

2 Corinthians 13:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Analysis

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness—Paul's letter provides opportunity for repentance before his arrival. The word *apotomōs* (ἀποτόμως, "sharpness/severity") suggests cutting, decisive discipline. By writing **being absent** (αἰὼν, ἀπών), Paul gives time for response, preferring repentance to confrontation—mercy preceding judgment.

According to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction—Paul's apostolic *exousia* (ἐξουσία, "authority/power") is purposeful: **to edification** (εἰς οἰκοδομήν, εἰς οἰκοδομήν, "for building up"), **not to destruction** (οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν, οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν, "not for tearing down"). Even severe discipline aims at restoration, not mere punishment. This principle (stated in 2 Cor 10:8) governs all use of authority—power exists for construction, and even demolition (of sin, false teaching) serves ultimate edification.

Historical Context

Paul's authority was contested throughout his ministry, especially by "super-apostles" in Corinth who valued displays of power. Paul consistently reframes authority as service, discipline as corrective love, and power as means to building up the body. This letter writing before arrival was strategic pastoral care, maximizing opportunity for repentance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does warning in advance (writing 'being absent') demonstrate pastoral wisdom before exercising discipline?
2. What does it mean that church authority is given 'for edification, not destruction'—how does this apply today?
3. When might severe discipline ('sharpness') actually serve the goal of edification rather than contradict it?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| διὰ G1223 | τοῦτο G5124 | ταῦτα G5023 | ἀπὸν G548 | γράφω G1125 | ἵνα G2443 | παρὼν G3918 | μὴ G3361 |
| | Therefore | these things | being absent | I write | | being present | |
| ἀποτόμως G664 | χρήσωμαι G5530 | κατὰ G2596 | τὴν G3588 | ἐξουσίαν G1849 | ἣν G3739 | ἔδωκέν G1325 | |
| | sharpness | I should use | according | to the power | which | hath given | |
| μοι G3427 | ὁ G3588 | κύριος G2962 | εἰς G1519 | οἰκοδομὴν G3619 | καὶ G2532 | οὐκ G3756 | εἰς G1519 |
| | me | the Lord | to | edification | and | not | to |
| | | | | | | | destruction G2506 |

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 10:8 (References Lord): For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

2 Corinthians 2:3 (Parallel theme): And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

Titus 1:13 (Parallel theme): This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

1 Corinthians 4:21 (Parallel theme): What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

2 Corinthians 13:8 (Parallel theme): For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

2 Corinthians 10:2 (Parallel theme): But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.