

1 Corinthians 4

10-12-11

“Ramming Speed!”

I. Announce:

- A. **Announce next Wed** - We will meet in Gym. **Painting sanct ceiling.**
- B. **Wireless in Sanct** - CCMpublic (password: bible) **PS: open & unfiltered = don't do your banking.**
- C. **Introduce up:** Ted & Caroline Turner, & Chad Dulaney. Heading to Cambodia.

II. Intro:

- A. **John Kenneth Galbraith** (Famous Economist), in his autobiography, *A Life in Our Times*, illustrates the devotion of *Emily Gloria Wilson*, his family's **housekeeper**: **It had been a wearying day, and I asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House. “Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson.” “He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him.” “Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him.” “No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you.” When I called the President back, he could scarcely control his pleasure. “Tell that woman I want her here in the White House.”** Reader's Digest, December, 1981

1. **Who do you work for?** Paul gives us a great reminder.

III. SERVANTS & STEWARDS! (1,2)

- A. **Servant** - an “*under-rower*” - an oarsman on the bottom level of a vessel.
 1. **Regardless of how prominent or authoritative, all believers are merely oarsman on a ship, responsible to their Captain, Jesus Christ.**
 2. **Its entrusting *someone* else to steer the direction you are going. You just row.**
 3. **I think the greatest imagery of this...was the Epic 1959 film, Ben Hur. Ben-Hur or Charlton Heston was a galley slave for 3 years, as slave "Number 41."**
 - a) **Watch 3 min. Clip!**
 - (1) **Battle Speed; Attack Speed; Ramming Speed. Rest.**
- B. **Steward** - an *Estate Manager*, a *House Keeper*.
 1. **This figure is that of a steward in charge of his masters house.**
 - a) **The church is the house; Christ is the master; & we are the stewards.**
 - b) **This is one who manages everything for his master; but owns nothing himself.**
 - (1) **Joseph in Potiphar's house is the best example.**
- C. **Faithful** - implies unswerving adherence to a *person* or *thing* or *to the oath or promise* by which a tie was contracted. [*full of faith*, trustful, and not simply trustworthy]

1. **Faithful!** - There is nothing in Pompeii that invests it with a deeper interest than the spot where a soldier of old Rome displayed **a most heroic fidelity**. That fatal day on which **Vesuvius**, at whose feet the city stood, burst out into an eruption that shook the earth, a **sentinel** kept watch by the gate which looked to the burning mountain...amidst the fearful disorder, the sentinel had been forgotten; and as Rome required her sentinels, happen what might, to hold their posts till relieved by the guard, or set at liberty by their officers, he had to choose between death and dishonor. **Pattern of fidelity, he stands by his post**. Slowly, but surely, the ashes rise on his manly form; now they reach his breast; and now, covering his lips, they choke his breathing. He also was "faithful unto death." **After 17 centuries, they found his skeleton standing erect** in a marble niche, clad in its rusty armor, the helmet on his empty skull, and his bony fingers still closed upon his spear.
 - a) **God requires every...usher, greeter, Children's Church worker, home study leader, sound man, worship leader, every servant, & steward to be FAITHFUL!**
2. **Maybe sometimes** we focus too much on **fruitfulness** & forget **faithfulness**?
3. **Maybe sometimes** we are so preoccupied with counting **our spiritual apples & oranges** that we forget to spend time watering our roots by just **serving, honoring, believing, & following** Jesus?
4. **Maybe fruitfulness** will just happen **naturally**, if we just let **His living water** soak into the depths of our soul.

IV. **JUDGING! (3-5)**

- A. (3) (NLT) **As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.**
 1. **Paul wasn't** concerned w/3 out of 4 judgments: **By you** (they were off base anyways); **By a human court** (lit. **A human day**; in the sense of a human judgement day); **By myself** (even his own assessment was immaterial); **By the Lord** (he was only concerned w/the scrutiny of the Lord, who knows our hearts, our desires, our every thought & motive).
- B. Some will **praise** us, Some will **criticize!**
 1. **1** can provide a big head; the other possible depression, **or at the least**, it makes you **2nd guess** yourself.
 2. But even criticism can be used in our life. It will be either a **weapon** to batter us (from Satan) or a **tool** to build us (from God).
- C. **Criticism...what do we do with it? (Practical App)**
 1. Proverbs 26:4,5 **Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.**
 - a) This tells me *different circumstances* dictates *different biblical methods!*

2. **Expect it** - Like the 2 men looking in the window of a taxidermist shop. The one says, "That's a poor job of mounting a bird!" Just then, the bird flew down from the perch!
 - a) Jesus was unjustly criticized, so how can His followers escape the same treatment?
3. **Evaluate it** - Consider the source.
 - a) **Not all criticism is bad.** Even if it is given to us in an *unloving way* by an *unsympathetic person*. (WWW)
 - (1) Tozer, "If the critic is **right**, he has helped you. If he is **wrong**, you can help him. Either way, *somebody gets helped.*"
4. **Wait on the Lord** - Don't phone friends, don't post it on Facebook, don't tweet it, quiet your heart & focus on **2 things**: 1)Bringing glory to the Lord through it 2)Pray for the critic.
5. **Watch for the Foe of Flattery** - Remember its like perfume, smell it don't drink it.
6. **Confront the accuser!** - Don't run around to tell a lot of people.
 - a) Swindoll, "Go directly to the person holding the knife. For until you take the knife away, the back stabbing will only continue."
7. **Remain silent!** - Sometimes the more you try to defend yourself the more you appear guilty.
 - a) *Go immediately to God, pray for His vindication, then step out of the way!*
 - b) **Read Ps.26:1-3.**
 - c) "Never kick a skunk. You may manufacture a worse problem that you started with."
8. **Never take revenge!** - That's God's business.
 - a) Deut.32:35 **I will take revenge; I will pay them back. In due time their feet will slip. Their day of disaster will arrive, and their destiny will overtake them.**

D. (4) **Nothing against himself...Really?**

1. (NLT) **My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.**

E. (5) Only God can judge fairly; He alone can light the things hidden in darkness...He alone knows man's motives...He alone has a clear view into our hearts.

V. **FOOLS! (6-13)**

- A. (6) **That none of you be puffed up** - There's nothing like reading the biographies of some of God's saints to cure a *superiority complex*.

1. Heb.11:35b-38 **Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and**

goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

2. **Story** - I remember as a kid having a basketball that started to separate. Out bulged the little black rubber liner (size of a small egg).

a) We still used it, but it wasn't as *trustworthy* when we dribbled it.

b) The Corinthian believers were like my basketball...they had gotten *puffed up*(6,18,19).

B. (7) Paul takes the stand against them with his *Sanctified Sarcasm!*

1. Spurgeon, "Will a man who is **very deeply in debt** say, "I have reason to be proud more than you because I owe 10 times as much as you do"? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any **grace** – he owes it all to God. And he who has the most grace is the most in debt to his Lord."

2. **Are you a self-made man/woman?** Then you make yourself a god.

a) Stop making a *snow man* which will not endure *the Sun of Righteousness*.

C. (10) **We are fools for Christ's sake** - *Mwen fou pou Jézi*.

D. (13) **Filth of the world** – dirt, filth.

1. (NIV) **Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.**

E. **Offscouring** – That which is removed by the process of cleaning dirt off, scouring, scum.

1. 1st word spoke of a "**rinsing**"; this 2nd word means a "**scraping**" of a dirty vessel.

VI. **WARNINGS! (14-21)**

A. (15) **Life is a school, so be teachable!**

1. Our Father uses many **hands** & many **voices** to teach us.

B. Paul was saying, "not in their words, their philosophy, & their dogma, but in **Power**...which they didn't have!"

1. Alan Redpath asks, "I wonder if sometimes **competence** is a covering for our lack of the **transforming power of God the Holy Spirit?**"

C. (21) Ok, your choice! **What do you want?**

D. **Two Roads:** I can come wielding the **rod** of "Apostolic discipline", or mutual **love** in a spirit of gentleness?¹

1. Paul's answer to their situation was to point them to the path he himself has chosen, *the royal route to heaven (imitate me)*.

E. **2 roads** are clearly offered to *each of us* in life:

¹ F.F.Bruce

1. **The Road of the Self-Life!** – It seeks after intellectual entertainment, & wins the applause of men, but ends in corruption, failure, & defeat.
2. **The Road of the Cross!** – The path of unpopularity, making him a spectacle to the world, often criticized & derided, even persecuted, certainly thought out-of-date & old-fashioned.

a) That is the road Paul chose!

b) Which path are you on today?

c) You know there is something in all of us that wants “both”!

(1) **We want a middle road.** A little bit of praise & popularity; a little bit of recognition & thanks; a little bit of applause of men.

(2) **We also want the anointing of the H.S. & the authority of God.** We want the **power...w/o the cost!**

d) You can only meet the needs of those around you in the power the H.S.

(1) **Mt.16:24-26 If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**

F. Here we find **the principle** of all ministry, the **background** for all Christian living!

1. Paul was simply **a faithful servant** of Christ & a **steward** of the mysteries of God!

G. **Prayer:** Battle Speed; Attack Speed; Ramming Speed. Rest.