

2 Corinthians 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

Analysis

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. Paul's ironic self-defense begins. The phrase *tōn hyperlian apostolōn* (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων, 'super-apostles' or 'most eminent apostles') drips with sarcasm. These self-styled leaders claimed superior credentials, but Paul asserts he is 'not a whit behind' (*husterēkenai*, ὑστερηκέναι, 'to be inferior/lacking').

Debate exists whether 'super-apostles' refers to the Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James, John) whom the false teachers claimed to represent, or to the false teachers themselves. Context favors the latter—Paul distinguished himself from false apostles, not true ones. Yet the ambiguity may be intentional, challenging both the genuine Jerusalem apostles' authority and the fraudulent claims of the interlopers.

Paul's 'I suppose' (*logizomai*, λογίζομαι) is understated—he knows he's a true apostle commissioned by the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:8-10; Gal 1:1, 11-12). His apostleship came not through human appointment but divine revelation. The false apostles boasted of their credentials; Paul ironically claims to match them while actually far surpassing them in genuine apostolic marks.

Historical Context

The Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James, John) had recognized Paul's apostleship and gospel (Gal 2:6-10). False teachers likely claimed to represent these leaders while distorting their message, creating confusion about Paul's relationship to the

Jerusalem church. Paul must assert his equality without disparaging the genuine apostles.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do false teachers today claim connection to respected Christian leaders or traditions while actually distorting their message?
2. What is the relationship between God-given authority and human credentials or impressive background—which matters more?
3. In what ways might we wrongly elevate 'super-apostles' (celebrity preachers, impressive speakers) above faithful but less prominent servants of Christ?

Interlinear Text

λογίζομαι	γὰρ	μηδὲν	ὑστερηκέναι	τῶν	ὑπερ	λίαν
I suppose	For	not a whit	I was		the very	chiefest
G3049	G1063	G3367	G5302	G3588	G5228	G3029

ἀποστόλων·

apostles

G652

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