

2 Corinthians 12:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

Analysis

Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? Paul's rhetorical question demands self-examination: examine the co-workers I've sent—did any of them exploit you financially? The Greek *epleonektēsa* (ἐπλεονέκτησα, "I made gain," "I defrauded") implies greedy advantage-taking. Paul's defense rests on empirical evidence: review the conduct of everyone I sent, including Titus (v. 18), and you'll find consistent integrity.

This verse establishes a principle: ministry is evaluated not just by the primary leader but by all associated workers. If Paul secretly schemed to extract money, his representatives would expose it through their behavior. The Corinthians' own experience of Paul's delegates proves his financial integrity—unless they can identify a single instance of exploitation, the accusation collapses.

The question format is pastorally wise: rather than defensively asserting innocence, Paul invites the Corinthians to examine evidence themselves. This respects their agency while exposing the baselessness of accusations.

Historical Context

Paul frequently worked with ministry teams—Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, and many others (Romans 16, Philippians 4:2-3, Colossians 4:7-14). This collaborative ministry model provided accountability and multiple witnesses to Paul's conduct.

The Corinthians had extensive interaction with Paul's co-workers, giving them ample data to evaluate his character through his associates.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does collaborative ministry (working with teams rather than solo) provide accountability that answers accusations of financial impropriety?
2. What does Paul's appeal to the Corinthians' own experience ("examine those I sent") teach about defending ministry integrity through transparent evidence versus mere assertions?
3. Why is a leader's choice of co-workers significant for evaluating that leader's character—does association reveal character?

Interlinear Text

μή	τινα	ὧν	ἀπέσταλκα	πρὸς	ὑμᾶς	δι'	αὐτοῦ
G3361	any	whom	I sent	unto	of you	by	of them
	G5100	G3739	G649	G4314	G5209	G1223	G846

ἐπλεονέκτησα	ὑμᾶς
Did I make a gain	of you
G4122	G5209