

1 Corinthians 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Analysis

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Paul uses huperetes (ὑπηρέτης, "minister/servant") and oikonomos (οἰκονόμος, "steward/manager") to define apostolic ministry. The first term originally meant an under-rower on a galley—one who serves beneath authority. The second refers to a household manager entrusted with his master's resources. Together they emphasize subordination and accountability rather than celebrity status.

The **mysteries of God** (mysteria tou Theou, μυστήρια τοῦ Θεοῦ) are the once-hidden revelations now disclosed in Christ—God's eternal plan of redemption through a crucified Messiah (2:7). Paul's role is not to invent wisdom but to faithfully dispense divine truth already revealed. This counters the Corinthian tendency to treat teachers as competing philosophers with original systems, when apostles are merely commissioned heralds of one gospel.

Historical Context

Written around AD 55 from Ephesus, this letter addresses a fractured church enamored with human wisdom and rhetorical skill (chapters 1-4). Corinth was a cosmopolitan commercial hub where itinerant philosophers gathered followers. The Corinthians imported this competitive dynamic into the church, forming personality cults around Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (1:12). Paul's household-servant

imagery would resonate in a Roman context where stewards managed estates but owned nothing themselves.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does viewing ministry as stewardship rather than ownership change your attitude toward spiritual gifts and teaching roles?
2. What 'mysteries of God' have you been entrusted to faithfully communicate to others in your sphere of influence?
3. In what ways might you be treating Christian teachers as celebrities rather than servants under Christ's authority?

Interlinear Text

Οὕτως ἡμᾶς λογιζέσθω ἄνθρωπος ὡς ὑπηρέτας
so **of us** **Let** **a man** **as** **of the ministers**
G3779 G2248 G3049 G444 G5613 G5257

Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ
of Christ **and** **stewards** **of the mysteries** **of God**
G5547 G2532 G3623 G3466 G2316

Additional Cross-References

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

1 Timothy 3:9 (Parallel theme): Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Titus 1:7 (References God): For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

2 Corinthians 4:5 (References Christ): For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Ephesians 6:19 (Parallel theme): And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Colossians 2:2 (References Christ): That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Romans 16:25 (References Christ): Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Colossians 4:3 (References Christ): Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

Ephesians 1:9 (Parallel theme): Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Matthew 24:45 (Parallel theme): Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?