

John 3:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Analysis

John's response begins with theological foundation: 'A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' All ministry is divine gift, not human achievement. If Jesus is gaining followers, heaven has given it. John's perspective eliminates jealousy by eliminating ownership. He never possessed disciples to lose; they were always heaven's gift temporarily entrusted. This theology of gift transforms how we view ministry success and apparent failure.

Historical Context

This principle applies to all spiritual gifting (1 Corinthians 4:7). Paul would later ask Corinthians, 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' Neither John nor Jesus 'earned' their followings; God gave according to His purposes. Accepting this eliminates both pride in success and despair in apparent failure.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does viewing ministry as 'gift from heaven' eliminate competitive jealousy?
2. What would change if you consistently viewed your gifts and opportunities as divinely given?

Interlinear Text

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰωάννης καὶ εἶπεν Οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος
answered **John** **and** **said** G3756 **can** **A man**
G611 G2491 G2532 G2036 G1410 G444

λαμβάνειν οὐδὲν ἐὰν μὴ ἢ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ
receive **nothing** G1437 G3361 **it be** **given** **him** **from** G3588
G2983 G3762 G5600 G1325 G846 G1537

οὐρανοῦ
heaven
G3772

Additional Cross-References

James 1:17 (Parallel theme): Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (Parallel theme): For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Matthew 25:15 (Parallel theme): And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Amos 7:15 (Parallel theme): And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Jeremiah 17:16 (Parallel theme): As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

Jeremiah 1:5 (Parallel theme): Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Numbers 17:5 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

Mark 13:34 (Parallel theme): For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Matthew 21:25 (References John): The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?