

“God’s Stewards Answer to God”
1 Corinthians 4:1-5

I. Ministers are mere men who have been entrusted with a ministry by God (v. 1).

- A. Ministers are servants of Christ.
- B. Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of God.

(Matthew 10:28; John 3:30; Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 9:16-17; Colossians 1:25-27; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10)

II. Ministers must strive to be found faithful by God (v. 2).

(Luke 12:42-46)

III. Ministers will receive judgment for their work from God, and not men (vs. 3-5).

- A. People are in no position to judge ministers.
- B. Ministers are in no position to judge themselves.
- C. Ministers will receive their judgment from God.

(1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 33:13-15; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 10:17-18; Hebrews 4:13)

Scripture References and Notes

John 17:3

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be

children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

servants

ὑπηρέτης (hupéretés)

- a servant, an attendant, (a) an officer, lictor, (b) an attendant in a synagogue, (c) a minister of the gospel.
- From *hypó*, "under" and *ēressō*, "to row" – properly, a rower (a crewman on a boat), an "under-rower" who mans the oars on a lower deck; (figuratively) a *subordinate* executing official orders, i.e. operating under direct (specific) orders.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

⁵ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

1 Corinthians 9:16-17

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷ For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

Matthew 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Colossians 1:25-27

²⁵ Of *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of* the word of God, ²⁶ *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Titus 1:7

For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain...

1 Peter 4:10

As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

mystery

μυστήριον (mustérion)

- a mystery, secret, of which initiation is necessary; in the NT: the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation.

- In the Bible, a "mystery" (*mystērion*) is *not something unknowable*. Rather, it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals it*.

1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

Romans 16:25-26

²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to obedience of faith*...

Luke 12:42-46

⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, *both men and women*, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶ the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (KJV)

¹ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

1 Timothy 5:17

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (KJV)

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

“Paul was not bragging or placing himself above other ministers or above any other Christian. What he said about his own attitude toward himself should be said by every minister and every Christian. It should be a **very small thing** to any of us when our ministry or our spiritual life is criticized or praised, whether by fellow Christians, **by any human court**, or any other of man’s tribunals. We can benefit greatly from the counsel of a wise, spiritual friend, and sometimes even from the criticisms of unbelievers. But no human being is qualified to determine the legitimacy, quality, or faithfulness of our work for the Lord. We are not even qualified to determine those things for ourselves.”

– John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, 100.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Psalms 33:13-15

¹³ The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; ¹⁴ From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, ¹⁵ He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

¹⁷ But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD. ¹⁸ For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.