**Worcester Baptist Church**

**Morning Worship**

**The Church in Corinth Sermon Series Part 4**

**“We Don’t Need a Minister (They Say)”**

**Sermon Aim**

To challenge the church to be of one mind about the one thing that our new minister must be above all else.

**Sermon Message**

We don’t need a minister to be like us. We need a minister be like the best version of us for this time, this place, this mission.

**Key Verses**

“This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.” (1 Cor 4:1)

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” (1 Cor 4:20)

**Text: 1 Corinthians 4 (NIV)**

*The nature of true apostleship*

4 This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

6 Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign – and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! 9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world – right up to this moment.

*Paul’s appeal and warning*

14 I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. 15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. 20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 21 What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

**Talk**

‘Oh, we don’t need a minister (they say).

A minister will just get in the way.

We have a vision, a plan - God’s of course -

We don’t need a minister to take us now *off* course!

We’re building up church numbers day by day.

No, we don’t need a minister (they say).’

‘Oh, we don’t need a minister (they say).

A minister’s a big expense to pay

When times are tough, the cost of living high;

We can manage as we are, we’ll get by.

No need for manses, wages, or sick pay -

No, we don’t need a minister (they say).’

My dearest Sosthenes, what should we write

To these Corinthians to put them right?

To dispossess them of their strange ideas,

That they have no need for overseers?

To counsel and to help them understand

They’re lost without a parent’s guiding hand?

They seem puffed up like some mad pompous king,

Believing that they now have everything;

That they are all now ‘rich beyond compare’,

‘Cos God has honoured everybody there.

Some can’t see what’s right before them, and some

Can’t see the wood for the arboretum.

Come, brother Sosthenes, and help me pen

A suitable reply, some sound doctrine

To testify and teach the Spirit’s will.

Fellow servant of Christ, take up your quill

And there upon your holy parchment score

God’s mysteries revealed to us - and more!

I fear that our epistle may require

A drop of irony to quench our ire

At Corinth’s disregard for costly lessons taught,

At their neglect of souls so dearly bought,

At their ignoring my eighteen month stay:

Ha! ‘We don’t need a minister (they say).’

But first, before I jog their memory

Of how we strived for them, both you and me,

Let us remind ourselves and duly heed

Christ’s warnings on judging another’s deed.

‘The measure you use’ll be measured to you,’

He said on the mount, so wise and so true.

So in speaking wisdom to their folly

Let’s hold on to Christ’s own humility.

The Light of the World, whom John spoke of,

Comes not with a rod, but gently, with love.

So must it be here now with our reply,

Christ’s light to bring truth and expose the dark lie.

So where now to begin? Where best to start?

An appeal to the head or to the heart?

Should we remind them what *is* the true cost

To minister to the flock and save the lost?

Should we remind them of the cost *you* had to bare,

As chief ruler of the Synagogue there.

Of how a mob beat you and tried to throw

You to the Roman Gov’nor, Gallio

Of how you went through agonising pain

(Sorry for bringing that all up again).

You showed the true cost of apostleship,

So should we now chastise, or bite our lip.

When they all boast in that arrogant way:

‘Nah, we don’t need a minister (they say)’

Should we unleash a bitter, long tirade

And thus retell the sacrifice we made?

Or is there yet another better way:

A way beyond words with true pow’r to sway?

We know these folks. For many months we toiled

And lived together, and together foiled

Attacks by some against the Corinth Church.

So how can we now idly watch them lurch

Into the making of a big mistake?

No, that would be too much for us to take.

We cannot bare to see them slip away

With ‘We don’t need a minister (they say)’

So we must go to them. And be with them.

Yes we must show to them - and see with them -

That though our faithfulness is truly great,

It’s not too great for them to imitate!

Yet here at Ephesus our work’s not done.

So let us send instead our dearest son,

Timothy, who, though young in years

Will vanquish all of our parental fears.

And by God’s grace let youth reach hearts and minds:

The child-like parts of us that God’s love finds

A lot’s been said to each Corinthian,

But now the time for speaking has passed on.

For God’s kingdom is not a matt’r of talk

But power - Now It’s time to walk the walk,

To send not just a lett’r to rouse and stir,

But also Tim: their brand new minister.

A youthful minister with youthful eyes

And heart shall see and act, pastor, baptise.

Regrded as they ought to regard us:

Servants of Christ and those whom Christ entrusts

With mysteries which God has now revealed.

By Holy Spirit led and blessed and filled.

This love letter with Timothy we send

Requires yet my own hand for its end.

[*writing*] “My love to all of you in Christ Jesus.

Amen.” [*kissing the parchment*] To Corinth go from Ephesus,

May the church take a diff’rent stance one day:

‘We don’t need a min’ster - *like us’* (they’ll say)