

1 Corinthians 3:18-4:5 PM

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[0 : 0 0] uh this will be a shorter than normal sermon because we have baptism so just so just you've got to jump on we're just going to jump we're going to get right onto it okay and you need to be concentrating right from the start so if if um if you're new let me catch up real quick so paul wrote this book called first corinthians uh to this church that had a number of quite specific problems going on um for example uh they were pretty loosey-goosey around the sexual behavior um they also treated church services as opportunities to show off um there are various people suing it they were like suing each other in the courts in the church um and what paul does is in the letter is he spends a couple of a few chapters like four chapters say for each of these issues right so it's super simple for the first four chapters he's focusing on divisions there's lots of divisions in the church and our reading is uh first corinthians 3 18 to 4 5 probably good to have it open so we're coming to the end of this first issue that he's dealing with the issue of division so that's a bit of a summary we're all on board now great let's go let's do this let's let's make it happen so um they were dividing over really stupid things and it's i mean this is easy i think for us to relate because i mean it's just easy for us to fall into divisive behavior i think in the world and the internet has created this incredible is just this incredible enabler of division let me give you an example and i was trying to think of an example because you know sometimes i might give examples and they're like about parenting or like winston churchill blah blah blah you know so um and uh our director of youth has been saying can you just like can you just talk like something even remotely relevant to people that are like 20 years old mr beast so relevant right so there's a generational gap right there so mr beast is not the devil mr beast is mr beast is a the the second most popular youtuber in the world anyway mr beast is really popular i'm absolutely killing it with the youth right now um he paid for cataract surgery for a thousand people in developing countries so these are people who are effectively blind all they needed was cataract surgery they couldn't get it in their countries without the money they didn't have the money he paid for a thousand people to get this uh curing them of their blindness right huge backlash this happened quite recently big backlash against this not for the self-evident fact that it was like well of course he's doing it to promote his kind of brand no um he's been accused very publicly by lots of people of ableism which says you are in wanting to cure these people of their blindness you're assuming assuming that they have a problem with it or you're assuming that there's something wrong with them and he's sort of going look they wanted the surgery they asked for the surgery i gave them the surgery they loved the surgery it's brilliant but there's a big drama around this people are saying it shouldn't have happened so this is a great example like we can divide over anything like anything so what was the issue in corinth it turns out that there were two sources of division the first source of division was self deception and we see this in verses 18 and 19 verses 18 and 19 let no one deceive themselves for if anyone thinks they are wise or she is wise in this age let him become a fool that he may become wise for the wisdom of the world is folly to god okay so what what's paul talking about here so there are

these folks in the church who had deceived themselves by telling themselves that they were very very clever because they lived in this really academic city there's lots of philosophers in this city they saw themselves as really super sophisticated as we would say in new zealand very sophisticated and paul they thought he's just some hick from some other place we don't need to listen to paul even though he founded the church we don't really need to listen to him because we're very sophisticated so you had people in this church who were kind of pushing themselves forward to be leaders which would be okay ish i guess except the people pushing themselves forward were just absolutely enamored by all the local intellectuals by all the worldly wisdom their hearts were more sort of corinthian corinthian than they were christian and they hadn't really grasped what faith was about they just kind of wanted to be impressive and paul says that wisdom

that you're grasping at that you think is so brilliant compared to god's wisdom it's just folly it's just foolishness to god and if you actually could read all four chapters in a row you'd see there is this line of reasoning paul says look we've got to put you guys have got to put the cross back at the center of what we're about not all this other stuff you want to kind of run this church on like the fuel that you're putting in the tank is all the local sort of intellectual stuff and he's going no the fuel going into the tank of the church it's got to be the cross has got to be central because all your stuff that you're on about that you love it might sound really impressive but no one's no that's not going to save anybody one of the things i like about the whole anglican thing you know anglican is not the only way to do church it's the way i like to do it uh you probably like it um but one of the good things about it is that even if the sermon is rubbish you're still going to hear the gospel every week through the liturgy somebody up here is still going to say jesus died for your sins and he rose again and you are forgiven and you're going to be with him forever isn't that brilliant so i i appreciate that so you're still going to hear that every week okay so first point paul says you guys are divided you're fighting because some of you have deceived yourself into thinking you're very very clever and it's causing all sorts of problems so stop doing that stop deceiving yourselves if you really want to be wise you're going to take the posture of somebody who is foolish and say lord i don't i don't know what i'm doing i don't know what's going on help me teach me okay second source of division verses 21 to 23 so let no one boast in men so let no one boast in people for all things are yours whether paul or apollo or cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future all are yours you are christ's and christ is god's okay so i know corinthians is very dense it's quite confusing so let me tell you what i think's going on here so not only were the people in the church posturing intellectually they were posturing when it comes to their favorite leaders and we've mentioned this in previous sermons so some folks were saying i'm a paul guy some folks were saying i'm an apollo guy i'm a cephas guy they were doing that instead of just being like aren't we really lucky to have all these great people around us helping us in our faith instead of that they were dividing into these little cliques and bad-mouthing each other and they were doing this because that's how the world operated back in the days so in corinth we've talked about this before again that the great celebrities of the day were the local philosophers so they would go to the public squares and that you know talk it up and they were very clever and they were excellent communicators and what people did is they kind of attached themselves to these philosophers they'd say i'm a follower of such and such a philosopher i'm a follower of this philosopher so you'd have these like gaggles these

groupies around particular philosophers and they didn't like the other groupies who were attached to the other philosophers they were kind of like like um snobby intellectual versions of english um soccer hooligans for example right and this is all helpful to know because this is this is what um the reason they would do this it's not even necessarily i mean maybe they kind of liked a particular philosopher but it was more about gaining social status because the way to climb social ladders was about who you were connected to and they figured they'd just pick their person who they thought was the most sort of powerful kind of philosopher person and they attached themselves to that person to gain as we would say in new zealand they'd say to gain mana it's a new zealand word it's a maori word mana and it sort of means what it sort of sounds like it's respect it's kind of like power so in the church people were acting this way in corinth they would say i'm of paul i'm of apollo i'm of cephas again they're just trying to elevate their own personal status by connecting themselves to the person that they thought was the most influential the most powerful who had the most mana and paul says i know what you're trying to do and stop it this is not how christians operate verse 21 just don't stop boasting in people stop that stop boasting in people and he gives a good theological reason for it in verses 20 to 23 he says this and it's a little bit tricky to follow but just stay with me he says christ is god you belong to christ these leaders belong to christ in fact the whole world belongs to christ the future is christ the present is christ life and death is christ so what does that mean christ is supreme over all so because christ is over all and you belong to him those things belong to you okay stay with me i know i might have lost some of you right there just stay with me i don't fully understand it myself but i'm just going to say some words right now and i think they make sense all right so here we go you ready here is what i think is going on paul is saying stop saying i belong to apollo theologically apollo belongs to you is what he's saying stop saying you belong to paul actually paul is a gift to you he belongs to you and then what paul does is he unpacks this a but first just a reminder of where we're at where we're at here big picture okay so paul is addressing division in the church he says it's caused by intellectual posturing which is just

foolishness compared to the wisdom of god he also says i want you to stop this relational posturing because both of those things are hurting you spiritually and they're hurting and damaging his church okay so paul wants to unpack this idea of how is it that paul belongs to you or apollo's belongs to you rather than the way that you want to do it and you want to like latch on like a leech to the local biggest brain you can find to increase your status in life okay so paul says stop using leaders to boost your ego stop using leaders to boost your pride and your sense of sort of social status right he says okay and then what paul does he says so um let me tell you how you should relate or how you should regard leaders in the church so we're in chapter 4 now verse 1 he says this this is how one should regard us that's paul apollo's will myself people who do this kind of thing as servants of christ and stewards of the mysteries of god okay i'm just going to pick one of those words here um the word servant here it's a very it means slave but a very specific type of slave so it's the lowest

of the lowest slaves so literally means under oarsman so you know like gladiator movies roman movies and you have the big boats and then you have there's always a dude sitting at the back of the boat with the massive drum boom boom boom boom it's like this is a great this is a great movie and then it kind zooms in down into the ship to underneath in the in the bottom the basement of the ship i don't know what that what's the what's the bottom of the ship called the galley oh it's a kitchen anyway like right in the bottom of the ship you see the dudes rowing those guys like 20 of them i made that number up right but there's like 20 of them rowing that's the word like it's the worst slave they're in the they just they die every time in these movies these are the guys that just die straight away the under oarsman so paul says let me tell you how you should relate to um these guys you're trying to leech onto to gain social status they're right at the bottom that's the picture of the church leader picture of the church leader is someone who serves leaders of service the people of corinth they didn't belong to paul it was like it was the other way around paul belonged to them he was their servant so this is what i do i exist to help you grow in your faith this is what i've decided this is what god has said i should do with my life my job we're here is to help you walk with jesus it's not to make you happy i hope you're happy but that's not what i'm trying to do my job is to serve you to help you be on mission for christ in vancouver okay let's keep going verse two he says moreover is required of stewards to be found faithful so this is really good this is what you should know about what i do in this role in paul's role in apollo's role the church leader my goal am i succeeding it's it's about am i being faithful that's what i'm aiming for faithfulness so that people who do this sort of work i mean like i come to the scriptures each you know each week my goal is not to like what's the freshest take what's the big fresh take on this passage no that's not my goal my job is not to do that it's not to be an iconoclast it's to be faithful to the words before me do my best job i can of explaining these things faithfully to you right the people in corinth didn't really get that they treated their pastors like they treated the local celebrities i hope to glean social status from them and paul says we're not superstars we're the under oarsmen now we go to verses three to five because this is where he sort of starts to pull and scoop up everybody because right now this just sounds like a sermon for pastors right so uh three to five let me read it quickly for you but with me it is a very small thing that i should be judged by you or by any human in court in fact i do not even judge myself how it will come to that but i'm not aware of anything against me but if i am not thereby acquitted it is the lord who judges me therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time before the lord comes who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart then each one will receive his commendation or her commendation from god all right so how does this little last part relate to all the stuff i've just been saying so as we said before paul had some fans he also had some distractors who didn't like him remember the groups would go against each other that was going on and um uh those who were judging him had just these worldly categories to judge him by like you're not slick enough you're not good looking enough your your presentations aren't sharp enough that kind of thing so how does paul think about that what does he say about that and it's so great what he says i love what he says in verse three he goes i don't care if you judge me for not being superstar philosopher i don't care if you judge me in fact i don't even judge myself he says isn't that brilliant

i don't even judge myself many of us i know in our heads it's like we are constantly on trial in our heads and it's like we have these two judges in our in our brains one judge represents what other people say to us judgy judgy judgy judgy judgy the other judge represents us telling bad things us telling bad things to ourselves and we're always guilty we always come up short and it seems like paul has kind of jumped out of that cycle of thinking it's like my identity doesn't owe anything to what

others say about me my identity doesn't owe anything to what others say about me whether you think i'm failing or succeeding in ministry i'm just doing my thing here not even his own fallible assessment of himself i should have a bigger church that should be growing blah blah blah it's like i've just i'm just stepped i've just stepped out of that i'm not even going to judge myself so when it comes to ministry because what matters is what god thinks high self-esteem low self-esteem it's not even on his radar he's just getting on with what the lord has for him in his life and for some of us it's this for some of us it's to be uh you know like a great dad or for some of us it's going to be um in your workplace that's going to be your ministry or you're at college be a great student minister to your friends he's just like just get on with it just just get on with what the lord has for you isn't that great he's not worried if his ministry reaches these sort of acceptable levels these standards that other folks have for him or that he's placed on himself he's just being faithful he doesn't have this tortured conscience that some of us have about what we're doing in our lives i love that isn't that brilliant now look at the last verse one more time it talks about judgment talks about disclosing hidden things and it all sounds a bit like oh my goodness i hate this stuff this is so heavy heavy heavy but the last verse then each one will receive his commendation from god it's like he scoops this all up and he goes the only judgment that matters in your life is god's judgment and when we think about judgment what do we think we think discipline right but here it's about reward each one will receive his commendation from god isn't this brilliant on the day of judgment there will be disciplining but also god will praise you that's the way it's also translated for all the good things you've done in the world isn't that a wild idea on the day of judgment it's not just christians you are forgiven here you go right here's the door you know where it is going there it's all fantastic in there forgiven just just go through next no it's like you'll hear from the lord fantastic you know you did that thing that was dear that was great you did that thing hey it was awesome well done remember the time you'd sing the blah blah gee that was good love that brilliant you did that well done which means there's great continuity between this life and the next how we live affects the next it all matters maybe i'll just say that it all matters judgment good and bad it all matters god will commend you i love that i'm going to close up here god loves his church loves his people loves communities like this he hates it when it's hurt hates it when it's damaged and so we must pray because we don't want to be we don't want to be part of that right we don't want to be the people hurting the family of god through posturing you're trying to connect trying to climb social ladders in the church or thinking that we are smarter or cleverer than you know a couple of thousand years of very robust theology so we ask the holy spirit to transform us

[20 : 18] and that's what the gospel does doesn't it it's it's what it did for paul it's what we pray that it will do for us it transform our hearts transforms our hearts so we're no longer captive to the opinions of others we're no longer captive to our very wobbly opinions of ourselves we're no longer captive to those things but what we are captive to what we do long for what our great desire is that one day we'll face god and we will hear him say well done good and faithful servant amen