

2 Corinthians 12:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Analysis

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. Paul's fear deepens: his third visit might bring **humbling** (*tapeinōsei*, *ταπεινώσει*)—not honor but shame when he must publicly grieve over unrepentant sinners. The phrase **my God will humble me** shows Paul doesn't see this as human-caused embarrassment but divine discipline: God orchestrates humbling through congregational sin that Paul must confront.

The mourning is pastoral: **I shall bewail** (*pentho*, *πενθήσω*, "mourn," "lament") **many which have sinned already, and have not repented.** Past tense "sinned already" (perhaps the incest case from 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 or other sexual sins) coupled with ongoing impenitence creates crisis. Paul will mourn (not merely rebuke)—pastoral grief over souls endangered by sin.

The specific sins: *akatharsia* (*ἀκαθαρσία*, "uncleanness," moral impurity), *porneia* (*πορνεία*, "fornication," sexual immorality), and *aselgeia* (*ἀσέλγεια*, "lasciviousness," sensuality). This triad covers the spectrum of sexual sin—internal impurity, external fornication, and shameless excess. Corinth's culture was notoriously immoral ("to Corinthianize" meant to practice sexual vice), and the

church remained contaminated despite Paul's previous corrections (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Historical Context

Corinth was a port city infamous for sexual immorality, including temple prostitution at the Aphrodite temple. The Corinthian church, emerging from this pagan context, struggled to apply gospel holiness to sexual ethics (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:12-20). Paul's fear that many remained impenitent suggests widespread tolerance of sexual sin—a devastating failure requiring apostolic discipline on his third visit.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does "my God will humble me" reframe pastoral grief over congregational sin—not as personal failure but as God-ordained humbling through others' impenitence?
2. Why does Paul emphasize "have not repented" rather than simply "have sinned"—what does this reveal about the sin that most endangers the church?
3. What does Paul's weeping ("I shall bewail") over sexual sin teach about appropriate pastoral response—combining truth about sin's seriousness with brokenhearted love for sinners?

Interlinear Text

μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντα με ταπεινώσῃ τῇ θεός μου
And lest again when I come me will humble which God my
G3361 G3825 G2064 G3165 G5013 G3588 G2316 G3450

πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ πενθήσω πολλοὺς τῇ
among you and that I shall bewail many which
G4314 G5209 G2532 G3996 G4183 G3588

προημαρτηκότων καὶ μὴ μετανοησάντων ἐπὶ τῇ
have sinned already and And lest have of which
G4258 G2532 G3361 G3340 G1909 G3588

ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελγείᾳ τῇ
the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which
G167 G2532 G4202 G2532 G766 G3739

ἐπραξαν
they have committed
G4238

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 13:2 (Sin): I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

1 Corinthians 5:1 (Parallel theme): It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Galatians 5:19 (Parallel theme): Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

