

3 THIEVES THAT STEAL THE GLORY FROM GOD

(1 Cor 4:1-21)

INTRODUCTION

By the time Paul came to Corinth God had already used him to teach great multitudes the word of God,

- to preach in Salamis and Paphos at Pisidian Antioch, at Iconium in Lystra and Derbe, in Phrygia and Galatia, in Philippi and Thessalonica, in Berea and Athens and finally in Corinth.

God had used him to bring many to Christ to heal the sick to start many churches, to defend the Gentiles before the council in Jerusalem and even to preach before important Roman officials.

He had disciplined a team; he had cast out evil spirits, he had healed a lame man and many other things; and even after Corinth he went on to be used mightily of the Lord. You cannot help but marvel at how God had used Paul.

And yet when the Corinthians spoke of him, from what we have in Ch 4 it seems as though some had only 3 things to say about Paul.

- (1) He's not so hot, in fact he's not doing such a good job - they judged him negatively (vs. 1-6).
- (2) Secondly if he has so little? We're doing better than he is (vs. 7-13).
- (3) In fact we don't need him - we have many more people that we look up to, better than Paul.

These people's hearts even though they were believers had become a den of robbers ~ and they harboured 3 robbers that love to steal the Glory of God as they were indeed doing in Paul's case. These robbers are not strangers and in fact many of us have given them refuge in our hearts and we might not be aware but they constantly rob us and rob God of his glory. They are the thieves called

- the critical spirit
- the proud spirit and
- the ungrateful spirit
- let's look at these 3 robbers in turn.

1. The Critical Spirit

The robber steals the glory of God by never finding anything that is good, possessive and praise-worthy. It hunts for something to criticise as though it were hunting for gold

Ill - man and dog that walked on water.

The critical spirit sees fault in everything. Ill - inventor It doesn't see change, it doesn't see potential, it doesn't see progress or hope or accomplishments. And because it doesn't see these things, it doesn't see what God is doing, and in a situation where the heart should be filled with praise, it robs God's glory and fills the heart with criticism.

Many of us have given this thief refuge in our hearts. Oh we give him names like efficiency and thoroughness an eye for detail but he robs God of his glory.

Poem - the flower

In Corinth they were judging Paul and he didn't seem to fare too well vs. 3 - Paul reminds them that when you judge as men you judge by outward appearances therefore your judgement is faulty. God judges his servants by their motives and things hidden we cannot see.

Continue to harbour this spirit and it will continue to rob you of the ability to give glory to God.

2. A Boastful Spirit - The 2nd thief the Corinthians were harbouring was a boastful spirit and there was much they felt they could boast about. They were rich, they had everything they wanted, they were like kings. While Paul felt like a man on display, condemned to die they did not; they were everything that Paul was not.

Ill - Bougainvillea on Jacaranda

Ill - Woodpecker on tree

vs. 7 - when you came right down to it, they had nothing to boast about; everything they had they had received from God and from others. Look at us today - what can we boast about?

Colour...	choice
country...	
Riches...	ability and opportunities
Intelligence...	Genetic constitution and IQ

Everything I boast about is really nothing more than stealing the glory from God my maker and this is where a boastful spirit becomes a thief. And of course the more God accomplishes through me, the harder it becomes to give him glory. This is one of the hidden dangers of material possessions, and God knows it; he warned the Israelites Deut 8:10-14, 17

Maybe this is why God will never bless some of us with wealth; he knows it would lead us astray. Do you harbour this thief in your heart? And how many times has he stolen Gods glory?

3. An Ungrateful Spirit

III - an and scrambled egg

This spirit does not know how to say thank you. its so busy focusing on the future and the next thing that it does not examine the past and present to see God at work and so it never says thank you. now its very quick to ask for Gods intervention and help but it doesn't stop to say thank you when God works.

Jesus and the 10 lepers (Lk 17:10) How many times have you cried out to the Lord in public, asking for prayer, shearing a need? Did you come back and say thank you to God with the same earnestness and to the people who prayed with you?

Ps 107:13-15

Ps 105:1-4

We are to "overflow with thankfulness" and to give thanks in all things. A grateful spirit recognises that God is in control and that he is at work.

The Corinthians did not display gratitude for what God had done for them throu Paul. Instead they see to be saying "we don't need Paul anymore", we have any other people better than Paul and Paul (vs. 15)

III - the magnetic heart (Mrs Njeru)

Conclusion - 3 thieves that steal the glory of God from our lives

- a critical spirit
- a boastful spirit and
- a thankless spirit

When you harbour one, the others soon move in for they are related; and their surname is "Arrogance".