

1 Corinthians 9:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Analysis

If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Even if outsiders reject Paul's credentials, the Corinthians cannot—they owe their very existence as a church to his ministry. The Greek *sphragis* (σφραγίς, "seal") denotes authentication, like a signet ring pressed into wax. Their conversion, spiritual gifts, and continued faith are irrefutable proof that God commissioned Paul as an apostle.

Paul's logic is devastating: to deny his apostleship is to deny their own legitimacy as believers. If Paul is not a true apostle, then his gospel is false, and they are not truly "in the Lord." This is not arrogance but theological necessity. Apostolic ministry mediates the gospel that creates the church. The Corinthians cannot reject Paul's authority without sawing off the branch they sit on.

Historical Context

In the ancient world, a seal authenticated documents, contracts, and ownership. Roman officials carried signet rings to authorize decrees. Paul uses this commercial metaphor theologically: just as a seal proves a document's authenticity, the Corinthian church—born through Paul's preaching—proves God sent him. This was especially important given ancient concerns about fraudulent teachers and false prophets.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the existence of genuine converts validate gospel ministry?
2. What is the relationship between apostolic preaching and the church's foundation (Eph 2:20)?
3. Can you reject spiritual authority without undermining your own faith's foundations?

Interlinear Text

εἰ ἄλλοις οὐκ εἰμι· ἀπόστολος ἀλλά γε ὑμῖν
If unto others not I am an apostle yet doubtless to you
G1487 G243 G3756 G1510 G652 G235 G1065 G5213

εἰμι· ἡ γὰρ σφραγὶς τῆς ἐμῆς ἀποστολῆς ὑμεῖς ἔστε
I am for the seal G3588 G1063 G4973 G3588 G1699 G651 G5210 G2075
G1510 G3588 G1063 G4973 G3588 G1699 G651 G5210 G2075

ἐν κυρίῳ
in the Lord
G1722 G2962

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 12:12 (Parallel theme): Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

John 6:27 (Parallel theme): Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

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