

2 Corinthians 9:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

Analysis

Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me—Paul plans to travel with Macedonian delegates who will witness Corinth's response. **And find you unprepared** (εὕρωμεν ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους) uses the negated form of the readiness word from v. 2-3: from *paraskeuazō* (prepared) to *aparaskeuastos* (unprepared). The irony is stark: those Paul praised for readiness might be found unready.

We (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed (καταισχυνθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα μὴ λέγωμεν ὑμεῖς) reveals Paul's pastoral delicacy. The verb *kataischynō* (καταισχύνω) means "put to shame, disgrace, humiliate." Paul says he ("we") would be embarrassed—having boasted of them—but the parenthetical "that we say not, ye" hints that Corinthians themselves would bear the greater shame. This tactful construction spares their feelings while making the point.

In this same confident boasting (ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῇς καυχήσεως)—*hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις) means "confidence, assurance, substantial reality." Paul's boasting wasn't empty rhetoric but confident assertion based on their commitment. Failure to perform would make that confidence groundless.

Historical Context

Honor-shame dynamics dominated Greco-Roman culture far more than modern Western guilt-innocence cultures. Public disgrace could destroy social standing, business relationships, and community influence. Paul's gentle threat of "shame" before Macedonian witnesses would powerfully motivate action. Yet he redeems this cultural value: shame is reoriented from peer approval to covenant faithfulness and Christ's honor (10:17-18).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the presence of witnesses affect your faithfulness to commitments—and should it?
2. When has fear of disappointing others (whether healthy or unhealthy) motivated your obedience?
3. How do you balance appropriate concern for reputation with freedom from people-pleasing?

Interlinear Text

μήπως ἐὰν ἔλθωσιν σὺν ἐμοὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ εὗρωσιν

Lest **if** **come** **with** **me** **they of Macedonia** **and** **find**

G3381 G1437 G2064 G4862 G1698 G3110 G2532 G2147

ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους καταισχυνθῶμεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα μή

you **unprepared** **should be ashamed** **we** **(that** G3361

G5209 G532 G2617 G2249 G2443

λέγωμεν ὑμεῖς ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῆς καυχήσεως

we say **ye** **in** **confident** **boasting**

G3004 G5210 G1722 G3588 G5287 G3778 G3588 G2746

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