

2 Corinthians 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Analysis

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Paul immediately clarifies verse 4 lest anyone misunderstand his confidence as self-confidence. The Greek *hikanoi* (ἱκανοί, "sufficient" or "adequate") appears three times in verses 5-6, emphasizing a central theme: all competence for ministry comes from God alone. The phrase **of ourselves** appears twice for emphasis—*aph' heautōn* (ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν, "from ourselves") and *ex heautōn* (ἐξ ἐαυτῶν, "out of ourselves").

To think any thing as of ourselves uses *logisasthai ti* (λογίσασθαι τι, "to reckon" or "consider"). Paul cannot even think a useful thought on his own—a radical statement of divine dependence. The contrast is absolute: zero sufficiency from self, complete sufficiency from God. This echoes Jesus' words: "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The term *hikanotēs* (ἱκανότης, "sufficiency" or "adequacy") in **our sufficiency is of God** points to God as the sole source of ministerial competence.

Historical Context

Paul's radical dependence on God stood in stark contrast to Greco-Roman philosophies that emphasized human self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*). Stoic philosophers, for example, taught that the wise man should be completely self-sufficient, unaffected by external circumstances. Even Jewish thought could emphasize human ability to keep the law. Paul's gospel dismantles all human self-

reliance, grounding Christian ministry entirely in God's enabling grace. This was not weakness but theological clarity about the source of all spiritual power.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life or ministry are you tempted to rely on your own sufficiency rather than God's?
2. How does the truth that you cannot even "think" a spiritually useful thought apart from God humble and liberate you?
3. What would change in your daily life if you truly believed that all your adequacy comes from God alone?

Interlinear Text

οὐχ	ὅτι	ἱκανοί	ἐσμεν	ἀφ'	ἐαυτῶν	λογίσασθαι	τι
Not	that	sufficient	we are	of	ourselves	to think	any thing
G3756	G3754	G2425	G2070	G575	G1438	G3049	G5100
ὥς	ἐκ	ἐαυτῶν	ἀλλ'	ἡ	ἱκανότης	ἡμῶν	ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
as	is of	ourselves	but	G3588	sufficiency	our	is of G3588 God
G5613	G1537	G1438	G235		G2426	G2257	G1537 G2316

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 12:9 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (References God): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

John 15:5 (Parallel theme): I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Philippians 2:13 (References God): For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

James 1:17 (Parallel theme): Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

1 Corinthians 3:6 (References God): I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Luke 21:15 (Parallel theme): For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

2 Corinthians 4:7 (References God): But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

1 Corinthians 3:10 (References God): According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.