

2 Corinthians 10:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Analysis

For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἔαυτὸν συνιστάνων, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος, ἀλλ' ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν)—Synistanōn (συνιστάνων, "commending") ties back to the self-commendation throughout the chapter (vv. 12, 13, 18). Dokimos (δόκιμος, "approved/tested") denotes what passes scrutiny—genuine versus counterfeit. Self-commendation proves nothing; only divine approval validates ministry.

Whom the Lord commendeth (ὁν ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν)—Christ's commendation manifests through effective gospel ministry, transformed lives, Spirit-empowered preaching, and Christlike character. Paul's "letters of recommendation" are the converted Corinthians themselves (3:2-3). Divine approval doesn't require human credentials—God's work speaks for itself. This principle will govern chapters 11-12: Paul's sufferings, visions, and weakness all demonstrate God's approving power, not human impressiveness.

Historical Context

Letters of recommendation were standard in the ancient world, establishing one's credentials and character. Paul's opponents likely brought impressive letters from Jerusalem or other churches. Paul refuses this game: God's commendation through gospel fruit matters, not human endorsements. The Jerusalem apostles recognized Paul's calling (Gal 2:7-9)—he needed no other credential.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What human commendation are you seeking—praise, credentials, titles, recognition—that distracts from pursuing God's approval alone?
2. How does God's commendation manifest in ministry—and how can you recognize counterfeit ministry that lacks divine approval despite human impressiveness?
3. What does it reveal about your heart when you're more concerned with others' opinions than with God's evaluation of your faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γὰρ	ό	έαυτὸν	συνίστησιν	έκεῖνός	ἐστιν	δόκιμος
not	For		himself	commendeth	he	is	approved
G3756	G1063		G1438	G4921	G1565	G2076	G1384

ἀλλ'	δὲν	ό	κύριος	συνίστησιν
but	whom		the Lord	commendeth
G235	G3739		G2962	G4921

Additional Cross-References

Luke 16:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Proverbs 21:2 (References Lord): Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Romans 2:29 (Parallel theme): But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

1 Corinthians 4:5 (References Lord): Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

2 Corinthians 10:12 (Parallel theme): For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

John 12:43 (Parallel theme): For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Proverbs 27:2 (Parallel theme): Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Romans 14:18 (Parallel theme): For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

2 Corinthians 13:7 (Parallel theme): Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

1 Peter 1:7 (Parallel theme): That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: