

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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What a glorious time of year this is...the cooling of the temperature, the changing of the seasons, the turning of the leaves, and the grand experience of the North Carolina State Fair! I love the State Fair. Parts of it I think I love too much. In the midst of all kinds of people it's interesting to see some of them stand out. One year I actually saw a one-man band...he was something to see and amazing to hear. Only one man who could play a few different instruments all at once was quite an exhibit...unique in one of the crowded intersections of the fairground. It seems that these state fairs have a cultural history, especially in the fall of the year. They were usually held in the fall of the year. Harvest time was over and some of the harvest, especially the good fruit and vegetables, were entered into competition to see who could win the blue ribbons for the biggest pumpkin or the best preserves. Even today at the state fairgrounds in Raleigh there is a building where prize winning livestock are on display. Quite an exhibition I'd say.

When you use the word exhibition you've got to be careful these days. Sadly there are some disturbed folks who take pride in being called *exhibitionists* while putting some parts of themselves on display that normally would remain hidden. You'll see reports of some of those people being pursued by law enforcement because what they are doing is unauthorized and out of order. That's not the kind of exhibitionist I want to talk about today. You should be glad!

But I do want to talk about how Christianity should be an exhibition and on exhibition. Someone should be putting Christians on display so others can see the value of being a prized possession of the one conducting the exhibition. Consider the following Scriptural passage as we try to gain some understanding as to whom that Someone might be...

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 Corinthians 4:9)

In my mind's imagination I would think that the Apostle Paul on display was often not a very pretty sight...without reading too much into the Biblical text I would say he was more than a little hard on the eyes. He had been through a lot physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In some of his self-descriptions he was not the Pharisee he once had been, at least outwardly. Following Jesus was not a career-advancing move in first century culture. Often life and death struggles ruled the day and kept people up at night. Paul is writing in context about how some of the church folk were placing some of the Apostles on pedestals. This is commonly a human contrived perception. Even in our day, believers can find themselves following particular ministry leaders and seek to identify with some particular camp of Christianity. Here Paul is declaring that God Himself was putting them on display as dead men walking in the midst of a dying world. Before angels and men they had become a spectacle. Consider that these men lived out their lives being humiliated by the world's systems and men who run them. And that *angel* language...they were on display to all types of angels, even fallen ones. Some of the holy angels may have marveled at their faithfulness and some of the evil angels would have done all they could to hinder these faithful witnesses by spiritual attack. To both men and angels, the Lord God put them on exhibition as an example to be studied. We would do well to learn from these exhibits. Read more on Chapter 4.

The question becomes for me and you...how do we react to being hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, working for a living, being reviled and slandered, and being seen as the scum of the earth, and the dregs of all things? Knowing these trials are coming, and how God puts us on display, does being a servant of the Most High God, a follower of King Jesus, still appeal to us? Is the calling of Jesus to *Follow Me* still motivate you and me to love and obey the Lord? While both men and angels are watching?

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam