

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: So Account of Us

Text: 1 Cor 4: 1-2

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At Corinth the problem of division over the preachers had done what it always does—it resulted in division among the brethren.

- They exalted one preacher and put down another
- So they exalted the brethren who followed the preacher they liked and put down those who followed the preacher they did not like. So Paul say in

**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 [by the things I have said about preachers] **not to think of men** [preachers as well as our brethren] **above** [beyond—less or more—than] **that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.****

- So preachers are the example Paul uses—himself and Apollos—as ministers and stewards.
- But this applies to all true believers—this is what every believer is.

**Proposition:** We have no reason to be puffed up one against another because it is God who made us what we are.

**I. FIRST, ALL OF GOD'S TRUE WITNESSES—  
ARE TO BE ACCOUNTED AS MINISTERS OF**

# CHRIST—1 Corinthians 4: 1: Let a man so account of us,...

A. Let a man so reckon us, let a man so impute to us— what God has really made us to be—not what we are not—not more, not less—what God has really made us to be.

B. This word “account” is the same Greek word found in “Ro 4: 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,...8: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

1. When God imputes the righteousness of Christ to a believer, he is accounting to us what we have already really been made to be by Christ.

**Romans 4: 7:...Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**

2. Let me give you two verses showing how God imputes or accounts. Turn to Lev 17

Leviticus 17: 3: What man soever there be of the house of Israel, **that killeth** an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, 4: And **bringeth it not** unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; **blood shall be imputed unto that man;** [is blood imputed to that man in order to make him to have shed blood? No. Is God treating him as if he shed blood? No! Blood shall be imputed to that man because] **he**

**hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:**

**Notice: God is not making the man sin by the imputation of sin to him—“blood is imputed unto that man [because] he hath shed blood.” Let’s go to the New Testatment, Rom 5. Let’s look at federal Headship, at Representation by Adam and Christ.**

**Romans 5: 12: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so [because of Adam’s transgression] death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: [“for that” means because in Adam all really have sinned therefore death passed upon all men.]**

3. He gives an example to show that sin is imputed to us because we were truly made sin by Adam’s disobedience.

**Romans 5: 13: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. [God is just. God does not account sin to someone unless he has been made sin.] **14: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,** [even when they had no law, death reigned] **even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,** [Death even reigned over newborn babies that did not actively, rebelliously sin against a direct law as Adam did.]**

4. How was God just to impute sin to their account when there was no law, even to newborn babies who had not actively committed a trespass like Adam?

- God imputed sin to them because God is just and sin is what they really were!
- Because we all really did transgress and were really made sin when we broke that one law in the garden because we were really in Adam when he broke it
- But now look at this: **Romans 5: 14...[Adam] is the figure of [Christ] that was to come.**

5. Christ is Head and Representative of all God's elect. And Christ made his people righteousness by his obedience unto the death of the cross.

Romans 5: 18: Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men [all who Adam represented] to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men [all who Christ represented] unto justification of life. 19: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

- God shall regenerate and give faith to each one for whom Christ died.
- When God imputes the righteousness of Christ to a believer, it is not God imputing to us what we are not—it is God imputing to us what Christ has already made us.
- Not by our works
- But by Christ's obedience unto the death of the cross in our place.

**App.** My Greek Lexicon says the word account “**refers to facts not suppositions.**”

- And if we take an honest look into the scriptures to see how God accounts, imputes, reckons—we find that God accounts to a person the fact of what that person already really is.

**For example:** If I have \$20 in my wallet and I account that I have \$20 in my wallet, I did not put \$20 dollars in my wallet by imputing \$20 dollars to my wallet, I accounted \$20 dollars to my wallet because it is a reality--\$20 dollars is in my wallet.

- Imputation is the act of God accounting to a person what the person has already been made by his representative head.
- But in scripture, God's accounting is never represented as treating a person as if they are something that they are not.

**“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom 6: 2)**

**Romans 6: 6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed from sin**

6. God accounts us dead to sin—not in order to make us dead to sin nor is God counting us what we are not—but God accounts the believer dead to sin because we are dead to sin by Christ's death. He commands his child to do the same.

**Romans 6: 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Colossians 3: 2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.**

**D. Paul just declared 1 Cor 3: 20:...all things are yours....23: And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. 1 Cor 4: 1: Let a man so account of us—what we really have been made by Christ!—1 Cor 4: 1: Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ—**

1. Ministers are servants.

- Not guests being exalted at the banquet table, but waiters doing the serving
- Not being ministered unto, but ministering to others.
- It is a subordinate office

**Illustration:** An “under-rower” was a subordinate servant in the lowest part of the ship. It is where the captain of the ship appointed him. And he rowed wherever the captain of the ship commanded.

- Christ is our Captain
- Christ's preachers and his people are made ministers in this “fellowship” belonging to Christ
- Christ appoints where we will serve
- We row as Christ our Captain commands us.
- Even as Christ gives us strength and grace for the work.

**App.** Christ's church is the opposite of this world. This world considers great men to be those who are served, ministered unto, exalted by men. But Christ said,

Matthew 20: 26...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27: And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28: **Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**

Brethren, "ye are Christ's. Let a man so account of us" what Christ has really made us—"the ministers of Christ." Seek to serve, not to be served!

C. And lest we account ministers too lowly, he says, remember, we have been made the ministers "of Christ"

1. Christ made us his ministers.

- Christ redeemed us, made us the righteousness of God in him.
- Christ quickened and called us
- Christ qualified and sent us, uniting each of us together with his people.

2. *We are the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

- We have no authority of our own
- Our whole business is to do what Christ and Christ alone commands, wherever he puts us.
- We are sent by Christ *to serve one another*
- *Not to lord over one another*
- Nor *to be lorded over by one another—*

- We are not men-pleasers, *we are the servants of Christ and your servants for Christ's sake.*

**App.** So brethren, we are not to exalt one brother, at the expense of another—lest we judge the workmanship of Christ, lest we put in question the Master of that brother—“we are ministers of Christ.”

## **II. SECONDLY, HE SAYS—AND ACCOUNT OF US AS “STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD”**

A. A steward is a willing bond-servant. Christ makes us willing bond-servants in the day of his power—in the day that he reveals to us our full complete redemption is accomplished, Christ sets us free—and his goodness, his grace, makes us willing to serve him. It is pictured in Exodus 21.

Exodus 21: 2: If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and **in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.** [If Christ our Master shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.]...**5: And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:**  
**6: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever. (Ex 21:2-6)**

**Ro 6:18: Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.**



B. A steward is entrusted with his master's property and goods.—what are the goods we are put in trust with from our Master—1 Cor 4: 1...stewards of the mysteries of God.

**App.** Brethren, we who have been made stewards—willing bond servants—have been entrusted with the most valuable thing there is—the gospel of God. Paul said, “**the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.**” (1 Tim 1: 11)

1. God alone can reveal the mysteries of God to his stewards.

- We must go to his word to receive what he says.
- We must go into our Master chamber every day in prayer to receive revelation from him.

B. Then the steward is to faithfully deliver our Masters gospel to those of his household—1 Corinthians 4: 2  
**Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**

Lu 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is that **faithful and wise steward**, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to **give them their portion of meat in due season?**

1 Pe 4:10 As **every man hath received the gift**, even so **minister the same one to another**, as **good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

**Illustration:** I received this gift from God my own self and now I am ministering the same to you.

1. God's children are the members of his household.
  - The gospel of Christ is the children bread.
  - The children must hear his gospel preached through his stewards.
  - Therefore, the steward must labor in the word and in prayer to receive the gift from God so he can minister the gift to his brethren.

**App.** If a man is lazy he is not a faithful steward of God. If a man is not a laborer in the word and in prayer, he is an unfaithful steward. If he preaches his own words and ideas rather than God's word he is not a faithful steward.

2. We do not come to hear the steward—we come to hear the “glorious gospel of God, the mysteries of God.” We come to hear Christ speak of:

- **God's electing grace**—sovereign and free
- **God's predestinating grace**—ruling all things and all people, conforming his people to Christ
- **God's redeeming grace**—Christ's successful redemption of his people
- **God's regenerating grace**—the irresistible quickening and calling of the Holy Spirit
- **God preserving grace**—the only way we will persevere as good and faithful stewards is by God preserving us, working in us both to will and do of his good pleasure.
- **God's resurrecting, glorifying grace**—one day God shall raise each of his children anew to be with Christ

forevermore in a new heavens and new earth wherein dwellth righteousness.

- **Salvation is of the Lord**—A to Z, beginning to end, that is the bread we are to dispense to God's children
- And it is Christ who feeds us through his gospel and grows us in grace and knowledge of him.

2 Cor 5:20: Now then we are **ambassadors for Christ**, as though **God did beseech you by us**: we pray you **in Christ's stead**, be ye reconciled to God.

3. So it is required in a steward that he be found faithful—faithful to his Master.

**Illustration: (Turn to Rev 2)** You bear witness of Christ to your friends and family. You do it for years and years. But it seems to fall on deaf ears. What do you? **It is required in a steward that he be found faithful.** You just keep bearing witness of Christ.

- As a steward I preach, I pray, I write, I contact people who are interested in the gospel
- As stewards you bear witness of Christ, you ask men to come, you provide for this place, you provide for one another, you provide for others
- Yet, at times, it seems that it all just goes unappreciated—even rejected, men hate you and reproach you.
- What do you do? **It is required in a steward that he be found faithful. Hear God speak.**

Revelation 2: 9: **I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and**

*I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. 10: **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer:** behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**” (Re 2:9-10)

**App.** Do what you do for the glory of our Master, do what you do in faithfulness to him and his people! Do everything to honor him, to bring no dishonor on Christ, his gospel or his people. And never seek the praise and applause of men!

**Spurgeon** “Brothers, take care that you use your talents for your Master, and only for your Master....It is unfaithfulness to Jesus if we preach sound Doctrine with the view to be thought sound, or pray earnestly with the desire that we may be known as praying men. It is for us to pursue our Lord’s Glory with a single eye and with our whole heart. We must use our Lord’s Gospel, our Lord’s people and our Lord’s talents for our Lord and for Him alone.”

**I 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.**

**Amen!**