

**I CORINTHIANS**  
**Chapter 4:8-13**

**Verse 8**

Take note of the contrast between Paul and the church: with inspired sarcasm, he used three statements to repudiate – (def. renounce), their faulty evaluation of themselves - **V: 8.**

There is a definite progression in the criticism: - **"full", "rich", "kings"**:

1. Fullness - represents self-satisfaction.
2. Riches - portrays self-sufficiency. They manifested the Laodicean spirit - **"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"** - **Revelation 3:1.**
- 3 Kingship – revealed a sense of spiritual triumph with no more conflict. This will only take place in the millennium kingdom. This is why Paul ironically added - **"and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you."** Paul was still fighting a spiritual warfare, but the Corinthian Christians, in their opinion, felt they had arrived at spiritual maturity - **Philippians 3:12-14.**

**Verse 9 - 10**

In contrast to the Corinthians' high opinion of themselves, Paul and the apostles looked like failures. The church had promoted itself to first place - **kings**, but God - **"had set forth the apostles last"**. The verb - **"set forth"** was used of doomed gladiators forced into the arenas to fight and to die. The church expected to live, but Paul knew that the apostles were appointed to martyrdom, like condemned criminals - **Romans 8:38; II Corinthians 11:23-30.** At Ephesus, from where Paul wrote this letter, this is what almost happened to his associates - **Acts 19:23, 29.** They were also made a - **"spectacle"** of the world of evil angels and unsaved men. This concept was used of conquered people paraded before the public as objects of derision (scorn) - **Hebrews 11:33-40.**

Notice Paul's statement - **"as it were appointed unto death."** According to some historians we learn that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross. James was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple and when they saw he was still alive they beat him to death with clubs. Peter was crucified upside down. Philip was brutally whipped and scourged and then hanged by the neck against a pillar. Thomas was martyred by a lance being thrust through his body while kneeling in prayer. Paul was beheaded.

From these writings, it seems that the apostles were - **"appointed unto death."** Paul, as well as the other Apostles, knew that most likely their faith would be the cause of their death.

In Paul's day, it was not popular to be a Christian. To be called a Christians in many cases meant you did not have very long to live. Paul lived with the probability that he would have to give his life for Christ because he was well aware of what it meant to be a Christian.

These church members considered themselves wise, but Paul considered himself a fool - **"for Christ sake"**. They saw themselves as - **"strong"** and **"honorable"**, but Paul saw himself as **"weak"** and **"despised"**. It is obvious there was a difference between Paul and the believers at Corinth as to what it meant to be a Christian.

The Apostle Paul tells them; in a very straight forward and almost mocking way that they have the wrong idea of what it means to be a Christian.

The word - **"spectacle"** carried the idea of a public **"spectacle"**. We get the word "theater" from this word, which implies a production for public viewing. Paul was simply saying that the Christian life was a public matter. Being a Christian means our life is on public display. Christians are always being watched by the world around us.

I have heard people say being a Christian is a private matter. I have asked people if they were saved and they said, "That is a personal matter." In a sense that is true, but we must never forget that being a Christian is very much a public matter.

People around us watch how we live. They listen to what we say and take note of the things we talk about. They observe what we do and how we do things. When you profess to be a Christian, whether you like it or not, you become a - **"spectacle"** to the world and to men.

The sad truth is that many who call themselves Christians live a life that is hurtful to the cause of Christ and a hindrance to winning others to Christ. We all have met someone who used the hypocrites of the church as an excuse to ignore church and ignore their need of salvation. They feel they do not need God nor salvation because they are already living as good as those in the church.

When the lost see and hear certain things, whether you realize it or not, you are helping them to form an opinion of what it means to be a Christian. In our daily life are we exemplifying the likeness of Christ or the world?

**Verse 10:**

In a series of three contrasts - **4:10**, Paul pointed out the differences mentally - **"fools"** vs. **"wise"**; physically - **"weak"** vs. **"strong"**; and socially - **"honorable"** vs. **"despised"**. Before the world, Paul viewed himself and the apostles as nothing, yet the Corinthians prided themselves on their acceptance in the world.

**VERSES: 11 -13a:**

Oftentimes when the Bible speaks of the - **"world"**, it is talking about a system going in the opposite direction of God. That is why John told us not to - **"love the world"** - **I John 2:15**. The world is going in an opposite direction of God and is at all times trying to pull us in that direction.

In **verse 11** - Paul tells us how he had experienced, **"hunger, and thirst"**. He had known what it was to be - **"naked"**, (poorly clothed). There was no place that he could really call home and on top of that he had been - **"buffeted"** - (roughly treated). In **verses 12** and **13**, we see they were not only in the ministry full time but they had to work just to make ends meet. They had also been - **"reviled"**, **"persecuted"**, and **"defamed"**.

Being a Christian had not been easy for Paul and the others. It had created many hardships and caused much suffering.

Paul not only described what he had experienced, but also described his response and attitude to all the things that he had experienced. In **verse 12** - he says we, **"labour, working with our own hands."** The word **"labor"** - speaks of a kind of work considered by Greeks to be beneath their dignity. It spoke of a kind of work done only by slaves.

Nevertheless, Paul was not ashamed of the kind of work he had to do. It was work that needed to be done in order for him to be able to preach the gospel. The world may have frowned on such work, but Paul's attitude was the opposite.

In - **verses 12-13** Paul said, - **"being reviled we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we intreat."** His reaction to the mistreatment by others was the opposite of how the world reacts to such things. The word **"reviled"** means, "to speak evil against." How does the world as a whole respond to such treatment? They retaliate and respond with evil speaking. But Paul said they blessed those who spoke evil against him. The word - **"bless"** speaks of delivering a eulogy. It means to say a good word.

Many years ago, I heard a pretty good example that I think illustrates a point here.

*One day a man called on a pastor to preach his brother's funeral. The man's brother had been a liar, cheat, crook, and scoundrel. The preacher said that he was not sure that he could do it. The man offered him \$500 if he would do it. The only condition was, the preacher had to say that his brother was a good man. The preacher agreed. At the funeral the preacher said, "All of you know that so and so was a liar, cheat, crook, and scoundrel, but next to his brother he was a good man."*

When people said evil things against Paul, instead of saying bad things about them, he said good things. Paul said that when he was persecuted he suffered it. That is, he simply endured it. He did not try to get even or seek revenge. He just accepted it and went on. Paul said that when he was defamed, he simply went on telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word - **"intreat"** in **verse 13** means to "exhort." He refused to be sidetracked or become bitter. He just threw all that happened over his shoulder and went on telling the wonderful story and exhorting people with eternal things.

Now again, this is not how the world would take such treatment. But Paul was not of this world. He was a Christian and the actions and reactions of a Christian are the opposite of the world. As Christians our behavior is to be different than this world. But you say, "I'm not going to be treated that way and I don't care what anybody says." That's the problem. You don't care what anybody says. You don't care that you could hurt the testimony you have with those you work with, etc. You don't care that your behavior could hinder someone from becoming a Christian. Let me remind you of something perhaps you have forgotten. You are a Christian! As a Christian your behavior is to be a reflection of the Lord Jesus and the teachings of God's Word.

Paul would later say to the Corinthian believers, - **"Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" - II Corinthians 5:17**. Paul was saying, - If you have been born again then you are a new creation in Christ, you are different therefore be different." What does it mean to be a Christian? It means that you live a life opposite of the world.

Notice in - **verse 13** - Paul says - **"...we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."** The words **"filth"** and **"offscouring"** are synonyms which refer to the scrapings or offscourings cleaned from dirty dishes or greasy pots. It would be like what is left in a grease trap of the kitchen after all the dishes, pots and pans had been cleaned, the kind that those of us who have been in the military know of by experience.

Paul was saying that the world looked on him and other believers as the religious scum of the earth. It is hard for some to realize, but this world will never have a love affair with Christians. This world is offended by much of what Christianity represents.

As Christians we believe that certain lifestyles are not alternative lifestyles, but immoral relationships. As Christians we believe that certain philosophies (the way one thinks), and ideologies – (beliefs or ideas) that are so readily embraced by society are contrary to the teachings of God's Word. Many things that are accepted as standard by this world is called sin by God.

Our message is the message of the cross. As we saw in - ***I Corinthians chapter one***, it is a message that is foolishness to the world. Our message declares that all men are sinners and all men need a Saviour. Our message declares there is a hell awaiting those who die without Christ and a heaven for only those who die in Christ. Our message declares that there are not many ways to be saved, but only one way. This goes against the grain in the way this world thinks therefore our message is offensive.

What does it mean to be a Christian? The Biblical ideal is not always what we want to hear. A real Christian is one who lives in this world and is being watched every day. It is for that reason we live a life that is pleasing to God. The world may not always appreciate who we are and what we believe, but may we live in such a way that they never doubt that we are what we claim to be.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The apostle just gives the cold hard facts concerning the life of a Christian. It is truly sad today that so many who profess being a child of God live, act, talk, walk, dress, think, and conduct themselves no differently than the rest of the world.

The Lord's local churches will never be destroyed from without, but will destroy itself by permitting the world's system and ways into the church.

In the books of - ***James*** we find a good summary of this lesson in - ***James 2:14-20***.

May God help us all to be more like our Saviour.

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**Study Guides**

1. There is a definite progression in the criticism: - "\_\_\_\_\_", "\_\_\_\_\_", "\_\_\_\_\_".
  - a. Fullness - represents \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Riches - portrays \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_. They manifested the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Kingship - revealed a sense of spiritual triumph with no more \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In contrast to the Corinthian's high opinion of themselves, Paul and the apostles looked like \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In Paul's day it was not popular to be a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Christians are always being \_\_\_\_\_ by the world around us. People watch how we \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What is Paul referring to when he uses the word - "World"?
6. Give definitions for: **"naked"**, **"buffeted"**.
7. The word **"labor"** - speaks of a what kind of work?
8. True or False - Paul said he scorned those who spoke evil against him.
9. What does the word - **"bless"** mean?
10. The word - **"intreat"** in **verse 13** means to "\_\_\_\_\_."
11. As Christians our behavior is to be \_\_\_\_\_ than this world.
12. What do the words **"filth"** and **"offscouring"** mean?
13. As Christians we believe that certain lifestyles are not alternative life-styles, but \_\_\_\_\_ relationships.
14. What does it mean to be a Christian?
15. What is the message of - **James 2:14-20**?