

2 Corinthians 11:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

Analysis

Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? Paul's rhetorical question highlights the absurdity: he is criticized for working with his hands to support himself rather than accepting payment from the Corinthians. His self-abasement (*emauton tapeinōn, ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν*, 'humbling myself') through manual labor **that ye might be exalted** follows Christ's pattern (Phil 2:5-8; 2 Cor 8:9).

Freely (*dōrean, δωρεάν*, 'as a gift, without charge') echoes Jesus's command (Matt 10:8). Paul's tentmaking (Acts 18:3) removed any suspicion of mercenary motives—he sought their souls, not their money (12:14). The false apostles, conversely, demanded financial support as proof of their authority and exploited the Corinthians' resources (11:20).

The hamartian (*ἀμαρτίαν*, 'sin/offence') Paul ironically asks about is actually Christlike servant-leadership. The gospel proclaims that Christ became poor to make us rich (8:9); Paul enacted this by voluntarily lowering his status to elevate the Corinthians spiritually. His self-support modeled the gospel's grace and prevented accusations of greed.

Historical Context

In Greco-Roman culture, teachers and philosophers typically charged fees proportional to their claimed status. Free teaching was considered inferior. The 'super-apostles' demanded support as their due, while Paul's refusal was interpreted as evidence of inferior apostleship. Paul turns this upside down—true apostles serve, not exploit.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does our consumer culture's expectation that 'you get what you pay for' clash with the gospel's free grace and servant ministry?
2. In what ways might Christian leaders' lifestyles and financial expectations contradict the gospel of Christ who became poor for us?
3. When have you seen genuine servant-leadership criticized because it didn't fit cultural expectations of status and compensation?

Interlinear Text

Ἄμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς
G2228 an offence G4160 Have I committed G1683 myself G5013 in abasing G2443 that G5210 ye

ὑψωθῆτε ὅτι δωρεὰν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον
G5312 might be exalted G3754 because G1432 freely G3588 G3588 of God G2316 the gospel G2098

εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν
I have preached to you
G2097 G5213

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 12:13 (Parallel theme): For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

1 Corinthians 9:6 (Parallel theme): Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

2 Corinthians 10:1 (Parallel theme): Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

1 Thessalonians 2:9 (References God): For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

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