

2 Corinthians 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Analysis

For we commend not ourselves again unto you—Paul addresses recurring accusations that he engages in self-promotion (heautous synistanom en, ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν, "we are commending ourselves"). His opponents apparently brought letters of recommendation (3:1) and boasted in credentials. Paul rejects self-commendation as ministry mode.

But give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart—Aphormēn didontes hymin kaucēmatos hyper hēmōn (ἀφορμὴν διδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, "giving you opportunity for boasting on our behalf"). Paul provides ammunition for the Corinthians to defend him against critics. The contrast: tous en prosōpō kauchōmenous kai mē en kardia (τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ, "those boasting in face/appearance and not in heart"). Prosōpon (πρόσωπον) means outward appearance—eloquence, presence, status. Kardia (καρδία, "heart") represents internal reality—genuine transformation, authentic motives.

This distinction permeates 2 Corinthians: outward suffering versus inward renewal (4:16), earthly body versus heavenly dwelling (5:1-4), sight versus faith (5:7). Paul stakes authenticity on invisible realities the Spirit produces, not visible credentials culture values.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture was intensely competitive, valuing rhetorical skill, impressive presence, and patronage networks. The "super-apostles" (11:5) likely excelled in these areas. Paul's weakness—physical unimpressiveness (10:10), refusal of patronage (11:7-12), suffering (11:23-29)—seemed to disqualify him. Paul inverts cultural values: God's power perfected in weakness (12:9-10).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Where are you tempted to boast in outward appearance (achievements, status, image) rather than heart transformation?
2. How do you evaluate ministry and spiritual leaders—by cultural impressiveness or by internal spiritual fruit?
3. Can you rejoice in weakness and suffering as authenticating marks of genuine ministry, or do you still crave visible success?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γὰρ	πάλιν	ἑαυτοὺς	συνιστάνομεν	ὑμῖν	ἀλλὰ
not	For	again	ourselves	we commend	unto you	but
G3756	G1063	G3825	G1438	G4921	G5213	G235
ἀφορμὴν	διδόντες	ὑμῖν	καυχήματος	ὑπὲρ	ἡμῶν	ἵνα
occasion	give	unto you	to glory	behalf	our	that
G874	G1325	G5213	G2745	G5228	G2257	G2443
ἔχητε	πρὸς	τοὺς	ἐν	προσώπῳ	καυχωμένους	
ye may have	somewhat to	G3588	in	appearance	answer them which glory	
G2192	G4314		G1722	G4383	G2744	
καὶ	οὐ	καρδίᾳ				
and	not	in heart				
G2532	G3756	G2588				

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 3:1 (Parallel theme): Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

2 Corinthians 1:14 (Parallel theme): As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:18 (Parallel theme): For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.