

2 Corinthians 8:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord,
but also in the sight of men.

Analysis

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men—Paul cites Proverbs 3:4 (LXX) and Romans 12:17, establishing dual accountability: *pronoumen gar kala* (προνοοῦμεν γὰρ καλά, 'we take thought for honorable things') *ou monon enōpion kyriou* (οὐ μόνον ἐνώπιον κυρίου, 'not only before the Lord') *alla kai enōpion anthrōpōn* (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπων, 'but also before men'). The verb *pronoeō* (προνοέω, 'to think beforehand, take care for, provide') indicates proactive planning. *Kala* (καλά, 'good/honorable/beautiful things') suggests both moral excellence and visible propriety.

This principle is vital for Christian ethics: private holiness isn't enough; public perception matters. Paul doesn't advocate mere appearance-management (hypocrisy) but genuine integrity made visible through accountability structures. The phrase *enōpion anthrōpōn* ('in the sight of men') acknowledges that Christian witness depends partly on credibility—if unbelievers suspect financial impropriety, gospel proclamation suffers. This dual accountability—God and humanity—requires both authentic integrity (satisfying divine scrutiny) and transparent procedures (satisfying human observation). Leaders must care what people think while ultimately answering to God.

Historical Context

Paul's concern for reputation reflects Jewish-Christian ethics rooted in wisdom literature (Proverbs 3:4, 'find favor... in the sight of God and man'). This dual

accountability distinguished Christian communities from both pagan religious charlatans (who often fleeced followers) and insular Jewish sectarians (who cared only for internal purity). Paul wanted the church to be both holy and credible, attractive to outsiders through visible integrity.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does caring about human perception differ from people-pleasing or hypocrisy?
2. What 'honest things' should Christian organizations proactively demonstrate to skeptical observers?
3. When is concern for public reputation healthy, and when does it become compromising?

Interlinear Text

προνοοῦμενοι	καλὰ	οὐ	μόνον	ἐνώπιον	κυρίου
Providing	for honest things	not	only	in the sight	of the Lord
G4386	G2570	G3756	G3440	G1799	G2962

ἀλλὰ	καὶ	ἐνώπιον	ἀνθρώπων
but	also	in the sight	of men
G235	G2532	G1799	G444

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:17 (Parallel theme): Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

1 Peter 2:12 (Parallel theme): Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Philippians 4:8 (Parallel theme): Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

2 Corinthians 2:17 (Parallel theme): 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.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (Parallel theme): Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Romans 14:18 (Parallel theme): For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Matthew 6:4 (Parallel theme): That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

1 Timothy 5:14 (Parallel theme): I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Matthew 23:5 (Parallel theme): But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Matthew 5:16 (Parallel theme): Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.