

2 Corinthians 11:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

Analysis

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. Paul's biting sarcasm targets the Corinthians' intellectual pride. Hēdeōs gar anechesthe tōn aphonōn (ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων, 'gladly you tolerate the foolish') describes their embrace of the false apostles' boasting. Phronimoi ontes (φρόνιμοι ὄντες, 'being wise/sensible') is heavy irony—they think themselves sophisticated.

The Corinthian church's supposed wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25; 3:18-20) made them gullible to false teachers. They prized eloquence, credentials, and philosophical sophistication—exactly what the 'super-apostles' offered. Their intellectual pride blinded them to the difference between worldly wisdom and gospel truth. They tolerated fools gladly while questioning the truly wise apostle.

The irony cuts deeply: truly wise people would reject foolish boasting; the fact that the Corinthians embrace it proves they're not as wise as they think. Their tolerance of the false apostles' self-promotion while resisting Paul's necessary self-defense reveals inverted values—they call evil good and good evil (Isa 5:20).

Historical Context

The Corinthian church's location in a sophisticated commercial center and their attraction to eloquent teachers like Apollos (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4) fostered intellectual pride. They valued Greek philosophical wisdom (sophia) and rhetorical skill (logos) over the 'foolishness' of the cross (1 Cor 1:18-23). This cultural captivity made them vulnerable to impressive-sounding false teaching.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does intellectual pride or attraction to sophisticated-sounding teaching make churches vulnerable to false teachers today?
2. In what ways might valuing education, eloquence, and cultural relevance actually work against discerning biblical truth?
3. When has your supposed wisdom actually been foolishness—embracing what sounds smart while rejecting simple gospel truth?

Interlinear Text

ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι

gladly

For

ye suffer

G3588

fools

wise

G2234

G1063

G430

G878

G5429

ὄντες·

seeing ye yourselves are

G5607

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 4:10 (Parallel theme): We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

1 Corinthians 8:1 (Parallel theme): Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

1 Corinthians 10:15 (Parallel theme): I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

