

2 Corinthians 11:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

Analysis

That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Paul's disclaimer is crucial: *ho lalō, ou kata kyrion lalō* (ὁ λαλῶ, οὐ κατὰ κύριον λαλῶ, 'what I speak, I speak not according to the Lord'). This is not divine revelation but strategic irony. *Kata kyrion* (κατὰ κύριον) means 'in accordance with the Lord's manner/command'—Jesus didn't boast but humbled himself (Phil 2:6-8).

But as it were foolishly (*all' hōs en aphrosynē*, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνη) acknowledges the worldly foolishness of self-promotion. **In this confidence of boasting** (*en tautē tē hypostasei tēs kauchēseōs*, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως) describes entering the arena of confident self-praise that characterizes worldly rhetoric and the false apostles.

Paul's careful distinction between apostolic teaching ('according to the Lord') and strategic irony ('as foolishly') prevents misunderstanding. He's not claiming divine sanction for boasting itself but for the ironic strategy of boasting in weakness to expose the folly of boasting in strength. His self-awareness contrasts sharply with the false apostles' shameless self-promotion.

Historical Context

Jewish culture valued humility (Prov 27:2), while Greco-Roman culture valued self-promotion. Paul navigates between these cultures, adopting Gentile methods

temporarily while maintaining Jewish-Christian values. His disclaimer protects against canonizing boasting while permitting necessary self-defense in extreme circumstances.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do we distinguish between necessary self-defense and ungodly self-promotion—where is the line?
2. In what circumstances might we need to adopt cultural methods we personally find distasteful for strategic gospel purposes?
3. How does Paul's self-awareness and disclaimer about speaking 'foolishly' model healthy self-examination for Christian leaders?

Interlinear Text

ὅ	λαλῶ	οὐ	λαλῶ	κατὰ	κύριον	ἀλλ'	ὥς	ἐν
That which	I speak	it not	I speak	after	the Lord	but	as	in
G3739	G2980	G3756	G2980	G2596	G2962	G235	G5613	G1722
ἀφροσύνη	ἐν	ταύτῃ	τῇ	ὑποστάσει	τῆς	καυχήσεως		
G877	in	G3778	G3588	confidence	G3588	of boasting		
	G1722			G5287		G2746		

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:12 (References Lord): But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

2 Corinthians 9:4 (Parallel theme): Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

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