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A Time to Boast

1: 12-14

A time to boast DIG: What does your conscience have to do with who you are? In what does Paul boast? What was the basis for his integrity? How does a leader who uses his authority according to worldly wisdom differ from one who does so by the grace of ADONAI?

REFLECT: What is the relationship between your integrity and your willingness to recognize or accept your role in Kingdom work? What would be a greater source of pride for you - being a person of integrity or being recognized by others for the work you do? Explain.

If we boast at all, we should boast upholding the Name and accomplishments of ADONAI.

As a result of **Paul's** change of travel plans (**to see link click [AI](#) - A Change of Plans**), there were some in **Corinth** who charged **him** with being insincere, deceptive, exploitative, unreliable, **boastful** and weak. But when people have a contentious attitude, they don't need much excuse to find fault. Therefore, **Paul** was forced (**2:11**) to defend **himself** against these charges throughout this letter - always, as **he** painfully points out, for the twin purposes of benefitting **the Corinthians** and upholding the name of **ADONAI**. Never to puff **himself** up.³⁶ Later in **his** letter, **Paul** responded in detail to **their** lies about **his** character (see **[Bi](#) - Do Not be Unequally Yoked with Unbelievers**). But in the meantime, **Paul** was defenseless in the face of **their** false accusations. **He** had only one court of appeal - **his** clear **conscience** before **God**.

The testimony of Paul's conscience (1:12): **Paul** answers the baseless charges against **him** in the only way possible - by appealing to the testimony of **his** own **conscience** and **the Corinthians'** knowledge of **his** conduct. **Paul's** letters were like **his** conduct: simple, sincere, **not in worldly wisdom, but by the grace of ADONAI**. **He** had **no hidden meanings** or ulterior motives in **his** correspondence with **the Corinthians**. **He** was above board and straightforward in person; and **he** was the same way in **his** letters.³⁷



For our boast (Greek: *kauchesis*, meaning *the reason for boasting*) **is this (1:12a)**: It is a delicate situation. How do you **boast** inoffensively and in accordance with the gospel? Yet **boasting** is not always wrong. It all depends on the basis of **the boasting**. **Boasting** is related to confidence, and confidence is good if one places it in the right things. **Paul's** understanding of **boasting** comes from **Jeremiah**, **"The wise man should not boast of his wisdom, the powerful should not boast of his power, the wealthy should not boast of his wealth; instead, let the boaster boast about this: that he understands and knows me - that I am ADONAI, practicing grace, justice and righteousness in the land; for in these things I take pleasure,"** says ADONAI (Jer 9:23-24). If one **boasts** in human achievements, then **it** is sinful. However, if someone **boasts** in what **YHVH** has done, then **it** is good.³⁸ For an audience like **the Corinthians**, who were too easily influenced by human pride and achievement, **Paul's** endurance through suffering and trial (see **Aj - Our God Who Delivers Us**), and **God's** faithfulness, were things that **he** could legitimately **boast** about.³⁹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that we can boast about **You**. **You** are absolutely amazing and wonderful! It is so comforting to meditate on **Your** character. Each of **Your** traits are so loving and pure. What a joy to know that when we put our lives into **Your** hands, asking **You** to guide us - **You** always desire what is best for us, regardless of our choices in life. **You** never make a mistake and **You** always want what is best for us.*

Your** deep love and tender care are such a comfort when we are attacked by others or may make bad choices for ourselves. Through it all we can lift our heart up to **You**. The earthly pain fades and we feel **Your** tender love and mercy. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).

God** was watching and saw all the hard and unfair trials that **David** was going thru. **God

could have stepped in and rescued **David** and wiped out **Sha'ul**, but **God** had a purpose for the trials in **David's** life – to prepare **him** for future leadership of the entire nation of Isra'el. Thank **You** that I can trust as you allow trials in my life that **You** will use to purify me and to glorify **Your** name. I love and delight in clinging to **You** in good and in hard times – for **You** are worthy of all of my love! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen.

That our conscience assures us that in our dealings with the world, and especially with you, we have conducted ourselves with sincerity and godly pureness of motive - not by worldly wisdom, but God-given grace (1:12). That was the true source of **his** planning and actions. Thus, **Paul** begins **his** defense with three verdicts from **his** **conscience** about **his** conduct.

First, **he** acted **with sincerity** (Greek: *eilikrineia*, meaning *something held up to the light of the sun for inspection*). It is a compound word of sunlight (*eili*) and to judge (*krino*). It pictures something held up to the sun for inspection. In **Paul's** day, unscrupulous potters would fill the cracks in their pots with wax before selling them. But careful buyers would hold the pots up to the sun, and the light of the wax cracks would become clearly visible.

Second, **with godly pureness of motive** (Greek: *hagiotēs*, meaning *holiness*). The writer to the **Hebrews** used *hagiotēs* to describe **the holiness of ADONAI (Hebrews 12:10)**. **Paul's pureness of motive** confirmed in **his** own mind, contrasted sharply with the immorality and corruption of which **he** was wrongly accused. **Paul's sincerity** and **godly purity of motive** should have been **especially** evident to **the Corinthians**. They had observed **him** firsthand during the eighteen months that **he** ministered in **their city (Acts 18:11)**. The shining **purity** of **his** life was set against the dark, ugly backdrop of **Corinth's** immorality. There was nothing in **Paul's** life that would have confirmed any of the scandalous accusations against **him**.⁴⁰

Third, not **with worldly wisdom**, which is the opposite of true **wisdom** (Greek: *sophia*) which only comes from **God** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**). Most people in the ancient world, as in ours today, regarded “wisdom” to be good no matter what form it took. **Wisdom** by definition was an understanding of what was true, right, or lasting and was manifest in behavior marked by common sense and good judgment. But **Paul** didn't believe that **Messiah** simply offered a greater **wisdom** that could be added to the **wisdom** of this world. **He** thought the **wisdom** of **Messiah** invalidated the **wisdom** of this world. **Messiah** offered the only true **wisdom**, and the world offered only a false, **worldly wisdom**.⁴¹

Even though resumes are given in our society, many today take offense at **Paul's boasting** and view **his** self-commendation as a sign of personal arrogance. Three factors must be kept in mind. First, **Paul** did not engage in **boasting** in order to make **himself** look good. **He** was pushed to do it by **the Corinthians**, who placed great importance in such things, and by **the false apostles** (see [Af - The Problem of the False Apostles](#)), who enjoyed flaunting **their** supposed apostolic authority (**5:12** and **10:12**). As **he** answered those outrageous lies, **Paul's** primary concern was not to defend **himself** but to protect **the people** from **the deceivers**. Second, **Paul's** credentials concerned **his** position as an apostle, not **his** person. It was as servants of **Messiah** and ministers of the gospel that **he** commended **himself** and **his** coworkers. And third, when **Paul** does **boast**, **he** doesn't **boast** of **his** achievements and accomplishments, but in the hardships, struggles and trials of an itinerant ministry (**6:4-5**).⁴²

Paul's appeal for understanding (1:13-14): In verse 12 **Paul** wrote a general statement about **his** integrity and that of **his** mission. Now **he** gets more specific with **the Corinthians** with a play on words. **There are no hidden meanings in our letters other than what you can read** (Greek: *anaginoskein*) and **understand** (*epiginoskein*) that is impossible to capture in English. It seems that some of **the Corinthians** were "reading between the lines" and reading motives into **his** messages, motives that were not there. Here, **Paul** countered, and said that **his** meaning, which lay on the surface, could be understood by simply reading what **he** said. **They** didn't need to ask, "Do **you** really mean what **you** say!" **He** had no hidden agenda. The integrity of **his** letters flowed from the integrity of **his** life. **He** simply wrote in the same manner that **he** lived – straightforwardly. Understanding what **he** wrote should have been just as straightforward if **the Corinthians** would but give **his** writings a fair hearing. Thus, when **Paul** wrote: **And my hope is that you will understand fully**, **he** expressed a longing that the true nature of **his** ministry would come into full focus for **the Corinthians** (**1:13**).⁴³

Some **Corinthians** also presumed that **Paul** somehow veiled **the gospel**. However, **it** is not unclear or distorted. What makes **the Good News** obscure is **Paul's** own suffering. Such affliction does not mesh well with a message that is supposed to be good news. **Paul** was unimpressive in person, which also makes **his gospel** unattractive to worldly people like **the Corinthians**. To this charge **Paul** responded vigorously later in **his** letter: **Indeed, we refuse to make use of shameful underhanded methods, employing deception or distorting God's message. On the contrary, by making very clear what the truth is, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. So if indeed our Good News is veiled, it is veiled only to those in the process of being lost** (**4:2-3**).⁴⁴

Paul wanted **the Corinthians** to gain an even-deeper understanding of **God's Word**, and of **himself** and **his** motives. Then **they** would trust **him** and would not be swayed by the lies of **the false apostles**.⁴⁵ **As you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully** (Greek: *telos*, meaning *until the end*) **that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Yeshua (1:14 NIV)**. Positive steps had been taken toward fellowship with them, yet further steps were needed for the relationship to be fully healthy. Was he filled with **joy (7:7, 9, 13e,16)**? Yet on a deeper level **he** remained troubled. While the majority had demonstrated a zeal for **him** by renouncing the offender (see **BI - The Effects of the Severe Letter**), **the false apostles** and a minority remained unimpressed. This is why we seem to get mixed signals from **Paul** concerning **his** relationship with **the Corinthians**. Was he filled with joy, or still concerned to a certain degree? The answer is "yes" to both questions, depending on which group is under consideration at the moment. What Paul is after, therefore, is that the church would fully embrace **him**, **his** mission, and **his gospel** (see the commentary on **Romans As - Paul's Gospel**). **Their** wavering between **him** and other voices competing for a following was distracting at best and destructive at worst.

When John Stott was rector of All Souls Church in London, Billy Graham preached a crusade in 1954 that filled Wembley Stadium night after night. Stott puzzled over why Graham was able to attract such crowds when the churches of that great city were half empty week after week. Stott reflected, "The answer I gave myself was this: I believe Billy Graham was the first transparently sincere preacher these people had ever heard." We need preachers whose sermons are like thunder because their lives are like lightning! Certainly, **Paul's** life and ministry shone with brilliant integrity, which undergirded all **he** did, including writing letters like **Second Corinthians**, and **Paul** wanted **the Corinthians** to grasp that fact. **He** was a man under orders and under **the Truth (John 14:6)**.⁴⁶