

2 Corinthians 12:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

Analysis

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. Paul insists that boasting in the paradise vision wouldn't be *aphron* (ἀφρων, "foolish")—because it's objectively true ("I will say the truth")—yet he **forbears** (*pheidomai*, φείδομαι, "I spare," "I refrain") precisely because factual boasting still produces wrong evaluation.

The pastoral wisdom is profound: even true claims can mislead if they cause people to **think of me above that which he seeth me to be**. Paul wants judgment based on observable reality—his ministry marked by suffering (11:23-29), his physical presence "weak" and speech "contemptible" (10:10). Spectacular past visions don't define present ministry; cruciform weakness does.

This verse strikes at Christian celebrity culture: Paul could legitimately promote his extraordinary experiences (they're true!), but refuses because it would create false impressions. Ministry credibility rests on what people see (observable fruit, Christlike character) and hear (gospel proclamation), not marketing mystical résumés.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture prized rhetorical self-promotion; philosophers and sophists built reputations on dramatic conversion stories and divine encounters. Paul's refusal to exploit his paradise vision—though it would "win" the argument with false apostles—demonstrates that gospel ministry operates by completely different values: humility, weakness, and transparent accountability to observable fruit rather than marketed credentials.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How can even truthful claims about spiritual experiences become "foolish" if they cause people to evaluate ministry by wrong standards?
2. What's the difference between credibility based on "what you see and hear" in present ministry versus credibility based on past dramatic experiences?
3. In what ways might contemporary Christian culture pressure leaders to "not forbear"—to market their spiritual experiences despite Paul's example?

Interlinear Text

έὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχήσασθαι οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων
though For I would desire to glory not I shall a fool
G1437 G1063 G2309 G2744 G3756 G2071 G878

ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ· φείδομαι δέ μή τι εἰς ἐμὲ
the truth For I will say now I forbear but lest any man of me
G225 G1063 G2046 G5339 G1161 G3361 G5100 G1519 G1691

λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὅ βλέπει με ἥ ἀκούει
should think above that which he seeth to be or that he heareth
G3049 G5228 G3739 G991 G3165 G2228 G191

τι ἔξ εμοῦ
any man G1537 me
G5100 G1700

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:16 (Parallel theme): I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

2 Corinthians 11:31 (Parallel theme): The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

2 Corinthians 12:11 (Glory): I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.