

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	ταπεινώση	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		
ἀκαθαρσία	καὶ	πορνεία	καὶ	ἀσελγεία	ἣ		
the uncleanness	and	fornication	and	lasciviousness	which		
G167	G2532	G4202	G2532	G766	G3739		
ἔπραξαν							
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,

