

HOW NOT TO BOAST

2 Corinthians 10:7-18

Some people love to talk about what THEY have done.

Their favorite topic is themselves.

Like the man who wrote the book Humility and How I Attained It. His favorite chapter was the last one: "How You May Be Like Me!"

Some people love to talk about the things THEY have done

–the kingdom they have built.

Like Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4, walking on the roof of his royal palace, "*Is not this the great Babylon that I have built . . . by MY mighty power.*"

Some business tycoons have that attitude about the kingdoms they build.

Some pastors have that attitude about the kingdoms they build.

Paul wants nothing to do with that attitude!

While God uses him to give birth to the church in the Gentile world, he won't get hung up *boasting* about *HIS* great accomplishments.

In the final chapters of 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his ministry.

But he's not going to start boasting about his accomplishments.

He wants to talk about what GOD has done!

VINDICATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 10-13

To defend himself against the accusations of the false teachers.

The concluding section responds to those who attack Paul's ministry as inferior.

He affirms his God-empowered authority and explains why he acts as he does.

RESPONSE TO THE CRITICS 10-12:18

EXHORTATION NOT TO JUDGE BY THE FLESH 10:1-6

They're judging by human standards

They're trying to do things as the world does

–empowered by our efforts.

We should lay aside the world's tools.

We're not pursuing flesh-powered leadership.

We're pursuing God-powered leadership.

We're committed to doing God's will God's way.

We're not using fleshly weapons.

We should fight with God-powered weapons.

We imitate Christ's example.

The world didn't understand Him; it won't understand us either.

God-empowered weapons conquer the logical arguments of men.

We should evaluate things from God's perspective.

DENIAL OF INCONSISTENCY 10:7-11

They're evaluating on the basis of external appearance. 7a

Apparently Paul's physical appearance was not all that impressive.

Greek culture exalted a great physique.

Muscle-building magazines would have gone over big in Corinth.

Paul wasn't that kind of man.

A 1st century description of him identifies him as "a man of middling size, and his hair was scanty, and his legs were a little crooked." His eyes and nose were a bit strange.

[I suppose he may have walked with a limp!]

We don't know what he has in mind, but they don't seem to be impressed. They're not concerned about what he might do to them.

He tells us that his outward appearance was weak, and his speech seemed contemptible.

Apparently the strength of his ministry *isn't* personal magnetism!

His detractors felt that leadership should be impressive, bold, and visionary.

However, Paul wants them to understand that he acts on God's behalf.

If he has to come to them to handle this personally, they'll discover his character is consistent, in letter, or in person.

They'll find out what he's willing to do, and how God works through him.

If they think *they* belong to Christ, they must recognize that *he* belongs to Christ also. 7b

They see themselves as the spiritual elite. "WE are of Christ!"

"Look at what great things WE have done."

They have powerful personalities and impressive credentials

If they believe *they* act in Jesus' name, they must acknowledge that *he* comes in Jesus' name also.

Those who oppose Paul boast about their great accomplishments.

If God has enabled them to build such great kingdoms, Christ must be on their side.

Paul reminds them that God clearly affirmed His seal on his life.

If they're impressed with the great "orators" who come to them, boasting of their great skills and their accomplishments, they must acknowledge that he comes with God's seal of approval, and with God-powered weapons.

Christ appeared to him personally to call him.

Their own faith is the result of his ministry to them.

The fact that his appearance is less impressive doesn't negate God's call and God's power, which are evident in his life.

He's as much Christ's representative as any who've come.

Paul won't be ashamed to boast further about his authority. 8

Normally he would back off long before this.

He hates to boast about his accomplishments.

But for their sakes, he must. He won't be embarrassed about it!

This authority was given to him by God.

This authority is intended to build them up.

Paul wants to use his authority for blessing.

He wants to see them encouraged and built up; NOT torn down.

He talks about his authority because it's for their good.

They will never progress in their walk with God, they won't move on—take the next steps they need to take—until they realize the significance of his ministry in their lives.

This authority is not intended to destroy them.

Paul doesn't want to come as an act of judgment.

He doesn't want to jump all over them.

That's why he tries to send a letter of concern first.

Sometimes people don't respond to a kind, gentle approach.

Sometimes you have to be firm.

Donkey struck with a two-by-four.

"You have to get his attention first!"

He doesn't WANT to come that way.

He'd rather send a letter.

However, if they force him to it, he *will* come, and he will use his authority.

He isn't bashful about using it, or calling attention to it.

Because it's for their welfare.

Paul denies their charge that he is inconsistent. 9-11

He's tried to be kind to them.

He's been forced to write a stern letter in hopes of resolving significant issues, to avoid a painful disciplinary visit.

1:23; 2:3-4

He wants visit to be pleasant, celebrating what God has done.

However, if they don't resolve their problem, he'll come with the same severity he uses in his letters.

They think he talks big—at a distance.

They don't expect him to actually DO anything about it.

Paul *WILL* act sternly, if they don't resolve the issue.

They don't respect his authority,

because he's been too gentle with them.

If they don't respond to his warning, *God* will do something about it!

[After affirming his consistency, Paul turns to the issue of their boasting]

IMPORTANCE OF DIVINE APPROVAL 10:12-18

What matters is what God thinks about our ministry, not what man thinks.

It doesn't matter how impressed people are with our accomplishments.

His opponents are boasting about themselves.

Paul refuses to play that game.

He won't start comparing himself with people who sit around comparing themselves to one another.

They're comparing themselves with their own kind. 10:12

They set up their own standards, and then measure themselves by them!

When they compare themselves to people who live by *their* standard, they demonstrate that they don't get it!

If we just compare ourselves to our neighbors, we may look pretty good!

God doesn't conform *His will* to *OUR* standards.

It's *HIS* standards that matter; not ours!

Paul doesn't want to imitate their pattern!

He won't fall in the trap of people who praise themselves, and others like them.

That kind of evaluation conforms to the world's perspective.

Paul doesn't want to take credit for what others do.

13-16

The false teachers try to take credit for what Paul has done.

They're looking for glory for themselves: "*Look at what we produced!*"

But *Paul* was called by God to lay the foundation there.

He's determined not to try to take credit for their work.

He's not embarrassed to point out what God has done through him.

But he wants to limit his claims to what he has done.

He invests in them, because he wants to see their faith grow and reproduce.

He wants to see them develop, so that he can move on to new territory.

He dreams of seeing ministry develop in Rome some day.

But first, there's work to do at Corinth.

When they become mature, he'll move on.

Then he'll have real cause to celebrate what God has done!

Paul is concerned that the Lord approve of his ministry. 10:17-18

Paul would rather not boast at all about what HE has done.

If we're going to start boasting—if bragging is going to become the characteristic of our life—we ought to boast in the Lord.

In a day when it's common to boast about show, and personality, wealth and success, we need a dose of Paul's focus:

GOD deserves the credit for what's accomplished; NOT US!

Theme of Revelation: "Worthy are YOU . . . to receive glory!"

We should celebrate what GOD has done.

Legitimate boasting isn't boasting about what WE have done.

Legitimate boasting is boasting about what GOD has done.

What matters isn't self-approval and self-congratulations,

What matters is GOD's commendation for what's done.

Too often we put ourselves in GOD's place.

WE want to decide if people are doing what they should be doing.

God's servants are accountable to GOD.

HE determines whether we've been faithful.

HE WILL call us to account for our service.

LESSONS FOR US:

- 1. Success in ministry (or in life!) isn't evaluated by what you see.**

It isn't about external appearances.

It isn't about the ABCs—attendance, buildings and cash.

- 2. Success in ministry isn't evaluated by what others think.**

It isn't about popular opinion.

It isn't about doing what everybody tells you is the thing to do.

It isn't about going along with the crowd—following the latest fad.

3. Success in ministry isn't about building our kingdom.

It isn't about getting bigger and better—building monuments to ourselves.

4. Success in ministry isn't about making a name for us;

it should be about making a name for God!

It isn't about being sure I get the credit.

Our boast should be in the Lord; NOT in us!

It's Him we ought to be bragging about.

Anything of value results from His work—NOT our accomplishments.

Therefore, HE gets the glory.

We brag about what GOD has done!

5. Success in ministry is about pleasing God.

It isn't about satisfying ourselves.

It isn't about ME being pleased with what I've accomplished.

It isn't about pleasing OTHERS.

It's about pleasing GOD!

It's about hearing HIM say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*”

What about our boasting? Are WE boasting legitimately?