

1 Corinthians 13:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Analysis

And though I have the gift of prophecy (καὶ ἔὰν ἔχω προφητείαν, kai ean echō prophēteian)—Paul now addresses a gift he ranked highest for edification (14:1-5). Prophēteia means inspired proclamation of God's truth, not merely prediction. Even this supremely valuable gift becomes worthless without love.

And understand all mysteries, and all knowledge (καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν, kai eidō ta mystēria panta kai pasan tēn gnōsin)—Mystēria refers to divine secrets revealed only by God (1 Corinthians 2:7; Romans 11:25; Ephesians 3:3-9). Gnōsis is comprehensive understanding. Paul's hyperbolic "all mysteries and all knowledge" includes theological mastery, biblical expertise, and supernatural insight—the very knowledge Corinthians prized (1 Corinthians 8:1).

And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing (οὐθέν εἰμι, outhen eimi)—Jesus promised mountain-moving faith to His disciples (Matthew 17:20; 21:21). Outhen is absolute zero, not "little" but literally "nothing." Without love, even miracle-working faith reduces the miracle-worker to ontological nothingness.

Historical Context

The Corinthians' obsession with knowledge (gnōsis) appears throughout the letter: "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (8:1), their false wisdom (1:18-25), divisions over teachers (1:12; 3:4-7). Greek philosophical schools in Corinth emphasized esoteric knowledge and mystery religions offered secret revelations. Paul insists Christian maturity isn't measured by spiritual information but Christlike love.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How might theological knowledge or doctrinal correctness become a source of pride rather than love for the church?
2. What does it mean that prophetic gifting, mystery knowledge, and mountain-moving faith can coexist with being 'nothing' in God's eyes?
3. How does verse 2 challenge the modern church's tendency to elevate gifted teachers and celebrity Christians over character?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐὰν	ἔχω	προφητείαν	καὶ	εἰδῶ	τὰ	μυστήρια	
And	though	I have	the gift of prophecy	And	understand	G3588	mysteries	
G2532	G1437	G2192	G4394	G2532	G1492		G3466	
πᾶσαν	καὶ	πᾶσαν	τὴν	γνῶσιν	καὶ	ἐὰν	ἔχω	πᾶσαν
all	And	all	G3588	knowledge	And	though	I have	all
G3956	G2532	G3956	G1108	G2532	G1437	G2192	G3956	
τὴν	πίστιν	ῶστε	ὄρη	μεθιστάνειν	ἀγάπην	δὲ	μὴ	
G3588	faith	so	mountains	that I could remove	charity	and	not	
G4102	G5620	G3735	G3179	G26	G1161	G3361		
ἔχω	οὐθέν	εἰμι						
I have	nothing	I am						
G2192	G3762	G1510						

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:8 (Love): He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 Corinthians 13:3 (Love): And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Matthew 17:20 (Faith): And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

1 Corinthians 16:22 (Love): If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

Matthew 21:21 (Faith): Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

Ephesians 3:4 (Parallel theme): Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

1 Corinthians 13:1 (Love): Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Galatians 5:16 (Parallel theme): This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Colossians 1:26 (Parallel theme): Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

1 Corinthians 7:19 (Parallel theme): Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

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