

2 Corinthians 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

Analysis

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth—A principle statement: Paul's apostolic authority is bound by truth (alētheia, ἀλήθεια), not arbitrary power. He cannot wield authority **against the truth** (to harm what is true and right), only **for the truth** (to advance it). This limits and directs apostolic power—authority exists to serve truth, not personal agenda.

The logic flows from v. 7: if Corinthians repent, Paul can't exercise discipline (that would be "against the truth" of their righteousness); he can only affirm them. True spiritual authority is constrained by reality—leaders can't manufacture situations to display power, but must respond to actual spiritual conditions. This makes Christian authority fundamentally different from worldly power, which can act arbitrarily.

Historical Context

In the Roman Empire, authority was often arbitrary—emperors and governors wielded absolute power according to personal whim. Paul's insistence that apostolic authority is truth-bound, not arbitrary, established a radically different model of Christian leadership: servant-leadership constrained by revelation and reality, not personal preference or political maneuvering.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this principle—'nothing against the truth, but for the truth'—constrain and direct church authority today?
2. What are examples of church leaders acting 'against the truth' by wielding authority wrongly?
3. How does this verse guard against both authoritarianism and abdication of necessary authority?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γὰρ	δυνάμεθά	τι	κατὰ	τῆς	ἀληθείας	ἀλλ'	ὑπὲρ
nothing	For	we can do	G5100	against	G3588	the truth	but	for
G3756	G1063	G1410		G2596		G225	G235	G5228
τῆς	ἀληθείας							
G3588	the truth							
	G225							

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:30 (Parallel theme): There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Mark 9:39 (Parallel theme): But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.