

1 Corinthians 15:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Analysis

But by the grace of God I am what I am (χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι)—This phrase echoes God's self-revelation to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Paul's identity, ministry, and transformation are entirely chariti (χάριτι, "by grace")—not merit, pedigree, or achievement. The emphatic repetition of eimi ("I am") underscores grace as the sole explanation for Paul's existence as apostle.

And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain (καὶ ἡ χάρις αὐτοῦ ἣ εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ κενὴ ἐγενήθη)—The word kenē (κενή, "empty, vain") connects to v. 2's warning about believing eikē ("in vain"). Grace bore fruit: **I laboured more abundantly than they all** (περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα). Yet Paul immediately corrects: **yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me** (οὐκ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἣ σὺν ἐμοί). Grace initiates, sustains, and accomplishes—Paul is instrument, not source.

Historical Context

Paul's missionary labors exceeded the other apostles combined: three missionary journeys, church plants across Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, imprisonment, beatings, shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). His 13 New Testament letters

shaped Christian theology. Yet he attributes everything to grace, not personal ability.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul balance acknowledging his hard work with attributing everything to grace?
2. What would it look like for grace bestowed on you to be 'not in vain'—how is grace fruitful?
3. How can Christian leaders avoid both false humility (denying their labor) and pride (crediting themselves)?

Interlinear Text

χάρις δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι καὶ ἡ χάρις
by the grace But of God I am what I am and which by the grace
G5485 G1161 G2316 G1510 G3739 G1510 G2532 G3588 G5485

αὐτῶν ἡ εἰς ἐμὲ οὐκ κενὴ ἐγενήθη
his which which was bestowed upon me not in vain was
G846 G3588 G1519 G1691 G3756 G2756 G1096

ἀλλ' περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα οὐκ ἐγὼ
but G4053 his than they all I laboured not I
G235 G846 G3956 G2872 G3756 G1473

δὲ ἀλλ' ἡ χάρις ἡ θεοῦ ἡ σὺν ἐμοί
But but which by the grace which of God which was with me
G1161 G235 G3588 G5485 G3588 G2316 G3588 G4862 G1698

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2 Corinthians 3:5 (References God): Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Philippians 2:13 (References God): For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Galatians 2:8 (Parallel theme): (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

Romans 12:3 (Grace): For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

2 Corinthians 12:11 (Parallel theme): I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (Parallel theme): For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

2 Corinthians 6:1 (Grace): We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:2 (Parallel theme): By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Romans 11:1 (References God): I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

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