

**The Criteria Upon Which Apostolic Boasting Rests**  
**2 Corinthians 10:17-18**  
**Part Three**

What was Paul seeking to accomplish in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 as he addressed the unrepentant in the Corinthian church and those who held sway over them?

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!

But what did Paul mean by what he said in **verse 13**? In seeking to answer that question we initially considered what Paul meant by the word “sphere.” And what did we determine that word to mean? 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.

And of course as I mentioned to you last week the unexpressed premise of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 10:13 was 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. Paul then expanded on this thought in **verses 14-16.**

So, what was the first characteristic of proper boasting that we have considered? Proper boasting will be characterized by boasting within the measure of the sphere, which God has apportioned to the one boasting.

We are now ready to consider a second characteristic of proper boasting. So, what might this second characteristic of proper boasting be?

Proper boasting will be characterized by boasting in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17-18). Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 10:17-18** and see if this is not so. **"But [or in other words in contrast to boasting beyond the measure of the sphere that God has apportioned to us, or in other words in contrast to boasting in the labors of others] he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. (18) For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends."**

So based on these verses would it be safe to say that those boasting properly will be **"boasting in the Lord?"** Absolutely!

But what does this mean? In order to understand better what Paul meant when he spoke about **"boasting in the Lord"** we need, first of all, to look at **Jeremiah 9:23-24.** And why would we do this? We would do this because the admonition "to boast in the Lord" in 2 Corinthians 10:17 is Paul's succinct summation of Jeremiah's admonishment in Jeremiah 9:23-24.

So now with this in mind, let me now read for you **Jeremiah 9:23-24.** **"Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; (24) but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands**

**and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth.”**

So, again, why are these two verses that we just read so important in terms of our study this morning? These two verses are important because it was these two verses that Paul summed up, in **2 Corinthians 10:17** when he admonished the Corinthians that if they were to boast they should **“boast in the Lord.”**

So let us begin our examination of these verses by looking at **verse 23**. **“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches.’”** So, what do we see here? This is what we see. Before Jeremiah told his readers what they were to specifically to boast in, which he will in fact do in **Jeremiah 9:24**, he began by telling them what they should not boast in.

And what did he tell them they should not boast in? He told them that they should not boast in their wisdom, power, or riches.

So let me ask you this question. Why should those who possess wisdom, power or riches not boast in those things? They should not boast in those things, or in other words take credit for those things for the simple reason that they in an ultimate sense have not produced those things, but were rather simply given those things by God.

What does **1 Corinthians 4:7** tell us? **“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”**

So why should a wise man not boast in his wisdom? And why should a powerful man not boast in his power? And why should a rich man not boast in his riches? They should not boast in these things, or in other words take credit for these things for the simple reason that these things in an ultimate sense were not produced by them, but were rather given to them by God. All of these things were His provision.

And this is something that we also should be able to understand. In an ultimate sense everything that we possess in terms of wisdom, power, and

riches, or ever will possess, has been given to us by God. Therefore if we are going to boast let us not boast in these things, or in other words let us not take credit for these things, for all these things have been provided to us by God, and therefore rather than taking credit for these things we should rather humbly give Him thanks, asking Him to provide us the grace to be good stewards of what He has provided.

But Jeremiah is not done talking to his readers about boasting. So let us continue on to **Jeremiah 9:24**.

And what does this verse say? **“But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.**”

Here in this verse Jeremiah transitions from God’s gracious provision, that he alluded to **Jeremiah 9:23**, to God’s gracious and holy activity that he described as exercising **“lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth,”** an activity that in spite of our own sinfulness, have been direct beneficiaries.

So based on Jeremiah 9:23-24, what did Paul mean when he admonished the Corinthians **“to boast in the Lord?”**

Based on Jeremiah 9:23-24, when Paul admonished the Corinthians “to boast in the Lord,” he was admonishing them to acknowledge God’s provision and gracious acts on their behalf and on the behalf of others. And this is what proper boasting would be characterized by.

So let me ask you this question. Had Paul done that? Had he boast in the Lord, or in other words had he boasted in God’s provision and gracious acts on his behalf and the behalf of others? Yes. Absolutely.

So after he admonished the Corinthians **“to boast in the Lord,”** then what did Paul go on to say in **2 Corinthians 10:18**? **“For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.”**

So how does the God commend His servants? God commends His servants by working in and through their lives in accordance with the claims being made.

Those who are commended by the Lord will boast in the Lord, for boasting in the Lord is the human counterpart to being commended by the Lord and hence approved by Him (2 Corinthians 10:18).

May God give us the grace to live our lives in such a way that His commendation of us and His approval of us would be evident in the way we boast.