**I Corinthians 4:9-21**

***The Prosperity Gospel Is Not New***

Introduction

1.The Corinthians were carnal, fleshy. They were not spiritually minded. They were steeped in the ways and the wisdom of the world. They thought they were rich and reigned as kings. The philosophy of the Corinthians was similar to those of our day who are pursuing the ‘prosperity gospel.’

2. John MacArthur and Joel Osteen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDuDN2FtrIo>

3. Is that your concept of following Jesus? That was the Corinthian’s philosophy. They had it made, but they had nothing. They were divided over Paul, but that wasn’t Paul.

4. I Cor. 4:9-21 Paul says, ‘Follow me.’ Is following Jesus about our happiness, our financial and physical prosperity? Is it about life being easy and people liking us? Paul shows that being in the center of God’s will is not always easy and seldom popular.

*“Follow Me”* Where will it lead?

**I. THE PATTERN FOR FOLLOWING 4:9**

 ***A. Special To God 9a***

**1.** God had allowed His Son to be sentenced to death and made a spectacle. *God has*

 *exhibited His apostles last of all as men condemned to death.*

**2.** To the world they were worthless teachers, teaching worthless ideas, contributing

 nothing to mankind. The only thing they deserved was death. The imagery used here

 is that of persons brought into an arena, condemned to die. Men on death row have

 no rights!

 ***B. Spectacles For God 9b***

**1.** We are a spectacle to the world, angels and men.

 **2.** *Spectacle* is literally a theater, referring either to gladiator contests or to a triumphal

 procession of a Roman General bringing captured soldiers to the arena. The apostles

 likewise in the arena were fighting to the death.

 **3.** Paul uses the words: *spectacles…fools…sufferers…scum* words describe Paul’s condi-

 tion in contrast to what the Corinthians thought their condition to be. They thought they

 had everything in themselves. It was all about them. Paul knew he had nothing in him-

 self.

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**II. THE PARADOX IN FOLLOWING 4:10, 11**

1. ***The Contrasts 10*** Paul is using spiritual sarcasm. In so doing he is making a contrast between himself and the Corinthians.
2. *We are fools (moros…morons) for Christ’s sake. You are wise in Christ. Fool* this is according to the world and man’s standards. They were *fools* for Christ.
3. *We are weak, but you are strong.*
4. *We are despised, but you are honorable.* The Corinthians wanted honor and recognition from men, not the honor that comes from God. The Corinthians were caught up in the world’s wisdom (which is foolishness to God). They could not bear to be *fools for Christ*. They thought of themselves as prudent, strong, rich and distinguished.
5. ***The Circumstances 11*** *To this present hour:*
6. *Hunger, thirst, naked (without adequate clothing) buffeted, homeless, having no certain dwelling, working with our hands (which was beneath the dignity of the Greeks)*
7. They lived in the lowest levels of society. While the Corinthians were living like kings (v. 8), the apostles were living like slaves.

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**III. THE PRICE OF FOLLOWING 4:12, 13**

This is when we look like Jesus.

1. ***The Pressure 12, 13a*** There is a positive for every negative.
2. *Being reviled (we retaliate), no, we bless.*
3. *Being persecuted, we endure it.*
4. *Being defamed, we entreat (when we are slandered, we try to conciliate).*

The apostles genuinely look upon themselves as Christ’s galley slaves and stewards. They had no time for resentment or jealousy. They were better off than their persecutors. This was not them. **This was the Jesus in them.**

1. ***The Pain 13b*** What people say can hurt!
2. *We are made as the filth (scum) of the world.*
3. *We are the offscouring of all things (unto this day), dregs.* The Corinthians proudly saw themselves as being on top. The apostles saw themselves humbly as being on the bottom. They were on the bottom, but on the top. *Scum, dregs* was the stuff off dirty pots and pans. The words were commonly used for low, vile criminals.
4. It happens if you stand for Jesus Christ.

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**IV. THE PATIENCE OF FOLLOWING 4:14-17**

Paul’s tone changes, as a father.

1. ***A Father 14, 15***
2. *He Admonishes*…he exhorts, he pleads to repent and correct their ways. He wants them to move from Self control to Spirit control.
3. *He Loves as my beloved children (14b)*
4. *He Begets…*a child must be born before he can be cared for and trained. No child can have more than one biological father. *I became your father through the Gospel.* You may have countless tutors, but only one spiritual father. A Christian cannot be a spiritual father without being used by God to bring life to spiritual children.
5. This can never be done apart from the Gospel. The Gospel is lost in the ‘prosperity gospel’, which is no gospel at all. Ravi Zecharias…the gospel is being lost in the emerging churches: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfOMNOceuP4>
6. The source of every new birth is the power of God coupled with God’s good news!
7. ***A Follower 16***
8. *Be an imitator of me…imitator* the Greek word we get our word: mimic. This is a Christ-like role model. A spiritual father must be a good example. New babies don’t know the Word. They usually imitate.
9. *For this reason…Timothy* refers to the goal of making the Corinthians imitators of Paul, which followed Christ. What a thought. Timothy was so like Paul he could come as his model. Paul was like Christ. We should be able to say, *Follow me*, because there is a Christ-likeness in us.
10. *Just as I teach everywhere in every church*…it is not enough to just get people saved. We need to tell and explain the truths of the word of God. The world is full of false teachers leading sheep astray.

*“Follow Me”* Where will it lead?

**V. THE PERIL TO FOLLOWING 4:18-21**

The reasons we fail:

1. ***Pride*** *Now some have become arrogant…now some are puffed up…*
2. The ‘prosperity gospel’ leads to pride. It’s all about us. What do you expect!!!
3. Paul would not let this sinning go unchallenged. They thought he wasn’t coming. The wrong must be exposed. This wrong was caused by pride.
4. ***Power*** *God’s kingdom…his rule and glory does not consist in mere words, but in power.*
5. The real danger of the ‘prosperity gospel’ is the very thing they claim in missing… ***power.*** These talked a lot about their freedom, independence and rights. These are those who bought the world’s philosophy in the name of Christ.
6. God’s people should reflect God’s kingdom. A person’s true spiritual character is not determined by how much we have or how much we say, but by the power of His life in us!
7. ***The Prescription 21***
8. Deal with sin and self. If he needed to use a stick to shape them up, he would.
9. He wanted to come with love and gentleness.

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