

2 Corinthians 11:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

Analysis

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The climax of Paul's 'boasting': ei kauchasthai dei (εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, 'if it is necessary to boast'), ta tēs astheneias mou kauchēsomai (τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχήσομαι, 'I will boast of my weaknesses'). The conditional ei (εἰ) with dei (δεῖ, 'it is necessary') suggests reluctant necessity—boasting is required by circumstances, not desired.

Things which concern mine infirmities (ta tēs astheneias mou, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου) summarizes the entire suffering catalog of vv. 23-29—beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, dangers, deprivations, anxieties. These astheneiai (ἀσθένειαι, 'weaknesses') are his credentials. Where false apostles boast of strength, Paul boasts of weakness because weakness displays Christ's power (12:9-10).

This is the great Pauline inversion: boasting in weakness rather than strength, glorying in suffering rather than success, valuing what the world despises. It transforms weakness from embarrassment to badge of honor because weak vessels most clearly display that the treasure and power belong to God (4:7). This theology demolishes worldly ministry models built on human impressiveness.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman boasting emphasized strength, achievements, victories, honors. Paul's boasting in weakness was utterly countercultural, foolishness to Greeks (1 Cor 1:23). Yet it embodied the cross—God's power displayed through Christ's weakness, wisdom through folly, victory through defeat. Paul's ministry methodology incarnated his theology.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does boasting in weaknesses rather than strengths redefine success in Christian ministry and life?
2. In what ways does contemporary Christianity's emphasis on testimonies of victory and breakthrough miss Paul's focus on weakness and suffering?
3. What weaknesses, failures, or sufferings might God want you to 'boast' in because they display His power rather than your strength?

Interlinear Text

Εἰ	καυχήσομαι	δεῖ	τῆς
If	I will glory	I must needs	of the things which concern
G1487	G2744	G1163	G3588
τῆς	ἀσθενείας	μου	καυχήσομαι
of the things which concern	infirmities	mine	I will glory
G3588	G769	G3450	G2744

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:3 (Parallel theme): And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

2 Corinthians 12:1 (Glory): It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

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

Proverbs 25:27 (Glory): It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

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