

2 Corinthians 12:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. Paul's irony cuts deep: the only way Corinth was "inferior" to other churches was his refusal to accept financial support—which they somehow twisted into evidence of second-class apostleship. The phrase **I myself was not burdensome** recalls 11:9 where Paul explains he was supported by Macedonian churches, not Corinth, to avoid any accusation of greed.

The sarcastic plea **forgive me this wrong** (charisasthe moi tēn adikian tautēn, χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην) exposes the absurdity: Paul's generosity (offering the gospel free, 1 Corinthians 9:18) was perceived as insult. Perhaps the Corinthians' patron-client culture interpreted refusing financial support as rejection of relationship, or false apostles suggested Paul knew he wasn't a real apostle, hence didn't dare charge fees like legitimate teachers.

This verse reveals how gospel freedom challenges social conventions: Paul wouldn't be enslaved to patronage systems, even when refusing financial support was misinterpreted as lack of affection or authority.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture operated on patronage: benefactors supported clients who provided honor and services in return. Refusing patronage could signal social rejection. Paul's tentmaking self-support (Acts 18:3) allowed ministry independence but violated social expectations. The "super-apostles" likely accepted payment, appearing more legitimate by cultural standards—exposing how gospel ministry subverts worldly systems.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's financial independence model ministry freedom, even when congregations misinterpret it as lack of care or authority?
2. In what ways do contemporary Christians wrongly equate "professional ministry" (paid, full-time) with "legitimate ministry," echoing the Corinthians' error?
3. What does Paul's sarcasm ("forgive me this wrong") teach about using irony to expose absurd accusations?

Interlinear Text

τί γάρ ἐστιν ὃ ἡττήθητε ὑπὲρ τὰς λουπὰς
what For is it wherein ye were inferior to G3588 other
G5101 G1063 G2076 G3739 G2274 G5228 G3062

ἐκκλησίας εἰ μὴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατεινάρκησα
churches G1487 G3361 it be that myself I not burdensome
G1577 G3754 G846 G1473 G3756 G2655

ὑμῶν χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην
to you forgive me G3588 wrong G3778
G5216 G5483 G3427 G93

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 9:12 (Parallel theme): If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

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

2 Corinthians 12:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.