto [him].” Again, God gets the glory.

Again, Paul's labor is first, as he "laid the foundation." Those who come after him build on that foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**

The "grace of God" Paul refers to here is not about salvation, but about the message of grace which was revealed to him. The cross reference is in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,² If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
³ How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Now, look back at 1 Corinthians 3:10.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, **as a wise masterbuilder**, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Paul, a minister, as a wise masterbuilder, lays the foundation. Another minister comes along and "buildeth thereon." But then Paul changes to "every man" which is every member of the body of Christ. Now we have personal responsibility being introduced, (if it wasn't already so back in vs. 8).

The idea here is that the gospel gets you planted (or gets your foundation laid), other ministers may get you started in the doctrine (which is watering, or building on the foundation) which follows your salvation. But at some point, each of us is going to build upon the work of ministers who got the process going.

In other words, it is not just the job of ministers to "grow" us, or "build," us, although there is a place for their work, but it is up to every man to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ which was laid by someone else.

Paul's work was foundational but he realized that others would build on it: "another buildeth thereon."

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**

We have one more "hair-pin" turn with the term "every man." (Remember that we encountered this term back in vs. 8).

Either this is talking about every minister, or it is broadened to include "every man" in the body of Christ. In my understanding, this is for all believers in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the end of vs. 10 contains a stern exhortation for every member of the body of Christ to “take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” Why such a warning? Because, as we are about to see, the work of the builders will be judged.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

This is good proof for a dispensational change. For if there had been no dispensational change, would Paul have laid the foundation or would Jesus Himself have laid it in His earthly ministry? Do you see what I’m saying? If we are only a continuation of that which was before, then Paul could not have been the one planting, or the one laying the foundation; he would have been watering or building. But if there was a dispensational change, then it all started with Paul.

What foundation did Paul lay? Verse 11 says that the foundation is Jesus Christ. The cross reference to this would be back in Romans 16.

Romans 16:25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

The point here is to say that the foundation that is laid is not Jesus Christ according to prophecy, but “Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery” which was given to Paul.

Why do we mention this? Because Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that the foundation must be the one Paul laid, and then he says for us to take heed how we build on that foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying that you can’t lay any other foundation than the one he laid, which is Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery. If you try to lay a different foundation, then no matter what you build on top of it, the foundation will not hold.

A wise masterbuilder knows what kind of foundation you need because he knows what is meant to be built on top of it. This is going to be important at the JSoC. Dealing with first things first, make sure you have Paul’s foundation of Jesus Christ and not Israel’s.

And where do we find those things which pertain to Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery? We find them in Paul’s epistles, Romans through Philemon. So, if you are going to take heed how you build thereupon, you are going to pay attention to the doctrines in those books. (That is not to say you don’t learn the rest of the Bible, Paul says you do, but your practice is according to his epistles.)

So, what would be a wrong foundation? Anyone who preaches Jesus differently than Paul. This would include cults on one extreme and theologies which proclaim Jesus according to the prophetic program on the other. The latter would include those who lay claim to Israel’s covenant promises of physical blessing and good health, etc.

For example, Christ instructed His followers to “sell” all they had (Mt. 19:21, Mk. 10:21, Lk. 12:33) in Israel’s prophetic program, but Paul instructs us today in this DoGG to “provide” for our own households (1 Timothy 5:9).

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if **any man** build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ **Every man's work shall be made manifest:** for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Notice in vs. 12, “any man.” In vs. 13, “every man.” This is about every member of the body of Christ. The building materials are here referred to as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble. If you are saved, and you are trying to live for God, you are building. You may be building with gold, silver and precious stone, or it may be with wood, hay and stubble; or it may be with a combination. Obviously, the wood, hay and stubble are useless materials for God’s eternal projects.

If our work is approved by God, it will survive the fire. Fire burns up wood, hay and stubble. But fire, refines gold, silver and precious stones and makes them more valuable.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, **he shall receive a reward.** ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, **he shall suffer loss:** but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Verse 14 starts with “any man” which is talking not just about ministers, but about every member of the body of Christ.

If your work is of the right sort, it will “abide;” it will survive the fire. And for whatever work abides, there will be a reward.

So, what are the works which are gold, silver, precious stones? They are the works which proceed from Philippians 2:13.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

To God, a good work is that which He performs through us as we submit our lives to Him.

The “loss” in vs. 15 is referring to rewards, not salvation. The end of the verse is clear about that: “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” So, this is not about anyone losing their salvation.

If you would like to study more about the doctrine of eternal security, take a look at Romans 8:35-39, 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
1 Corinthians 3:16 – 4:6
Session Fifteen: How to Regard Ourselves and Others

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Again, this is talking to the body corporately, which means that God means to live the life of His Son in and through us, the body of Christ.

When you see the word “dwell” you need to pay attention. People commonly think that if you have the Spirit of God within you, then you are indwelt by the Spirit. But the Bible never uses the word indwelt or indwell.

Even so, they read the Spirit “dwells” in you and they think that means the same thing as he is “in you.” But that is not the case.

It is true that the Holy Ghost was given to us when we trusted Christ as our Savior.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by **the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of **the Holy Ghost which is in you**, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Here in chapter 6, Paul is talking about each individual, not the body corporate.

So what is the difference between having the Spirit in you, and the Spirit dwelling in us? The Spirit dwelling in us is something we allow, which means we submit to Him by walking after the Spirit. What it really means for the Spirit to dwell in us is that we are allowing Him to produce the life of God’s Son in us. After all, that is what He came to do, but we must submit to that.

We did not “allow” the Spirit to come into our human spirit when we trusted Christ, He just did it automatically. Even if you never submit to the Spirit’s leadership in your life, He is still in you. He still seals you until the day of redemption. The Spirit’s presence within our human spirit and His work to seal us until the day of redemption are not dependent upon us, but happen automatically in response to our faith in Christ.

So, notice in 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul is talking to the carnal Corinthians individually, he does not say “dwell,” but he says that the Holy Ghost is “in them.”

But in chapter 3, where Paul is talking about the body corporate, he uses the word “dwell.”

1 Corinthians 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

Notice in vs. 17, the change in singular and plural.

Paul now addresses individual men, “any man,” with a warning. He says if any man defiles the temple (the corporate body of believers [ye – plural]), him (singular) shall God destroy.

What does Paul mean when he says “defiles the temple?” How could someone defile the temple? That would be any action which hinders the body from being the vehicle for the life of Christ being made manifest in it and through it. That may be false doctrine, it may be immorality; it may be by causing divisions and disharmony, or anything else that keeps the church from being holy – set apart for the purpose God created it for.

There is a sense in which we have three different kinds of building activities going on which will all be evaluated at the JSoC:

- 1) those who build well (gold, silver, precious stones),
- 2) those who build poorly (wood, hay, stubble), and
- 3) those who do not build at all, but are actually destructive to the church being and doing what it is called to be and do.

We know the first group of builders will receive reward. The second group will suffer loss of reward. And the third group shall suffer something even worse, which Paul describes as “him shall God destroy.” We are assured this is not in reference to their losing their salvation, but this warning may be the reason for the admonition of 2 Corinthians 5.

2 Corinthians 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

It certainly seems to me that the warning of God’s destroying someone would constitute “the terror of the Lord.” Exactly what this destruction would be or what form it would take is not spelled out directly, but further study might shed some light on this issue.

The remainder of chapter 3 and the opening verses of chapter 4 go together, so let’s read them before we get into studying them.

1 Corinthians 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. ²⁰ And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. ²¹ Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; ²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; ²³ And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. ³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. ⁴ For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. ⁶ And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

We are putting these two sections of scripture together as they are both putting forward previous themes. Notice that each section begins with a third person singular command. Let's start with 3:18.

1 Corinthians 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

I wish we had time to explore the issue of men deceiving themselves. As we have discussed before, Satan has three main ways by which he is dealing with men: 1) temptation, 2) accusation, and 3) deception. It is one thing to be deceived by Satan, but it is another to deceive ourselves.

Understand that if we deceive ourselves, then we are open to the influence of deceiving spirits.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

So, it is important not to deceive ourselves. Paul talks about five ways in which we can deceive ourselves.

1. The man who thinks the wisdom of this world qualifies him to be wise in spiritual matters has deceived himself (1 Corinthians 3:18).
2. The man who tries to live his life (solve his problems) the way the world does has deceived himself (1 Corinthians 6:6-10).
3. The man who thinks bad company will not have any affect on him has deceived himself (1 Corinthians 15:33).
4. The man who thinks he has arrived has deceived himself (Galatians 6:3).
5. The man who thinks he can fool God is deceiving himself (Galatians 6:7).

There is a lot to say about each one of these, but we cannot take the time now to discuss them except for 1 Corinthians 3:18. Self-deception ultimately comes from believing a lie instead of believing God's truth.

Notice that the first section at the end of chapter 3 is about how we are to regard ourselves. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 pick back up on 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16, where Paul connected the themes of wisdom and foolishness to factions and boasting in leaders.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.¹⁹ For it is written, **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,** and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.²⁰ Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?**

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching **was not with enticing words of man's wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵ That **your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men**, but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit **we speak wisdom** among them that are perfect: yet **not the wisdom of this world**, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: ⁷ But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery**, even the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

The central theme that the world's wisdom is folly is recalled in 3:18-19.

1 Corinthians 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. ¹⁹ For **the wisdom of this world is foolishness** with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

The wisdom of men, the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the princes of this world work to make a man think that God's wisdom is foolishness. Therefore, Paul says to become a fool in the eyes of the world so that you might truly be wise. Spiritual wisdom can only come from God and His word. Every other wisdom God will destroy.

In 1 Corinthians 3:19-20, we have citations from Job 5:12-13 and Psalm 94:11 which emphasize the fact that human wisdom is going to come under the judgment of God. Let's start with vs. 19.

1 Corinthians 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, **He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.**

Job 5:12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise. ¹³ **He taketh the wise in their own craftiness:** and the counsel of the foward is carried headlong.

What does it mean to "take the wise in their own craftiness?" It means that God catches them with their own schemes and ambitions.

Now, take a look at vs. 20.

1 Corinthians 3:20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Psalm 94:11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.

Then, in vv. 3:21-23, Paul recalls the names we saw back in 1 Corinthians 1:12 and 3:4.

1 Corinthians 3:21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; ²² **Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas**, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; ²³ And ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.

1 Corinthians 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, **I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.**

1 Corinthians 3:4 For while one saith, **I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos;** are ye not carnal?

While the Corinthians were choosing which teacher they belonged to, Paul turns it on its head by saying you don't belong to them, they belong to you. This puts the teachers in their proper role as servants.

1 Corinthians 3:21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For **all things are yours;**

²² **Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas...**

If you only claim one of them, you are claiming too little since "all things are yours." Paul is saying to them, you don't belong to Paul, you belong to Christ, and Christ is God's.

Aren't Paul, Apollos and Cephas servants of God? Did any of them die for you? No? So, stop with all the divisions and being satisfied with so little when God has given you so much more. Paul, Apollos and every other minister is given for their benefit.

But there is more to vs. 21 than just those men.

1 Corinthians 3:21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

²² **Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;** ²³ And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Notice in vs. 22, Paul expands the list beyond ministers. So what does Paul mean when he includes life, death, etc.? How do these things belong to the Corinthians?

Firstly, Paul is saying this life is not all there is. What else is there? There is life in Christ that goes beyond merely physical life right now.

By including "death," Paul is saying that physical death is not the end, for our life in Christ continues on beyond that.

By "things present or things to come," Paul is saying that believers are not in bondage to things which are, or things which will come in the future, for those things belong to us because we are in Christ.

Paul is not saying that everything in life will be pleasant for the Corinthians. Just as every minister is for their benefit, so is everything they encounter: life, death, etc. Reminds you of Romans 8:28, doesn't it? It should. All of the things we go through and experience are meant to conform us to the image of God's Son. Even the sufferings are meant to make us more than conquerors. And this is possible because we belong to Christ!

The second section is found in 1 Corinthians 4:1-6, and it also begins with a third person singular command.

1 Corinthians 4:1 **Let a man so account of us**, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

The second section in chapter 4 is about how to regard others, especially God's servants. These verses rehearse the argument of 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:17 and reinforces the conclusion that human evaluation is inherently faulty. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

Here in 1 Corinthians 4:1-6, Paul applies this specifically to the evaluation of God's servants. (1 Corinthians 3:5-17)

1 Corinthians 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. ⁴ For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

Paul is saying that because he is God's servant, only God can truly evaluate him. In the same way, only God can truly evaluate all those individuals who live out of the foolish wisdom of the cross of Christ, because only God can fully discern their hearts. No amount of popularity holds any sway with God. For the members of the body of Christ, all will be evaluated and judged righteously at the JSoC.

Looking at 1 Corinthians 4:4, Paul is saying that even his own assessment of his ministry is not decisive. Why? Because it is the Lord who gives the final word on how faithful Paul has been.

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The Corinthians were engaging in the assessment of ministers. Because their knowledge was limited and partial, that was an unfruitful exercise. What is hidden in the lives of others will be exposed at the JSoC. God knows everything and will judge accordingly, and He is the only One who can do that.

Romans 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Now back to the text.

1 Corinthians 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos **for your sakes**; that ye might learn in us not to think of *men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Paul now tells the Corinthians why he has given this extended reflection in his ministry and that of Apollos. It is for their benefit. And how are they meant to benefit?

1 Corinthians 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

The problem is that the Corinthians had a pride issue and were “puffed up” against one another in their assessing the qualities of the various ministers and ministries.