

2 Corinthians 11:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

Analysis

I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. Paul's hyperbolic metaphor *esylēsa* (ἐσύλησα, 'I robbed/plundered') describes accepting support from Macedonian churches (Phil 4:15-16; Acts 20:34) while serving in Corinth. Military language depicts him as a soldier plundering one city to defend another. *Opsōnion* (ὀψώνιον, 'wages/pay') was technical military terminology for soldiers' rations.

The irony is sharp: Paul 'robbed' poor Macedonian churches to serve wealthy Corinthian believers without charge. The Philippians, in deep poverty (8:2), gave sacrificially; the Corinthians, relatively prosperous, were served freely. This exposes the Corinthians' ingratitude and self-centeredness—they benefited from others' generosity yet questioned Paul's apostleship because he wouldn't take their money.

Paul's strategy of accepting support from some churches while refusing it from others was intentional and flexible. In Corinth, he refused support to remove grounds for accusation and contrast himself with greedy false teachers. His financial independence proved the purity of his motives and prevented the gospel from being discredited.

Historical Context

The Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) were characterized by extreme poverty yet extraordinary generosity (2 Cor 8:1-5). The Corinthian church was relatively prosperous, located in a wealthy commercial center. Yet the poor gave while the rich were served freely—an inversion of worldly expectations that Paul deliberately maintained.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the economic inversion in Paul's support model challenge our assumptions about who should support whom in Christian ministry?
2. What motivates your giving to Christian ministry—desire to support gospel work or expectation of receiving proportional spiritual benefits?
3. In what ways do financial arrangements in ministry reveal or conceal the purity (or impurity) of ministers' motives?

Interlinear Text

ἄλλας	ἐκκλησίας	ἐσύλησα	λαβὼν	ὀψώνιον	πρὸς	τὴν
other	churches	I robbed	taking	wages	of them to	G3588
G243	G1577	G4813	G2983	G3800	G4314	
ὑμῶν	διακονίαν					
you	do					
G5216	G1248					

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:9 (Kingdom): And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

Philippians 4:18 (Parallel theme): But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

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