

1 Corinthians 4:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

For who maketh thee to differ from another? The verb diakrino (διακρίνω, "to distinguish/make superior") challenges Corinthian claims to special status. Paul's rhetorical question expects the answer: God alone determines distinctions. **And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?** (τι δε εχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες, τί δὲ ἔχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες;) The verb lambanō (λαμβάνω, "receive") emphasizes grace—every gift, ability, and opportunity comes from God.

Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? The logic is devastating: boasting about received gifts is irrational, like a beggar boasting about his benefactor's generosity. Kauchaomai (καυχάομαι, "boast/glory") was the Corinthians' characteristic vice. True Christian boasting glories only in the Lord (1:31; 2 Cor 10:17). This verse demolishes all grounds for human pride—in salvation, spiritual gifts, or any achievement. Grace leaves no room for self-congratulation.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture thrived on honor, status, and competitive achievement. Patronage systems created networks of obligation and prestige. The Corinthians imported these values into church life, boasting about their eloquence, wisdom, spiritual gifts, and preferred teachers. Paul's theology of grace-as-gift undercuts the entire honor-shame system, replacing competition with gratitude and humility.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What spiritual gifts, achievements, or advantages do you take credit for that are actually undeserved gifts from God?
2. How would your relationships change if you truly internalized that every good thing you have is received grace, not earned merit?
3. In what subtle ways do you compare yourself to others and feel superior, forgetting that God alone made whatever distinctions exist?

Interlinear Text

τί	γάρ	σε	διακρίνει	τί	δὲ	ἔχεις	ὅ
it why	For	thee	maketh	it why	from another and	hast thou	that
G5101	G1063	G4571	G1252	G5101	G1161	G2192	G3739
οὐκ	λαβών	εἰ	δὲ	καὶ	λαβών	τί	
not	if thou hadst	G1487	from another and	now	if thou hadst	it why	
G3756	G2983		G1161	G2532	G2983	G5101	
καυχᾶσαι	ώς	μὴ	λαβών				
dost thou glory	as	not	if thou hadst				
G2744	G5613	G3361	G2983				

Additional Cross-References

John 3:27 (Parallel theme): John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

James 1:17 (Parallel theme): Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

1 Peter 4:10 (Parallel theme): As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Romans 12:6 (Parallel theme): Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Proverbs 2:6 (Parallel theme): For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

John 1:16 (Parallel theme): And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Luke 19:13 (Parallel theme): And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Parallel theme): 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.

Romans 1:5 (Parallel theme): By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Romans 12:3 (Parallel theme): 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.