

Authentic Servants of Jesus (Joshua 24:14-15 & 1 Cor 4:1-21)

15-Mar-20

G'Day church family

It would be good to have your **Bibles open** at **Joshua 24** and **1 Corinthians 4**

There's the usual **outline** for you to take notes if you wish.

Let me **ask God** to **guide** us as we **learn from Him**

Let's pray...

Intro (Joshua 24:14-15)

If you'd like to turn to our OT reading from Joshua 24:14-15

The **context** is the Israelites - have been **led from slavery in Egypt** and they're **on the way** to the **Promised Land**

And their **leader** - **Joshua** - lays before them a **choice**

The **Israelites must choose** where their **allegiance** lies

Are they...?

To serve the **false gods of the Euphrates** that Abraham's family served - **before** God called **Abraham**

Or are they to **serve** the **false gods of the land of Egypt** - that they have just been rescued from

Or are they to **serve** the **false gods of Amorites** who currently occupy the Promised Land the Israelites are entering

Or **serve** the **one true God YHWH**?

Joshua makes his stand

Each **family** has to **make a choice**

[PowerPoint 1-Choice Joshua 24:15)

Joshua as head of his family - made his **stance** and his **choice**

See v15 - it's a great verse

"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord"

Each family must make their choice

What about us?

Will we serve the Lord? [This verse would be a great sign in our homes]

(pause)

And **having chosen** to **serve** the Lord

What will that really look like?

Is it just **words**? Or is it **action**?

And **who enables** us to **serve** the Lord?

Is it ourselves or is it the power of the Spirit of God enabling us to serve?

(pause)

That's the **subject Paul tackles** in 1 Cor chapter 4 - **servng the Lord**

Are we **authentic servants** of the Lord Jesus?

We'd better define **authentic** before we go any further...

[PowerPoint 2-Defintion Authentic]

Authentic - *genuine – real – not fake – not just lip service – fair dinkum*

Paul's having a go at the Corinthians - about whether they are **fair dinkum servants of the Lord Jesus** or not?

And he does this by way of **comparing the Corinthians servanthood** - with the **apostle's servanthood**.

And as we'll see there's no comparison

So, I'll make **5 points** about being **authentic servants** of Jesus

Authentic servants are faithful stewards (1 Cor 4:1-5)

[PowerPoint 3a-#1]

#1 - Authentic servants of Jesus are **faithful stewards** - that's in verses 1-5

The **Greek word** that Paul uses for a **servant** here

It's the word used to describe a **rower** - **below deck** - who rows a big **galley** ship

So, the **picture** that Paul's painting is that he and the apostles are the **rowers** under deck and **Jesus** is the **captain**

So, Paul's saying **any leader** in a church is not a **boss** - he is a **servant** - submitting to the authority of the **captain** of the ship - which is **Jesus**

And as servants of Jesus...

Paul says - they have been **entrusted** with **something** really **special**

See end v1 - that is - they are to be **stewards** of the **mysteries** of **God** that He has revealed

As leaders Paul and the apostles have been given the **precious Word of God** and the **Gospel** - the Good News of Jesus - to tell and teach others

V2 - they need to be faithful in handling God's Word -

For example - **every week** - **I agonize over what I say**

I try to be as **faithful as I can** to the **Word of God**

So that I'm proclaiming *God's Word* - not my own

Not only that - my **behaviour** - as a leader needs to **match God's Word**

All that is a **huge responsibility**.

That's what Paul's saying

Because he goes on to say - **people judge leaders**

The **Corinthians** are **judging Paul**

They're **comparing** him with other **leaders**

They're **doubting** he'll ever **visit** again

They're **doubting** his **teaching** - they think they know better than him

But Paul says - v3 - I **don't care whether you judge me** or if I'm **judged** by a **court** - I don't even **judge myself**.

He says v4 - **even if** I thought my **conscience** was **clear** - that's **irrelevant** - it doesn't make me innocent - because **Paul's not the judge**

Paul's saying to the **Corinthians** - you **can judge** me and act like some **judge** at the **Olympics**, qualified to give some - **a winner's trophy** - and send others away as **losers**. But **Jesus** is the **only judge** - and you Corinthians are judging before the events are finished.

V5 - the **Lord Jesus** - when He **returns** - at the **appointed time**

He'll be the **judge of how faithful a steward** Paul has been

And **what will the Lord judge?**

See v5 still - He will **bring to light what is hidden in darkness** and will **expose** the **motives** of the **heart**

Application - You see at the end of the day - as a leader - I can be judged by anyone here at church and anyone in the community

And that judgment can be valid or invalid - objective or subjective

It can be petty criticism - about the service on a Sunday - the bulletin was wrong - a slide was missed - the bible reader stuttered - the choir sang out of tune - my shirt was creased - I repeated myself several times

But what really matters - is that a leader is a faithful steward of God's Word - in preaching and teaching it - and in applying it to his/her life

Even if everyone thinks the leader is fine - and even if the leader thinks he's fine - is irrelevant - the Lord is the ultimate judge

Because only the Lord knows - the leader's heart - and the leader's motives - and the leader's faithfulness

Application - are we making unfair or unnecessary judgments or criticism of our leaders? We're not the ultimate judge. Matthew 7 warns - if we judge others - are we prepared to be judged in the same measure. Let's take the plank out of our own eye - before we point out the speck in someone else's eye

Application - We're all servants of Jesus

We all will be judged by how faithful we are as stewards of God's Word

So, to each of us here today

If we were to examine ourselves

Are we reading God's Word faithfully?

Are we faithful in what we say from God's Word?

Are we faithful in applying God's Word to our lives and showing it to others?

(pause)

Authentic servants are humble and sacrificial (1 Cor 4:6-13)

[PowerPoint 3b-#2]

#2 Authentic servants of Jesus are humble and sacrificial - that's in verses 6 to 13

Paul warns the Corinthians in v6 - **not to go beyond what is written** and get all **prideful and puffed up and following one leader over another.**

Paul wants them to **keep their thinking Biblical** - and not use standards beyond **God's Word** - to **judge him** or the other **Apostles**

Some people today evaluate a leader or minister **by his humour, personality, entertainment value, appearance, or skill in marketing and sales.** But this - is to think beyond what is written

The **problem** Paul is addressing is the Corinthians **pride in leaders and pride in themselves**

And Paul **tackles their pride** with **3 questions**

- a. V7a - **What makes you different** from anyone? Paul's point is if we are different - it's because of **what God's done in us** and not our own **doing**. So, there's no reason for pride
- b. V7b - **What did you have that you did not receive?** Paul's point - **everything** we have was a **gift from God** - so again, there's no reason for pride
- c. V7c - **And why do you boast as if you did not receive it?** Paul's point is if all we have is a gift from God - don't go around boasting as though it was your own accomplishment - **get rid of the pride and give the glory to God**

Authentic servants of Jesus are the opposite to the prideful Corinthians

Authentic servants of Jesus are **humble**

Application - Perhaps we can ask ourselves **some questions about our hearts?**

Do I truly give God the credit and glory that I am saved by Jesus?

Do I live with a spirit of humble gratitude for what God has blessed me with?

Knowing what **I have received from God** - what can **I give Him** - through my service - as a way of thanking Him?

Paul then goes on to use some **sarcasm** in verses 8

Do you **already have all you want?** Are you **already rich?** Are you **already reigning like kings** without us?

It's like Paul is saying "*Wow - you Corinthians have really arrived - you have it all - isn't it funny that we Apostles have nothing!*"

Although Paul is using sarcasm, his **purpose isn't to make fun** of the Corinthians - He wants to **shake them out of their pride and boasting and self-glorification.**

Instead Paul's point is **authentic servants are humble** and **also sacrificial**

Sacrificial is in verses 9 to 13

Paul paints a **picture** of he and the **Apostles being on display at the end of the procession, condemned to die in the arena.**

The picture he has in mind is when a **Roman general** has a **victory procession** after a **triumphant battle** - the general would **display his victorious army first** - then all the **booty** he had **captured** - and then **at the end** of the procession all the **defeated captives** came trailing by - and they would be **condemned to die** in the arena.

Paul's saying that's **what an authentic servant of Jesus feels like** - they're like the **people** trailing in at the **end of the procession**

Paul's saying a **true servant of Jesus** - is **sacrificial**

You see - the **Corinthians not only had pride** but they were somewhat **embarrassed by Paul's "weakness" and humble state.**

See v10 - to you Paul says - we are **fools for Jesus** - but you are **wise in Christ.**

With **contrast after contrast** - Paul sarcastically shows how **foolish it is for the Corinthians to think they are more spiritually privileged, blessed and endowed** than the apostles

Look what Paul and the apostles endured in the name of Jesus

Dishonour (v10), hunger, thirst, rags, brutally treated, homeless (v11)

Even **working with their bare hands** - the Corinthians, in their *Greeks* wisdom - **saw manual labour was only for slaves.** It was **offensive** to them that an **Apostle would work** with his own hands

But Paul's saying **authentic servants** of Jesus are **sacrificial**

They **bless those who curse** them (v12)

They **endure persecution** (V12)

They answer **slander** with **kindness** (v13)

They are **prepared to be the scum of the earth** - the **garbage** of the world (v13)

In **comparison to the Apostle Paul** - Each week - I sit in a nice **comfortable office** with **air con** - working on my **computer** tap tapping away - surrounded by my **books.**

Whereas **Paul** - was **moved** on from town to town, **accused of starting riots, mistreated, mistrusted, arrested, shipwrecked and imprisoned**

Yes - I get some persecution - I get mistreated - falsely accused and misunderstood and lied about.

And it's **horrible** at times.

But in comparison to the Apostle Paul - it's nothing

Paul's saying to the Corinthians and to us

Authentic servants of Jesus are humble and sacrificial

Jesus told his disciples **to deny themselves and to take up their cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24)** - so we can expect sacrifice as we serve Jesus

But Jesus also said - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

Authentic servants show parental love and concern (1 Cor 4:14-15)

[PowerPoint 3c-#3]

#3 Authentic servants of Jesus show parental love and concern - that's in verses 14 to 15

In v14 - Paul's aware that **his sarcasm might seem like he's trying to shame the Corinthians** - but his intention is to **lovingly warn them of the spiritual danger of their pride** - and he's warning them **like a father warns a child**
Paul sees himself as their spiritual father - because he was the one who **first introduced them to Jesus** - and **planted the church**

Application - we might have **someone** in our church family **who is a spiritual father or mother to us** - and they may come lovingly to us to warn us of a spiritual danger - **how will we receive this warning**

Application - **we might be the spiritual father or mother** - to someone in our church family - and **identify some spiritual danger** - **will we act lovingly and caringly to help our spiritual child** - or just leave them to their own devices?

Authentic servants of Jesus show parental love and concern for others.

Authentic servants' model exemplary living in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor 16-21)

[\[PowerPoint 3d-#4\]](#)

#4 Authentic servants model exemplary living in the power of the Spirit - that's in verses 16 to 21

See v16

Paul says I urge you [Corinthians] to imitate me

The **Corinthians first reaction might be: *Imitate Paul? Are you serious? Paul's a fool, he's weak, dishonoured, hungry, thirst, poorly clothed, homeless and beaten? People look at you, Paul, as the scum of the Earth - why would we imitate you, Paul?***

But remember - who Paul is imitating

See 1 Cor 11:1 - [Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.](#)

Jesus was considered foolish, weak - He was dishonoured - He had no permanent dwelling place - He suffered - He was beaten - He was treated as the scum of the Earth - and suffered death by crucifixion

Paul's only imitating what Jesus did

So, Paul says he will send his protégé - Timothy - v17 - who Paul loves - and who is faithful in the Lord - And Timothy will remind them of Paul's way of life **IN Christ Jesus**.

Paul goes on to say this **Christian life is not a matter of talk** - it's **God's power through the Holy Spirit** living inside Christians.

You see - we can be faithful, humble, sacrificial, loving, caring, loving, caring and Christlike servants - not by our own strength - but **by Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13)**. Because **we have God's power** - through the Holy Spirit

Unfortunately, **some of the Corinthians were so arrogant** - they thought Paul wasn't coming back because **he was afraid** of them. That just made them all the **more proud** in their hearts.

But **Paul had the power of God** that took Jesus to the Cross to pay for the punishment of sin - and the power of God that raised Jesus to life

So, Paul leaves the **ball in their court**

How do you want me to **come and visit you?**

With a **rod of discipline** or with a **gentle spirit?**

The **choice is yours Corinthians! Start being authentic servants** of Jesus

Paul faced some of the real challenges of ministry: how to confront sin without being too harsh, or implying that you are above sin; how to get people to conform their lives to the gospel when they think too highly of themselves. This is tough work to do in a heart, and only a great and powerful work by the Spirit can accomplish it!

Conclusion

To **finish** up then:

[PowerPoint 4a-Heading]

An **authentic Christian** - is a **serious servant of Jesus**

You don't have to **shave your head** - leaving just a **hairy cross** to show you're serious about Jesus

You don't have to get a **belly button ring in the shape of a cross** to show you're serious about Jesus

You don't have to get a **tattoo that says "my love for Jesus is more than skin deep"** to show you're serious about Jesus

You don't need a **sticker on your car saying "Jesus Freak"** to show you're serious about Jesus

People will know you are serious about Jesus - by the service you do in Jesus' name

[PowerPoint 4b]

As Jesus said: "Love one another as I have loved you - by this everyone will know that you are my disciples - if you love one another" (John 13:34-35)

Authentic servants of Jesus - show the love of Jesus in all they think and say and do.

Let's pray...