

The Criteria Upon Which Apostolic Boasting Rests
2 Corinthians 10:13-16
Part Two

Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 sought to communicate to the unrepentant as well as to those who held sway over them the criteria upon which true apostolic boasting rests.

So, what was the first criterion? The first criterion that Paul spelled out for the unrepentant as well as for those who held sway over them was that those possessing true apostolic authority will not boast improperly (2 Corinthians 10:12). So now let me read for you **2 Corinthians 10:12** and see if this is not so. **“For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”**

So, what was the first criterion that Paul spelled out for the unrepentant upon which true apostolic boasting rests? The first criterion that Paul spelled out for the unrepentant as well as those who held sway over them was that those possessing true apostolic authority will not boast improperly, or in other words they will not measure themselves by themselves or compare themselves with themselves in order to validate their claim that they are in fact true apostles.

And why would they not do this? They would not do this because it would not prove anything. Or in other words, just because someone looks in a mirror and declares that the image in the mirror is the standard by which a true apostle should be measured, does not make it so.

So if this were true, then what would make it so? There is only one thing that would make it so. And what would that one thing be? It would be the commendation of the Lord. So let me ask you this question. Had Paul been commended by the Lord to be His apostle? And what is the answer? The answer is yes! And this is clearly detailed for us in **Acts 9**.

But how would the Corinthians have known this? They didn't have **Acts 9**. But even though they did not have **Acts 9**, they did have the means to measure his apostolic claim, or in other words they did have the means to

measure whether or not he in fact had been commended by the Lord to be His apostle.

And this brings us to the second criterion upon which true apostolic boasting rests. So, what was the second criterion? If the first criterion upon which true apostolic boasting rests was that those possessing true apostolic authority will not boast improperly, then of course the second criterion would be that those possessing true apostolic authority, rather than boasting improperly, will boast properly (2 Corinthians 10:13-18). So, what will proper boasting be characterized by?

Proper boasting will be characterized by boasting within the measure of the sphere, which God has apportioned to the one boasting (2 Corinthians 10:13). And this is exactly what Paul did.

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 10:13** and see if this is not so. **“But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.”** So based on this verse, did Paul boast within the measure of the sphere which God had apportioned to him? And what is the answer? The answer would have to be absolutely!

And the same thing must be true for us if we are going to boast properly. We must also like Paul be able to say, if we are boasting properly, that our boasting is within the sphere which God has apportioned to us.

So now let us begin to examine this verse more carefully so that we might have a better understanding what Paul meant by what he said.

So let us first of all consider what Paul meant by the word “sphere.” The word “sphere” (KANON) in this context does not refer to what was measured, but rather to the measure that was used to do the measuring.

So if this is true what was the “sphere” or “KANON” that God had apportioned to Paul as a measure?

The “sphere” that God had apportioned to Paul as a measure was the work that He had purposed for Paul to accomplish among the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel. This was the “sphere” or the “KANON” that Paul

believed God had apportioned to him as a measure.

In other words, Paul believed that every church that he as an apostle of Christ established through the preaching of the gospel was a part of the sphere or the KANON that had been apportioned to him by God when he was called as an apostle of Christ and thus served as a measure of his apostolic authority.

Hence, the unexpressed premise of Paul's argument is that the founding function of establishing churches was the only appropriate and divinely instituted "canon" for apostolic authority within a particular church.

This is why Paul's boast to the Corinthians, that he was an apostle of Christ, was not beyond the measure of the sphere that God had apportioned to him, for he had in fact established the church at Corinth, which was a fact that the Corinthians knew very well.

So, what is proper boasting characterized by? Proper boasting will be characterized by boasting within the measure of the sphere which God in His sovereignty has apportioned to the one boasting, which in the case of the apostle and his apostolic boasting would necessitate that he in fact as an expression of his calling had been used by God to establish churches.

So now let me ask you this question. We know about the "sphere" or "KANON" that God had apportioned to Paul as a measure, but what about us? Has God done something very similar for us? And what is the answer? The answer is absolutely!

We also have a "sphere" or "KANON" that God has apportioned to us as a measure, for just as God apportioned to Paul a certain work consistent with His calling, He has also individually apportioned to each of us a certain work consistent with our calling if we are in fact a true follower of Christ.

So if we are in fact a true follower of Christ, what is our calling? We have been called to be an ambassador of Christ to go into this world in the strength and power that He provides and preach the gospel.

Now certainly, not all of us will necessarily have the same opportunities or the same effectiveness but know this: that God has individually apportioned

to each us as a measure a certain work associated with the proclamation of the gospel that will be consistent with our calling, and when that measure is seen and displayed then we can boast and declare with confidence that we are in fact a follower of Christ and that boast would be proper for it would be within the sphere of the measure God had apportioned to us as a measure, but if there is no such work displayed associated with the gospel that is consistent with our calling, then there would be no basis for making such a boast and therefore the boast would be improper for it would be beyond the sphere of the measure that God has given us, to measure whether or not we are truly a follower of Christ.

So after Paul had spoken about the sphere of measure that had been apportioned to him in **verse 13** to reach even as far as them, he then when on in **verse 14** to make more clear what he had already implied in **verse 13**. And how did he do this? He did this by way of reminder.

2 Corinthians 10:14 served as a reminder to the Corinthians that he alone, as the founder of the church, was the only one measured up to the divinely instituted canon for identifying apostolic authority.

Let me now read this verse for you and see if this is not so. **“For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ.”** Paul is continuing to drive home the point that he had just made.

Or in other words, Paul is once again by these words emphasizing that the founding function is the only appropriate and divinely instituted “canon” for determining apostolic authority within a particular church, which of course in light of his history with the church at Corinth, in having been the first to bring them the gospel of Christ, would have made him the true apostle of Christ, which he was very willing to boast in.

And why was he willing to boast about his apostleship? He was willing to boast about his apostleship because he, unlike his opponents, was not boasting beyond the sphere of measure that had been apportioned to him by God, or in other words he was not boasting of his apostleship based on another man’s labor.

And this is made clear to us in the first part of **2 Corinthians 10:15**. So let

me read this part of the verse for you. **“Not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors.”**

When Paul’s opponents declared that they were the true apostles and that Paul was the false apostle they had arrogantly claimed for themselves the credit that belonged only to him as if they had brought the gospel to Corinthians rather than Paul (2 Corinthians 10:15).

But this certainly was not the case with Paul for what did he say at the beginning of verse 15? “[in referring to himself] **not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors** [and then what did Paul say? He said this] **but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you.**”

Notice Paul’s emphasis on “growth.” It is not enough that the Corinthians had manifested faith in the past. They in Paul’s mind must persevere in the midst of the challenges now facing the church. Paul hoped that their growth in faith, manifested in their rejection of his opponents and participation in the collection, will send him beyond Corinth to places yet not reached with the gospel of Christ.

How do we know this? Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 10:16. “So as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.”**

May God give us the grace when boasting to boast properly within the measure of the sphere that we have apportioned by God as a measure.