

1 Corinthians 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Analysis

If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know (καθὼς δεῖ γνῶναι, kathos dei gnonai, "as it is necessary to know")—Paul deflates intellectual pride with devastating irony. The Corinthians' theological sophistication masked spiritual ignorance. True knowledge (gnosis in its proper form) is relational and humble, not merely propositional.

The phrase "as he ought to know" points to knowledge's proper purpose and method. Knowledge that breeds arrogance rather than love has failed at its fundamental task. This echoes Jeremiah 9:23-24, where genuine knowledge means understanding God's hesed (loyal love) and mishpat (justice), not merely accumulating facts. The "strong" Corinthians knew theology but hadn't grasped that love must govern knowledge's application.

Historical Context

Greek culture prized philosophical knowledge (sophia, wisdom) as the highest virtue. Corinth, influenced by sophistic rhetoric and Stoic philosophy, valued intellectual achievement. The church imported this cultural pride, creating factions around teachers (1:12) and despising those with less sophisticated theology. Paul subverts this entirely—true knowledge humbles, not exalts.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does thinking you "know" something shut down further learning and spiritual growth?
2. Where has theological knowledge made you proud rather than humble and loving?
3. What would it look like to "know as you ought to know"—knowledge that serves love rather than pride?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δέ	τι	δοκεῖ	εἰδέναι	τι	οὐδέπω	οὐδὲν
G1487	And	any thing	think	that he knoweth	any thing	yet	nothing
	G1161	G5100	G1380	G1492	G5100	G3764	G3762
γνῶναι·	καθὼς	δεῖ	γνῶναι·				
he knoweth	as	he ought	he knoweth				
	G1097	G2531	G1163	G1097			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 13:12 (Parallel theme): For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

1 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Proverbs 26:12 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Galatians 6:3 (Parallel theme): For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Romans 11:25 (Parallel theme): For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

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