

# 2 Corinthians 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

## Analysis

**For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.**

Paul's fivefold catalog of the Corinthians' submission to abuse is devastating. Each *ei* (εἰ, 'if') clause describes what they tolerate from false apostles while rejecting Paul's loving service. The repetition of *tis* (τις, 'someone/a man') emphasizes the agents of abuse.

**Bring you into bondage** (*katadouloi*, καταδουλοῖ)—enslaving them to legalistic requirements or human authority. **Devour you** (*katesthieî*, κατεσθίει)—consuming their resources like predators. **Take of you** (*lambanei*, λαμβάνει)—seizing what belongs to them. **Exalt himself** (*epairetai*, ἐπαίρεται)—arrogantly promoting himself. **Smite you on the face** (*eis prosōpon derei*, εἰς πρόσωπον δέρει)—insulting and humiliating them.

The verbs progress from spiritual enslavement through financial exploitation to personal abuse. This is what the Corinthians 'gladly tolerate' from impressive false teachers while questioning Paul who enslaved himself to serve them freely. The tragic irony: they submit to tyranny disguised as authority while resisting genuine apostolic care.

## Historical Context

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The false apostles apparently established authoritarian control, demanded financial support, promoted themselves shamelessly, and treated the Corinthians with contempt. Ancient rhetoric valued powerful, dominating speakers. The Corinthians, influenced by this cultural value, mistook abuse for authority and service for weakness.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How do contemporary Christians sometimes tolerate spiritual abuse, financial exploitation, or authoritarian control from charismatic leaders?
2. Why might people submit to domineering leaders while resisting servant-hearted pastors—what cultural values create this inversion?
3. What are warning signs that a Christian leader is 'devouring' rather than serving, 'exalting himself' rather than Christ?

## Interlinear Text

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ἀνέχεσθε	γὰρ	εἰ	τις	ὕμᾱς	καταδουλοῖ	εἰ	τις	
<b>ye suffer</b> G430	<b>For</b> G1063	G1487	G5100	<b>you</b> G5209	<b>bring</b> G2615	G1487	G5100	
κατεσθίει	εἰ	τις	λαμβάνει	εἰ	τις	ἐπαίρεται	εἰ	τις
<b>devour</b> G2719	G1487	G5100	<b>take</b> G2983	G1487	G5100	<b>exalt himself</b> G1869	G1487	G5100
ὕμᾱς	εἰς	πρόσωπον	δέρει					
<b>you</b> G5209	<b>on</b> G1519	<b>the face</b> G4383	<b>smite</b> G1194					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 2:4** (Parallel theme): And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

**Galatians 4:3** (Parallel theme): Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

**Galatians 4:9** (Parallel theme): But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

**Galatians 5:1** (Parallel theme): Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

**2 Corinthians 1:24** (Parallel theme): Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

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