

2 Corinthians 6:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

Analysis

Ye are not straitened in us (οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν, ou stenochōreisthe en hēmin)—Stenochōreō means to be constricted, cramped, or restricted (from *stenos*, 'narrow,' and *chōra*, 'space'). Paul insists the problem isn't on his side—he hasn't withdrawn affection or narrowed his heart toward the Corinthians. His love provides ample space for them. The present tense indicates an ongoing state: you are not (and continue not to be) restricted by us.

But ye are straitened in your own bowels (στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν, stenochōreisthe de en tois splanchnois hymōn)—Splanchna literally means intestines or inner organs, metaphorically the seat of emotions and affections (translated 'bowels' in KJV, better rendered 'hearts' or 'affections' in modern English). The constriction exists in their hearts, not Paul's. They have narrowed their affections toward him, withdrawing emotionally due to criticism, misunderstanding, or wounded pride.

Paul diagnoses the relational problem with surgical precision: the Corinthians experience emotional constriction, but they've misidentified the source. They blame Paul for distance they themselves have created. This is the psychology of projection—attributing one's own attitudes to another. Paul's appeal invites them to recognize and remedy their own hardness of heart.

Historical Context

The Corinthians had been influenced by Paul's opponents to view him suspiciously. They questioned his motives, criticized his ministry style, and compared him unfavorably to more polished speakers. This created emotional distance. Paul addresses the root issue: they've constricted their own hearts while imagining Paul has withdrawn his affection first.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what relationships might you be experiencing constriction that you've wrongly blamed on the other person rather than examining your own heart?
2. How does Paul's gentle diagnosis of the Corinthians' 'straitened bowels' model addressing relational problems with both honesty and grace?
3. What causes your heart to become constricted toward others—criticism, wounded pride, suspicion, unforgiveness—and how can you cultivate enlargement instead?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	στενοχωρεῖσθε	ἐν	ἡμῖν	στενοχωρεῖσθε	δὲ	ἐν	τοῖς
not	Ye are	in	us	Ye are	but	in	G3588
G3756	G4729	G1722	G2254	G4729	G1161	G1722	

σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν·
bowels **your own**
G4698 G5216

Additional Cross-References

Job 36:16 (Parallel theme): Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness.

Micah 2:7 (Parallel theme): O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

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