

Study 5: Judging and Imitating

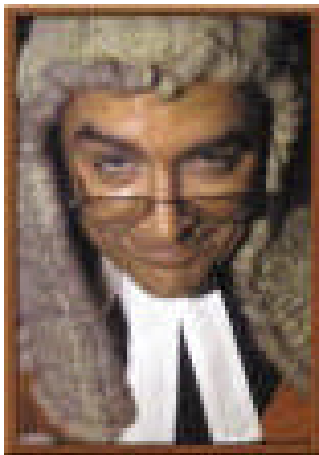
Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Who's Judgment matters?

In v 1 Paul says that he has been entrusted with the secret things of God. Thinking back to study 3 and 1 Corinthians 2:7, what do you think Paul means by the secret things of God?

What is required of Paul as a servant of God?

Reading between the lines in v 1-5, how do you think the Corinthians might have been treating Paul?



In the light of what Paul's said to them so far in his letter, what do you think they might have been judging him about?

Paul is not worried about being judged by the Corinthians. What judgement is he concerned to measure up to?

When will this judgement happen and why will it be completely just?

The Corinthians were probably judging Paul because his preaching was plain and clear and focussed on the cross. We've seen that they were impressed by fancy speeches and persuasive sounding philosophy and Paul's preaching just didn't seem to match up. But Paul says that he's not worried what they think about his preaching. He's only worried about what God thinks, and that will become clear to everyone when Jesus returns.

In what sense should Christian leaders not be worried about how people judge them? Can they ignore every criticism, or does Paul mean something else?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-21

Who's the king of the castle?

The Corinthians judgement of Paul was the result of a deeper problem which he turns to address in v 6-7. What is that problem?

Why is the Corinthians attitude so wrong?



From v 8-14 List all the sufferings and difficulties that Paul has faced as an apostle?

How does this compare with the Corinthians' situation?

How does Paul's lifestyle as an apostle fit with the message of the cross that he's talked about in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2?

How does the Corinthian's 'Kingly' lifestyle match the message of the cross

Given what we've seen about the Corinthians' attitudes so far in this letter, how do you think they would have felt about Paul's sufferings and difficulties?

Irony alert

Paul uses cutting irony with the Corinthians. They think that with their wisdom and their fancy speeches they've got it all - that they are kings in the faith. But even if they are kings in their own eyes, they're not in God's. God's not impressed by human wisdom and achievements. He's impressed by people who live lives which match the foolishness of the cross. Paul subverts the Corinthians' pride by boasting about his weakness. They would have been embarrassed by his weakness but he's showing that his life of suffering and humiliation matches the 'foolishness' of the cross much better than their life of 'glory'.



How does Paul want the Corinthians to react to his list of sufferings?

How does this compare with the way that they are actually treating him (see v 1-5)?

Words or power?

Verses 18-21 close this section of the letter. Who does Paul address?

What is in store for these people?

What does Paul mean that the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power?

Paul closes this section of the letter with a strong warning to some people at Corinth who have become arrogant. They're probably the ones who have been doing the boasting and causing the division that Paul has been addressing. He warns them that they need to take notice of what he's been saying in these chapters or else he'll have to come and sort them out in person. Then they'll see for certain that his message of the cross has God's power to save and transform people, but their eloquent philosophical speeches are just empty words.

If Paul showed up at church would you be proud of him or embarrassed by him?

What things should we be valuing in our Christian leaders?

How can we imitate Paul?

What would it do for our church if we did all imitate Paul?