

"We Have Become A Spectacle To The World"

1 Cor 4:8-13

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

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. In verses 8-13 Paul uses sharp irony and biting sarcasm to drive home his point. He contrasts his own personal experience against the shameless arrogance of the Corinthian.

Paul initially points out in verses 6 and 7 how all that they received was gifted to them. They are recipients not creators. Here he drives home his point.

I. Corinth’s shameless arrogance (vv. 6-8)

The people of Corinth were shameless in their actions. They abused their standing and position and began to believe their own press. Paul, through the use of sarcasm, is really laying into them.

“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.

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)

I find Paul’s sarcasm intriguing, especially when we contrast what he has said in 1:1-9 with his sarcasm in 4:8. Remember, “Whoever makes a sarcastic comment knows that they are saying something contrary to what they actually believe, or how they actually feel.” By his statements Paul is saying,

- You are **NOT** already filled, (v.8)
- You have **NOT** already become rich, (v.8)
- You have **NOT** become kings without us (v.8)
 - A. Not filled (4:8), though lacking nothing in Him (1:7).
 - B. Poor (4:8), though enriched in everything in Him (1:5).
 - C. Not reigning (4:8), but blameless in Him (1:8).

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.

Continued on the other side...

Instead of being humbled by God's grace, they were blinded by their pride.

II. Paul's guarded humility (vv. 9-13)

In contrast to the verbal boasting and pompous position of the Corinthian, Paul states his present experience.

A. We are spectacles (v.9)

We get our English word "theatre" from the Greek word translated "spectacle."

B. We are fools (v.10)

Paul uses three words to describe himself and those like him: fools, weak, and without honor.

Paul says, "We are morons." The word moronic comes from the Greek word "fools." It means blockhead, or idiot.

C. We are beggars (vv. 11, 12a)

D. We are gracious (vv. 12b, 13a)

This is where the difference lies between the Word of the cross and the wisdom of this age.

1. When we are reviled, we bless
2. When we are persecuted, we endure
3. When we are slandered, we try to conciliate

This is where we miss the target by the proverbial mile. This is what Christianity looks like under fire. This is the line drawn in the sand. Christianity affects and infects how we respond to being reviled, persecuted, and slandered. It is in these moments when we find our greatest hour.

E. 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. Paul anticipated this response thus he writes, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children (v.14)."