



Title: A Spectacle to the World (First Corinthians #10)

Text: 1 Corinthians 4:8-13

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Intro: In 1 Corinthians 4:8-13, Paul mixes sarcasm and seriousness to chastise the Corinthians for their sinful self-confidence and point them to the reality that suffering is an inevitable aspect of the faithful Christian life that God uses to display his goodness.

I. TRAGIC SYMPTOMS OF A SELF-ABSORBED CHURCH

1. Faith is merely a means of self-fulfillment or advancement.

- Consumerism—what's in for me.

2. Camps are formed and division dominates.

- As Americans we are unbelievably susceptible to the cult of personality.
- These divisions are often very subtle...but powerful nonetheless.

3. There is no sense of mission.

- Gospel→Community→Mission
- All the focus turns inward. Programs, maintenance, and ministry to the people already Christians becomes the energy-draining, life-consuming idol of a church that has lost its mission.

II. SUFFERING SERVES TO DISPLAY GOD'S GOODNESS.

A. How the Apostles died.

1. James: Acts 12:2 tells us Herod Agrippa killed him with a sword.

2. Peter: Eusebius records he was crucified upside down, thinking himself unworthy to die like Jesus.

3. Andrew: Hung from a tree.

4. Thomas: Thrust through with a spear, tormented with red hot plates, burned alive.

5. Philip: Hostile Jews tortured and crucified him.

6. Matthew: Beheaded.

7. Nathanael: Flayed and crucified.

8. James the Lesser: Thrown from the Temple and beaten to death.

9. Simon the Zealot: Crucified by the governor of Syria

10. Thaddeus: Beaten to death with sticks.

11. Matthias: Stoned while hanging on a cross.

12. John: Only one to have died a natural death. Thrown into boiling oil, severely scarred.

13. Paul: Beheaded by Nero.

B. How Suffering Displays God's Goodness.

1. Suffering teaches us to rely on God and not ourselves.

- Self-reliance was precisely the Corinthians problem!
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

2. Suffering stirs boldness and faith in others.

- Philippians 1:12-14—seems counterintuitive at first.

3. Suffering enables us to display that Christ is better than this world.

- 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Conclusion:

- Quote from C.H. Spurgeon on suffering:

“From the right hand of God our Lord Jesus rules all things here below and makes them work together for the salvation of His redeemed. He uses both bitter and sweet things, trials and joys, that He may produce in sinners a better mind toward their God. Be thankful for the providence which has made you poor or sick or sad, for by all this Jesus works the life of your spirit and turns you to Himself. The Lord’s mercy often rides to the door of our hearts on the black horse of affliction. Jesus uses the whole range of our experience to wean us from earth and woo us to heaven.” (Spurgeon, All of Grace, p.125)