

Galatians 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Analysis

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. Paul warns against pride. "For if a man think himself to be something" (ei gar dokei tis einai ti, εἰ γάρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι)—if anyone supposes himself to be something, someone important or superior. Dokeō (δοκέω) means to think, suppose, imagine. "When he is nothing" (mēden on, μηδὲν ὅν)—being nothing. This is stark: apart from God's grace, we're nothing, possess nothing, have accomplished nothing of spiritual value. All we have is gift (1 Corinthians 4:7).

"He deceiveth himself" (phrenapata heauton, φρεναπατᾶ ἑαυτόν)—he deceives, deludes his own mind. Phrenapatao is compound: phrēn (mind) + apatao (deceive). Self-deception is most dangerous because the deceiver and deceived are one—no external voice can easily break through. Pride prevents burden-bearing (verse 2): the self-important won't stoop to serve. Pride also prevents restoration (verse 1): the self-righteous harshly judge rather than gently restore. Humility recognizes: "I am nothing apart from grace; therefore I can bear burdens and restore gently."

Historical Context

Self-importance plagued the Galatian churches, as evidenced by provoking and envying (5:26). The Judaizers apparently promoted spiritual elitism: those who kept the law were superior to mere faith-believers. Paul demolishes this: all are nothing apart from grace. Jesus taught the same (Luke 17:10, John 15:5). This isn't

destructive self-hatred but realistic self-assessment: we're sinners saved by grace, possessing nothing we didn't receive, achieving nothing apart from God's empowerment. This truth simultaneously humbles and liberates.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. In what areas do you think yourself 'something'—superior, important, accomplished—when you're actually nothing apart from God's grace?
2. How does recognizing that you're 'nothing' liberate you for joyful service rather than crushing your spirit?
3. What role does self-deception play in maintaining pride, and how do you break through it with truth?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	δοκεῖ	τι	εἴναι	τι	μηδὲν	ὅν
G1487	For	think himself	something	to be	something	nothing	when he is
G1063							G5607
ἐαυτόν		φρεναπατῷ					
himself	he deceiveth						
G1438							G5422

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 26:12 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

1 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

1 Corinthians 8:2 (Parallel theme): And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Romans 12:3 (Parallel theme): For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (Parallel theme): And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

2 Corinthians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Luke 18:11 (Parallel theme): The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Proverbs 25:14 (Parallel theme): Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

1 John 1:8 (Parallel theme): If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.