

2 Corinthians 2:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Analysis

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God—The verb *kapēleuontes* (καπηλεύοντες, "to peddle, retail, adulterate") literally means to dilute wine for profit or hawk goods in the marketplace. Paul accuses false teachers of treating God's word as merchandise to be marketed, diluted for popular consumption, or manipulated for personal gain. The phrase *hoi polloi* (οἱ πολλοί, "the many") suggests widespread corruption—Paul's integrity was exceptional, not normal.

But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ—Three prepositional phrases define authentic ministry: *ex eilikrinias* (ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, "from sincerity/purity"), *all' hōs ek theou* (ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ, "but as from God"), and *katenanti theou* (κατέναντι θεοῦ, "before God"). Ministers speak with pure motives, divine commission, and God as their primary audience. The phrase *en Christō* (ἐν Χριστῷ, "in Christ") locates ministry within union with Christ—not human enterprise but participation in Christ's ongoing work. This concludes the chapter by answering verse 16's question: sufficiency comes from Christ-centered, God-commissioned, sincere ministry, not human cleverness or marketplace tactics.

Historical Context

First-century marketplace vendors commonly diluted wine and oil to increase profits. Itinerant teachers and philosophers often charged fees and adapted messages to please audiences. Paul supported himself by tentmaking (Acts 18:3) and refused payment from Corinth (1 Cor 9:12-18) to avoid any appearance of merchandising the Gospel. His financial integrity authenticated his message.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do modern ministers sometimes "peddle" God's word like merchandise?
2. What practical differences result from viewing God rather than people as your audience?
3. How does union with Christ ("in Christ") transform ministry from human effort to divine work?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γάρ	ἐσμεν	ώς	οἱ	πολλοὶ	καπηλεύοντες	τὸν	λόγον
not	For	we are	as	G3588	many	which corrupt	G3588	the word
G3756	G1063	G2070	G5613		G4183	G2585		G3056
τοῦ	θεοῦ	ἀλλ'	ώς	ἐκ	εἰλικρινείας	ἀλλ'	ώς	ἐκ
G3588	God	but	as	of	sincerity	but	as	of
G2316	G235	G5613	G1537		G1505	G235	G5613	G1537
κατενώπιον	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ἐν	Χριστῷ	λαλοῦμεν			
in the sight	G3588	God	in	Christ	speak we			
G2714		G2316	G1722	G5547	G2980			

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 4:2 (Word): But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (Sin): For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Revelation 2:20 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Jeremiah 5:31 (Parallel theme): The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

1 Corinthians 5:8 (Sin): Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Matthew 24:24 (References Christ): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Titus 1:11 (Parallel theme): Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Jude 1:4 (References Christ): For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:20 (Parallel theme): And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

1 John 4:1 (References God): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org