

"We Have Become A Spectacle To The World"

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org

May 15, 2005

"For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." (1 Cor 4:9)

Read 1 Cor 4:8-13

The Corinthian believer had become "puffed up" by their individual gifting and had become divisive by aligning themselves with various personalities. In so doing, the Church suffered and the work of God was stifled. Paul contrasts his own personal experience against the shameless arrogance of the Corinthian.

Paul initially points out in verses 6 and 7 how that all they had received was gifted to them. They are recipients not creators. Here he drives home his point. The people of Corinth were shameless in their actions. They abused their standing and position and began to believe their own press. In verses 8-13 Paul uses sharp irony and biting sarcasm to drive home his point. "WHAT IS SARCASM? Sarcasm is an indirect form of speech intentionally used to produce a particular dramatic effect on the listener (McDonald, 1999, p. 486). Whoever makes a sarcastic comment knows that they are saying something contrary to what they actually believe, or how they actually feel. It is through the use of sarcasm that Paul drives home his point concerning their shameless arrogance."

In verse 8 he makes three sarcastic statements.

- You are already filled, (v.8)
- You have already become rich, (v.8)
- You have become kings without us (v.8)

How can Paul say what he says in 4:8 in light of 1:1-9? Why does Paul say what he says concerning the Corinthians fellowship in 4:8? I believe there are two reasons why Paul responds to the fellowship in this way. **First**, what they are in position is not necessarily what they are in practice. **Second**, what they are in position is not a right to be exploited, but a responsibility to be expressed.

They were acting as if they were responsible for their filling, their wealth, and their authority. They were not seeing themselves as recipients of grace, but as worthy of reward.

In contrast to the verbal boasting and pompous position of the Corinthian, Paul states his present experience. Paul states five thoughts concerning himself in contrast to the arrogant attitude embodied by the Corinthian Fellowship. **First**, we are spectacles (v.9). "To the world [we are] worthless teachers teaching worthless ideas, contributing nothing to mankind. The only thing [we] deserve [is] death." (MacArthur, 110).

Continued on the other side...

Second, we are fools, weak, and without honor (v.10). They esteemed the wisdom of this world and its accolades more than the foolishness of the message preached of Christ crucified. **Third**, we are beggars (vv. 11, 12a). Paul shows how because of the gospel message and ministry he was left without anything. Yet in this context the gospel shines forth through the actions of God's people.

Fourth, we are gracious (vv. 12b, 13a). This is where the difference lies between the Word of the cross and the wisdom of this age. He notes three actions. Christianity affects and infects how we respond to being reviled, persecuted, and slandered. It is in these moments when we find our greatest hour. **Finally**, we are scum (v. 13b). Paul ends this thought in verse 13. In both words scum and dregs, Paul uses a compound construction to drive his point home. Paul says the same thing in both words. He says we are those things scrapped off as nothing.

If the Corinthian had any sense of personal humility, they would lower their heads in shame and weep tears of repentance. How about us? Where are we in all of this? Are we like the Corinthian fellowship or are we like the apostle Paul? If necessary, let this day be a day of repentance. May we embrace our circumstances as the arena in which we find our greatest hour. May God determine for us to become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.