

**A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF *KAUCHESIS* AND RELATED TERMS IN PAUL**

by

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This study entails a literary analysis of occurrences of *καύχησις* and related terms in the Pauline letters, in an effort to establish the meaning and connotations of these terms in relation to the various contexts in which they occur, as well as their functions in Paul's rhetoric.

The terms are analysed within demarcated literary units in the authentic Pauline letters, with a view to establishing the semantic content of the terms as emerging from textual and contextual variables.

The study shows that Paul, influenced by Jeremiah 9:22-23, distinguishes between negative/"worldly" and positive/"godly" *καύχησις*. The former is based on reasons of superior origin or personal abilities and achievements (associated with terms such as *σάρξ*, *κόσμος*, *αἰσχύνη*, *μωρία*, *ἀφροσύνη*, *φύσημα*, *ἄνθρωπος*, and *ἐν τῷ φανερῷ*), while the latter depends on God's actions (associated with *Κύριος*, *Χριστός*, *ἔπαινος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *καρδία*, *χαρά*, *ἀλήθεια*, *ἐλπίς*, *δόξα*, and *ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ*). Paul uses the distinction in various rhetorical situations to defend himself and his apostolic integrity against the arguments of his opponents.

**Keywords:** Paul, Pauline literature, Pauline letters, boasting, pride, arrogance, *kauchesis*, Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Thessalonians, Philippians, literary analysis

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
	<b>1. Recent scholarship on <i>καύχησις</i>.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2. Research question.....</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>3. Methodology and Outline.....</b>	<b>7</b>
II.	LITERARY ANALYSIS OF <i>καύχησις</i> AND RELATED TERMS.....	9
	<b>1. 1 Corinthians.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	1.1 Introduction.....	9
	1.2 Analysis of occurrences.....	10
	1.2.1 1 Cor. 1:26-31.....	10
	1.2.2 1 Cor. 3:18-23.....	15
	1.2.3 1 Cor. 4:1-7.....	19
	1.2.4 1 Cor. 5:1-8.....	23
	1.2.5 1 Cor. 9:13-18.....	26
	1.2.6 1 Cor. 15:29-32.....	29
	1.3 Conclusion.....	31
	<b>2. 2 Corinthians.....</b>	<b>33</b>
	2.1 Introduction.....	33
	2.2 Analysis of occurrences.....	34
	2.2.1 2 Cor. 1:12-14.....	34
	2.2.2 2 Cor. 5:12.....	36
	2.2.3 2 Cor. 7:4-14.....	38
	2.2.4 2 Cor. 8:23-24.....	39
	2.2.5 2 Cor. 9:1-5.....	40
	2.2.6 2 Cor. 10:1-11.....	42
	2.2.7 2 Cor. 10:12-18.....	45
	2.2.8 2 Cor. 11:1-21a.....	49
	2.2.9 2 Cor. 11:21b-33.....	55
	2.2.10 2 Cor. 12:1-6.....	62
	2.2.11 2 Cor. 12:7-10.....	67
	2.3 Conclusion.....	70
	<b>3. Romans.....</b>	<b>73</b>
	3.1 Introduction.....	73

3.2	Analysis of occurrences.....	74
3.2.1	Rom. 2:17-29.....	74
3.2.2	Rom. 3:27-30.....	79
3.2.3	Rom. 4:1-3.....	81
3.2.4	Rom. 5:1-11.....	83
3.2.5	Rom. 11:16-18.....	88
3.2.6	Rom. 15:15-21.....	90
3.3	Conclusion.....	92
<b>4.</b>	<b>Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians.....</b>	<b>95</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	95
4.2	Galatians.....	95
4.2.1	Gal. 6:4-5.....	96
4.2.2	Gal. 6:13-14.....	97
4.3	Philippians.....	99
4.3.1	Phil. 1:25-26.....	99
4.3.2	Phil. 2:14-16.....	100
4.3.3	Phil. 3:2-4.....	101
4.4	1 <sup>st</sup> Thessalonians.....	103
4.4.1	1 Thes. 2:19-20.....	103
4.5	Conclusion.....	104
<b>III.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>106</b>

## ***I. INTRODUCTION***

The notions of pride, arrogance, and boasting occupy a prominent position in the Holy Scriptures; these issues are often broached in the books of both Testaments, the Old and the New. The importance of these notions is natural, for pride (and its immediate consequences, such as boasting) is the exact antithesis of and often enters into conflict with another important concept, often dealt with in the Scriptures: humility. The general Biblical views on pride can be summarized in the following words: “God opposes the proud and bestows grace upon the humble” (James 4:6).

If we, however, examine the matter in depth, we soon discover that it is not as simple as it seems. There are two main Biblical terms in the semantic domain of pride, namely *ὑπερηφάνια* and *καύχησις*; in most English translations of the Bible, these terms are associated with *pride* and *boasting* respectively. Both of these bear a distinctly negative connotation in English, and the same is true for the Greek *ὑπερηφάνια*; but *καύχησις* – “boasting” – constitutes a much more complicated matter. A close study of occurrences of this Greek term will prove that its content is not as constant and straightforward: *καύχησις* can acquire a positive or slightly positive meaning in some contexts, although it can also be distinctly negative in others. The most striking and representative examples of this fluctuating meaning and the wide range of usage types of *καύχησις* and related terms can be found in the writings of Paul, especially in the Letter to Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians, where the term plays a significant role in the argument and serves important rhetorical goals. The apostle uses the notion of *καύχησις* in a variety of meanings, both negative and positive, sometimes mediating between the two poles, in accordance with the rhetorical function of the term in a particular context, and thereby provides his readers with an opportunity to draw an approximate conceptual framework for this ambiguous term, as well as to define its place in Pauline rhetoric. In fact, a correct interpretation of many passages in

Pauline letters is not possible without a prior examination of the content and function of *καύχησις* in the specific context.

It is therefore very important to examine the use and rhetorical function of the Koine term *καύχησις* in different contexts, as well as its basic and connotative meaning (meanings), for this examination may prove to be vital to the better understanding of certain passages in the Pauline letters. This topic gained prominence in recent scholarship, due to the publication of the book *Where is Boasting?* by Simon Gathercole, which examines Pauline views on justification and salvation through the prism of justified/unjustified boasting, as it is described in the Letter to the Romans. This study contributes significantly to the understanding of various types of *καύχησις* in Paul; however, Gathercole focuses almost exclusively on Romans, without really taking into account the other Pauline letters in which the term occurs, and therefore fails to mention certain interesting parallels between the function and connotations of *καύχησις* in different letters. Furthermore, he deals in detail with only one aspect, however important, of boasting, namely its relation to eschatology. Consequently, his study does not provide an exhaustive picture of the role of *καύχησις* in the Pauline writings. So far, few attempts have been made to carry out an overall study of the Pauline notion of boasting<sup>1</sup>.

### **1. Recent scholarship on *καύχησις***

In recent scholarship, the Pauline notion of *καύχησις* is dealt with mostly in its eschatological context, as it is discussed in the Letter to the Romans. As mentioned above, this problem has been recently brought into prominence by Gathercole's work, in which the author deals with boasting in relation to eschatology/soteriology and argues against the views of the so-called New Perspective on Paul. Adepts of this approach to Pauline

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Bosch, J. S., *'Gloriarse' segun San Pablo* (1970).

literature, such as Sanders, Dunn, and Wright, associate *καύχησις* in Romans (where the eschatological aspect is the most prominent) mostly with the Jewish notion of election on the basis of possession of the Torah<sup>1</sup>, as opposed to the traditional approach that tends to generalize “boasting” in this context, separating it from its possible ethno-social aspect<sup>2</sup>. Gathercole proceeds to mediate between the two, inclining more towards the traditional approach, but not accepting its scepticism in respect of the ethnic Jewish context of *καύχησις*. He defines two main aspects of the use and connotations of the term in the letter: national and theological. The latter, in its turn, is divided into three sub-aspects, namely monotheism, election, and eschatology. According to Gathercole’s findings, Paul discerns between false and true boasting in Romans, with both types closely connected to the notion of final vindication at the Last Judgement. False boasting is based on human confidence in one’s obedience and election (this applies especially to the Jewish confidence in Torah), while true boasting focuses on the action of, and reconciliation with God in Christ. Paul attacks the “false” boasting and makes an attempt to replace it with the “true” one.

Gathercole’s argument is structured around the above-mentioned definitions; yet, focusing exclusively on Romans, he fails to remark on the connotative and rhetorical parallels of use and function which exist between Romans and other genuine Pauline letters, and which might contribute to the argument. In my analysis of the Letter to the Romans, included in the present paper, I will employ Gathercole’s definitions of various aspects of *καύχησις* as an organizing factor, and at the same time attempt to link these definitions and relative connotations to the Pauline use of the term in other letters.

For the occurrences of *καύχησις* in 1 and 2 Corinthians, a detailed discussion can be found in the commentary by Margaret Thrall<sup>3</sup>, which will in the relevant sections be used as a point of reference. This scholar observes the distinction Paul often makes between

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Sanders (1983), p. 38; Dunn (1988), pp. lxiv-lxxii; Wright, p. 149, as quoted by Dunn (1996).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Käsemann (1980), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Thrall, M. E., *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (1994).

“boasting in the flesh” and “boasting in the Lord”. M. Carrez<sup>1</sup> also presents an analysis of the distinction Paul makes in 1 and 2 Corinthians between, on the one hand, negative, self-centered boasting, and positive, God-centered boasting on the other.

The commentaries by B. Witherington<sup>2</sup> and C. S. Keener<sup>3</sup> are also very relevant and useful for the research on this topic. Besides the discussion of the role of *καύχησις* in 1 and 2 Corinthians, the above-mentioned authors carefully place the term and its connotations within the socio-historical frame of Corinthian society of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., which is vital for the correct interpretation of Paul’s argument, since most of the problems he deals with in these letters, are closely connected to the issue of social status and standards of the contemporary Graeco-Roman society. According to these authors, Paul uses the notion of *καύχησις* for the purpose of inverting the traditional social values and opposing them to his own ideas, as well as supporting his apostolic status.

## **2. Research question**

The research question may be defined as follows: what is the meaning and connotations of *καύχησις* and related terms in the Pauline letters, as these are related to and influenced by the various contexts in which they occur, and their functions in Paul’s rhetoric?

## **3. Methodology and Outline**

The investigation entails a literary analysis of occurrences of *καύχησις* and related terms in the writings of Paul. By literary analysis is meant that the terms are set within demarcated literary units within the letters, and analysed in terms of their functions within these units. Apart from the obvious textual (literary/rhetorical) aspects involved, the letters are regarded as real correspondence in specific socio-historical situations, which calls

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<sup>1</sup> In his article *La confiance en l’homme et la confiance en soi selon l’apôtre Paul* (1964).

<sup>2</sup> *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (1995).

<sup>3</sup> *1-2 Corinthians* (2005).



attention to the socio-historical parameters which gave rise, and contributed to their creation. As the main aim of the study is directed at word meaning, the analysis of each literary unit is performed with a view to establishing the semantic content of the terms as emerging from textual and contextual variables. While the main focus is naturally on the letters with the highest number of incidences of the terms (Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians), occurrences in other genuine Pauline letters are also be examined briefly.

In the body of this investigation, each passage in which the term occurs is analyzed separately. Its rhetorical and socio-historical context is specified and linked to the main argument of the particular section. During the analysis, the content and connotations of *καύχησις* and correlates are defined with reference to the rhetorical function of the term within the passage. The results for each letter are summarized at the end of the section devoted to this letter. In a final chapter, an overall summary of the research findings for all the letters investigated is presented.

A preliminary investigation shows that there are two main types of boasting in the Pauline writings: negative and positive. Negative boasting is often associated with terms like *σάρξ* and *ἀφροσύνη*, while positive boasting is described as “boasting in God” (*ἐν Κυρίῳ / Θεῷ / Χριστῷ*) and it is associated with terms like *χάρις*, *ἐλπίς*, and *πίστις*. I will now proceed to discuss these variations in the context of Pauline rhetoric.

## **II. LITERARY ANALYSIS OF *καύχησις* AND RELATED TERMS**

### **1. 1 Corinthians**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

The Christian community of Corinth in Paul's times experienced serious social problems. Many (if not most) of its members came from a pagan Graeco-Roman background; as some scholars suggest<sup>1</sup>, the majority of these people had been converted to Christianity directly from paganism, without having received any preliminary religious instruction in a Jewish synagogue. Thus, it was extremely difficult for them to distance themselves from the numerous social conventions of contemporary Graeco-Roman society, the most prominent of which was the notion of honour and shame, closely associated with boasting and ostentation<sup>2</sup>. This was emphasized further by the fact that the majority of the Corinthians consisted of freedmen and their descendants, who managed to rise to a high social status<sup>3</sup> due to their wealth. Therefore, exhibiting one's accomplishments and boasting of the status one has managed to achieve, was an accepted practice among Corinthians.

As becomes clear from the text of the letter, this emphasis on worldly status and qualities has led the Christian community of Corinth to inner discords: Corinthian Christians began to form "parties" or "factions", each centred around a certain spiritual leader, whom the members of a particular party considered to be superior to other leaders on the basis of his "worldly" qualities – that is, those qualities that were usually regarded highly by the pagan Graeco-Roman society of the time. This arising factionalism even came to disrupting the relationship between Paul and his Corinthian flock, as some Corinthians

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Witherington (1995), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Strabo makes the following comment on the social background of population that colonized Corinth by order of Julius Caesar, a hundred years after the city had been destroyed by the Romans: πολλὸν δὲ χρόνον ἐρήμη μείνασα ἡ Κόρινθος ἀνελήφθη πάλιν ὑποὶ Καίσαρος τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν εὐφυΐαν, ἐποίκουσ πέμψαντος τοῦ ἀπελευθερικοῦ γένους πλείστους (*Geogr.* 8.6.23.26). See also Savage (1996), pp. 37-41; Witherington (1995), p. 24.

evidently grouped around another apostle, Apollos<sup>1</sup>, who possessed greater rhetorical skills than Paul. On this basis, the Apollos group claimed superiority over those Corinthian Christians who were attached to Paul.

Thus, the main goal of composing 1 Corinthians evidently consists in restoring the unity of the local community. By means of deliberative rhetoric, Paul emphasizes the fact that “worldly” boasting (as he labels the traditional Graeco-Roman praising of social qualities, in which the Corinthians indulged and which led them to inner factionalism) is not an acceptable practice in Christianity<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, he introduces his audience to the opposite notion of “godly boasting” or “boasting in the Lord”, which radically differs in form, content, and goals from that of the Graeco-Roman society.

## **1.2 Analysis of occurrences**

### **1.2.1 1 Cor. 1:26-31**

1:26 Βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλήσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σὰρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς,  
27 ἀλλὰ τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεὸς ἵνα τοὺς σοφοὺς κατασχύνῃ, καὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεὸς ἵνα κατασχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά,  
28 καὶ τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεός, καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ,  
29 ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ.  
30 ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν σοφία ἀπὸ Θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις,  
31 ἵνα, καθὼς γέγραπται, ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω.

1:26 So, my brothers, look at your calling: for not many are wise according to the flesh, not many are strong, not many are of noble birth.  
27 But God chose the foolish ones of the world, in order to put the wise ones to shame; and God chose the weak ones of the world, in order to put the strong ones to shame;  
28 and God chose those of lowly birth of the world and the despised ones, and those who are nothing, in order to put down those who enjoy importance,  
29 so that no flesh could boast before God.  
30 From Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us, as well as redemption, holiness, and salvation,  
31 so that, as it is written, “let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord”.

1:26-31 constitutes an elaboration of the general argument of value inversion: Paul begins his letter by arguing that the traditional values of the Graeco-Roman society are no longer valid for the Christian community, and offers an alternative value system, which

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<sup>1</sup> Or rather around Apollos’ authority, for there is no indication that this spiritual leader himself encouraged such party-forming in any way.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mitchell (1991), pp. 187-8.

represents an exact opposite of the traditional one. In the preceding verses (1:18-25) he has spoken about the “absurdity” of Christ’s crucifixion; now, he links the divine domain to the existence of the Corinthians themselves, stating that the same “absurdity” is present in their own life of believers, and introduces a particular aspect of this value inversion: its relation to *καύχησις*. Paul begins the passage by reminding his audience of their humble origin (1:26, where the particle *γὰρ* in 1:26 serves both as a link to the general argument and as a discourse marker) and comments on this from a theological point of view, arguing that God, unlike humans, prefers the humble to those of a high status and discards the traditional social values (1:27-28). Then, the apostle explains this statement by arguing that the divine intent in this case is to obliterate (negative) human boasting in oneself (1:29), as well as to make humans rely on Christ, who is the only source of *true* status (1:30), and sums up the argument by stating that the only valid boasting is that in the Lord (1:31).

In this passage, we find an opposition of the two types of boasting. The verse 1:29 (*ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ*) forms an antithesis to 1:31 (*ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω*); the first activity is censured, the other encouraged. *Σὰρξ* stands here in direct opposition to *ἐν Κυρίῳ*; taking into consideration the fact that *σὰρξ* (“flesh”) is often used in both the Old and the New Testaments as a synonym for “human” and “worldly”, it becomes clear that the type of boasting that is being discouraged in this passage, involves taking pride in one’s personal achievements. In Paul’s view, such behaviour is unacceptable.

The verse about “boasting in the Lord” is introduced by the phrase “*καθὼς γέγραπται*” – for in this verse Paul cites the Old Testament, namely the Book of Jeremiah: *ἀλλ’ ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, συνίειν καὶ γινώσκειν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι*

Κύριος (9:24). Some scholars<sup>1</sup> suggest that the whole passage of 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 is inspired by Jeremiah 9:22-23<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, if we compare the two passages, striking similarities will become apparent. Savage offers the following scheme of comparison<sup>3</sup>:

<i>Jeremiah 9:22-23</i>		<i>1 Corinthians 1:26-31</i>
μη̄ καυχάσθω ὁ <u>σοφὸς</u> ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ	v. 26	οὐ πολλοὶ <u>σοφοὶ</u> κατὰ σάρκα...
	v. 27	ἀλλὰ τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεὸς ἵνα τοὺς <u>σοφούς</u> καταισχύνη
καὶ μη̄ καυχάσθω ὁ <u>ισχυρὸς</u> ἐν τῇ ἰσχύϊ αὐτοῦ	v. 26	οὐ πολλοὶ <u>δυνατοί</u> ...
	v. 27	καὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεὸς ἵνα καταισχύνη τὰ <u>ισχυρά</u>
καὶ μη̄ καυχάσθω ὁ <u>πλούσιος</u> ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ αὐτοῦ	v. 26	οὐ πολλοὶ <u>εὐγενεῖς</u> ...
	v. 28	καὶ τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ἐξελέξατο ὁ Θεός, καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ
	v. 29	ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾱσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ
ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, συνίειν καὶ γινώσκεν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι <u>Κύριος</u>	v. 31	ὁ καυχώμενος <u>ἐν Κυρίῳ</u> καυχάσθω

The parallel here is obvious: both Jeremiah and Paul discourage the wise, powerful, rich or well-born from boasting in their status, declaring that the only acceptable boasting is that in the Lord. Paul, however, goes even beyond the point of Jeremiah<sup>4</sup>. Whereas the

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Keener (2005), p. 31; Cerfaux (1931), pp. 524-25, 528-29; Bosch (1970), p.127; Mitchell (1991), p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> The reference here is to the Septuagint text. Although it is most unlikely that Paul himself depended on this translation rather than on the original Hebrew text (having received, as a Pharisee, the highest theological education, he was evidently versed in the Hebrew Bible), one must always keep in mind the audience, to whom the particular letter was addressed. As has been mentioned earlier, the Christian community of Corinth consisted mostly of Graeco-Roman freedmen and their descendants rather than of theologically educated Jews. Most of these Christians did not know Hebrew and were not acquainted with the original text; therefore, Paul probably referred to the Greek translation in the course of his argument.

<sup>3</sup> Savage (1996), pp. 60-61.

<sup>4</sup> Savage (1996), p. 61.

prophet simply prohibits the “worldly” boasting, without offering any reason for this, Paul develops the argument further and explains why it is not acceptable to boast in one’s human qualities and achievements. According to Paul, God has put to shame everything that the secular society regards as “honourable”, preferring people of exactly the opposite social status: foolish, weak, and despised. Thus, “worldly” boasting loses its sense; moreover, it is closely associated with shame (*καταισχύνη*, 1 Cor. 1:27) instead of the honour that the Corinthians are striving for.

As Welborn notes<sup>1</sup>, the three terms Paul uses to refer to human qualities so highly estimated by society – namely *σοφοί*, *δυνατοί*, and *εὐγενεῖς* – are quite frequently employed by Greek writers to describe the groups of high class people, involved in political (and other) discords. Thus, the language itself indirectly points to the harmful, divisive nature of boasting in one’s status and qualities.

“Boasting in the Lord” also acquires broader dimensions in Paul’s argument. Whereas Jeremiah specifies the object of this “godly” boasting simply as “knowledge of the Lord”, Paul argues that Christians have been given a new status, completely different from anything that they have previously known in secular society. As one can notice in 1 Cor. 1:27-28, each description of the low status rejected by society and chosen by God, is followed by the epithet *τοῦ κόσμου* – that is, “in the world’s estimation”<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore implied that the status of these chosen people, in spite of being regarded lowly by the secular society, is not so in the eyes of God. *Ἐν Κυρίῳ* in 1:31 is paralleled by *ἐν Χριστῷ* in 1:29; thus, one can suppose that the qualities (or rather gifts, since they are *received* through Christ) mentioned in the 1:30 (*σοφία*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *ἀγιασμός*, *ἀπολύτρωσις*), form a significant part of the object of boast recommended in 1:31. In Christ, people partake of divine wisdom, justice, holiness, and freedom, which raise them to an incomparably

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<sup>1</sup> Welborn (1987), pp. 519-22; Dunn (1995), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Savage (1996), p. 61, n.29; Barrett, (1968), p. 58.

higher status than any "worldly" accomplishments. Welborn and Dunn<sup>1</sup> also regard ἐν Χριστῷ as an instrumental dative, the correct translation thereby being "through Christ". In this case, the status of Christians is even higher: they are themselves righteousness, sanctification, and redemption<sup>2</sup>.

But, whichever of the two versions one may accept, it is clear that both of them have a very important point in common: any (genuine) status and knowledge that Christians have, they owe to the Lord and His divine grace, not to their own qualities and accomplishments. It is therefore made clear that boasting in anything except God and His works is unacceptable<sup>3</sup>, and any claims of superiority on the basis of human qualities appear as foolish: since those who are considered to be wise according to the standards of secular society (σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, 1:26), are in fact put to shame, and since God prefers those who, according to the same secular standards, are "intellectually humble" (μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου, 1:27), any formation of factions on the basis of social qualities among Christians, who are supposed to focus on God, has no real sense. At the same time, the shift of focus from human achievements to the grace of God also transfers the very concept of boasting from a negative to a positive sphere: καυχᾶσθαι ἐν Κυρίῳ in this case becomes a form of doxology, a manner of giving thanks to the Lord for His gifts. It also becomes a means (and a basis) of uniting the Church "in a common boast in a common Lord"<sup>4</sup>: the same status is granted to *every* Christian, regardless of his "worldly" qualities, since the source of this status is Christ, and not each person's individual achievements. Thus, "boasting in the Lord", unlike the divisive human boasting, helps consolidate the Church – and this is one of the main reasons why Paul considers this kind of boasting to be acceptable and even recommended for Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Senft (1979), p.44; Witherington (1995), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Senft (1979), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell (1991), p. 212.

### 1.2.2 1 Cor. 3:18-23

3:18 Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός.

19 ἢ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ ἐστὶ. γέγραπται γάρ· ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν.

20 καὶ πάλιν· Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν, ὅτι εἰσὶ μάταιοι.

21 ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις· πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν,

22 εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα, πάντα ὑμῶν ἐστίν,

23 ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ Θεοῦ.

3:18 Let no one deceive oneself: if anyone of you considers himself to be wise according to the standards of this age, let him become a fool in order to become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written: He is the one who catches the wise in their cunning”.

20 And once again: “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, He knows that they are useless”.

21 So, let no one boast in men; for everyone and everything belongs to you,

22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, everything belongs to you,

23 whereas you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Verses 3:18-23 constitute a unit of thought, in which Paul once again deals with the inversion of traditional values (especially that of *σοφία*) and its relation to *καύχησις*. The verses are knit together by the repetition of an exhortation (*μηδεὶς* combined with an imperative), as well by the chiasmic pattern of *σοφός* and *μωρός / μωρία* in 3:18b-19a. The whole passage represents a kind of preliminary conclusion to Paul’s argument up to this point; in 3:18-23, Paul summarizes his views on the two main parts of the Corinthian problem – their boasting on the grounds of “worldly” wisdom (3:18-20, introduced by the first exhortation) and its direct outcome, the faction-forming in the name of various leaders (3:21-22) – and concludes the argument by stating that these claims are in fact senseless, since everything belongs to God and, consequently, to all Christians equally.

Here, Paul continues his criticism and rejection of the “worldly” kind of boasting. His attitude towards it is summarized in verse 3:21b of the letter: *μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις*. The structure of this clause – imperative of *καυχάσθαι* combined with *ἐν+noun* construction – is similar to the summary verse of the previously discussed passage: *ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω* (1:31). In fact, 3:21b constitutes an exact antithesis



of 1:31: ἐν ἀνθρώποις is opposed to ἐν Κυρίῳ. 3:21b can also be linked to 1:29: μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ. The synonymy of ἐν ἀνθρώποις and σὰρξ is supported by evidence from the beginning of Chapter 3 of the letter (verses 1-4), which precedes the passage in question. In these verses, Paul criticizes the boastful and arrogant behaviour of the Corinthians, namely the tendency of party-forming within the Church, which he is now going to refute. In his reprimand of Corinthian factionalism, Paul reproves his flock for being “flesh-focused” (σαρκικοί) and behaving “according to the ways of humans” (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), thus closely linking the two concepts together. In this way, it becomes clear that Paul continues opposing “worldly” (social, party-forming) and “godly” boasting to each other.

The above-mentioned verses of 3:1-4 are crucial for the understanding of the nature of boasting, mentioned in the passage in question. In these verses, Paul for the first time explicitly mentions the serious social problem that existed in the Christian community of Corinth: the arising division of the community into different parties/factions. Each of these factions considered itself to be superior to the other, boasting about and claiming the authority of a certain spiritual leader: some regarded themselves as disciples of Paul, others of Apollos or of Cephas. Apparently, the Corinthians believed that the name of a highly respected leader, attached to their faction, would increase their personal honour and status within the community. For this reason, members of each faction were doing their utmost to prove that the leader whose authority they claimed was superior to that of the other factions. In general, this behaviour strongly resembles the Roman attitude towards *patrones*: Roman *clientes* could also boast of enjoying protection from a person, whose status was higher than that of other people’s benefactors.

The main object of boast in the Christian community of Corinth appears to be wisdom, as it was perceived by the contemporary Graeco-Roman society, and which Paul

now labels as "worldly" (*σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*, 3:31). Witherington argues<sup>1</sup> that one of the reasons why Corinthians engaged in *σύγκρισις* (comparison and judgement) of their spiritual leaders was the difference in rhetorical skills that existed between Apollos and Paul. In Acts 18:24, Apollos is characterized as *ἄνηρ λόγιος* – an expression frequently used by Philo to describe men highly skilled in rhetoric<sup>2</sup>. Paul, on the contrary, characterized himself as *ιδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ* (2 Cor. 11:6) – this expression also belonged to the terminology of Graeco-Roman rhetoric<sup>3</sup>, and was used to refer to amateur rhetoricians. Amateurs could not, of course, display the same level of skills as professional rhetors, and it seems that some Corinthians, due to their Graeco-Roman background where rhetoric was highly prized and associated with honour<sup>4</sup>, criticized Paul for what they considered to be a serious drawback. In 2 Cor. 10:10, Paul mentions the displeasure that Corinthian Christians expressed in respect of his public speeches, in spite of their general respect towards him (*ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἐπιστολαί, φησί, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος*). Thus, it is probable that Paul and Apollos were being compared and evaluated on the grounds of their rhetorical skills, and what Paul refers to as Corinthian *καύχησις ἐν ἀνθρώποις* was largely based on human qualities of this kind.

To counter this point of view, Paul develops a counterargument, in which the above-mentioned “worldly” qualities and boasting in them are contrasted with “godly” behaviour and attributes. Everything that exacerbates the inner division of the Church, is included into the “worldly” group, whereas God (and, consequently, “godly” behaviour) appears as the main unifying factor. Paul emphasizes the point that in the eyes of God any human qualities and any kind of wisdom according to the common social standards have no real value, and

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<sup>1</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Post.* 53, 162; *De Leg. Alleg.* 142, 310; *Mut.* 220; *Cher.* 116. Cf. Witherington (1995), p. 130.

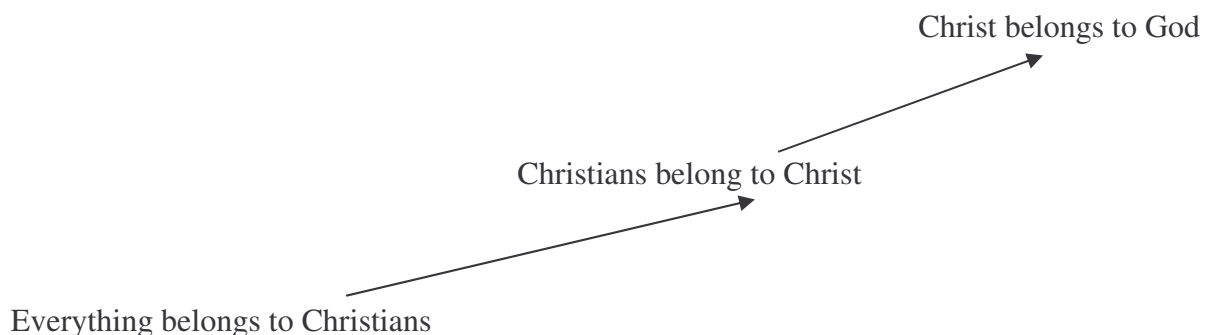
<sup>3</sup> Philo *Agr.* 143, 159-60; Isocrates *Antidosis* 201-4, Dio Chrysostom *Or.* XLII 3. Cf. Witherington (1995), p. 447, n. 29; Thrall (1994), p. 676, nn. 136, 143.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore e.g. Isthmian Games in Corinth included speech competitions. See Keener (2005), p. 30.

therefore it is senseless to boast in them: "worldly" wisdom is nothing but *μωρία* (3:19), and the thoughts and plans of the people generally regarded as wise by the dominant society (*ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ*), are in fact futile (*μάταιοι*) and cannot bring one genuine honour. Therefore Christian leaders cannot be compared or preferred to each other according to such human characteristics, and the human-orientated boasting of the Corinthians creates an equally futile and pointless factionalism.

Paul, however, does not stop at this, but proceeds to eliminating any other possible grounds for *καύχησις ἐν ἀνθρώποις*. He declares that not only rhetorical skills and "worldly" wisdom, but absolutely nobody and nothing (*εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος εἴτε ἐνεστῶτα εἴτε μέλλοντα*, 3:22) can be an object of such boasting. The structure of Paul's argumentation for this point is very interesting, for it represents his views on the nature of spiritual qualities, which, as we have already seen in the previous passage, can be taken as grounds for "godly" boasting.

First, Paul states that everything and everybody (including, paradoxically, the spiritual leaders themselves) naturally belong to Christians (*πάντα ὑμῶν ἐστίν*, 3:22). This evidently implies equity: if everything belongs to any Christian, it becomes clear that no one can claim to be "more gifted" than another, and therefore boasting before each other has absolutely no grounds. Then, the apostle proceeds to drawing an ascending "scale" of possessive genitives:



*πάντα ὑμῶν ἐστίν, ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ Θεοῦ*

Thus, all precious qualities that the Corinthians may boast of are being traced to their original source: God. He appears as the utmost possessor and distributor of all achievements and qualities, including wisdom; in fact, the meaning of this verse could be summarized in the phrase “everything belongs to God” – *πάντα Θεοῦ ἐστίν*. Everything can (and must) be traced to and grouped around Him – which, as has already been mentioned, displays God as the main unifying factor within the Church.

In this way, Paul’s main argument becomes clear: he explains to his audience that everything they have, comes from God through Christ and continues to belong to Him even when these qualities, achievements, and the resulting status are already in the possession of Christians. This, of course, includes ministry work: as Witherington puts it, “both conversion and spiritual growth are *of* God though they are *through* humans”<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, no spiritual leader can claim to be superior to another, and no group within the Church can claim the same on the grounds of a leader’s authority, for such leaders are in fact nothing but instruments used by God for transmitting His gifts. Divisive boasting in leaders and their qualities thus loses its sense, while the true nature of “godly” boasting in the Lord and spiritual matters is revealed: since every spiritual gift comes from and belongs to God, not to humans, boasting in such gifts is in fact a form of doxology. It is not human-focused, but is addressed directly to God, and therefore has a positive character.

### 1.2.3 1 Cor. 4:1-7

4:1 Οὕτως ἡμᾶς λογιζέσθω ἄνθρωπος, ὡς ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων Θεοῦ.

2 ὁ δὲ λοιπὸν ζητεῖται ἐν τοῖς οἰκονόμοις, ἵνα πιστός τις εὐρεθῇ.

3 ἐμοὶ δὲ εἰς ἐλάχιστόν ἐστιν ἵνα ὑφ’ ὑμῶν ἀνακριθῶ ἢ ὑπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ἑμαυτὸν ἀνακρίνω·

4 οὐδὲν γὰρ ἑμαυτῷ σύνοιδα· ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι· ὁ δὲ ἀνακρίνων με Κύριός ἐστιν.

5 ὥστε μὴ πρὸ καιροῦ τι κρίνετε, ἕως ἂν ἔλθῃ ὁ Κύριος, ὃς καὶ φωτίσει τὰ κρυπτά

4:1 This is how everyone must see us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 And the only thing demanded of stewards, is that they remain loyal.

3 It does not matter to me whether I shall be judged by you or by human court; but I do not even judge myself;

4 for I am not aware of anything blameful in myself, but this is not sufficient for me to be justified; the one who judges me is the Lord.

5 So, do not take premature judgments until the Lord comes; He will shed light on the hidden things of the dark and reveal the intentions of the hearts, and then everyone will receive his praise from God.

<sup>1</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 132.

τοῦ σκότους καὶ φανερώσει τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν, καὶ τότε ὁ ἔπαινος γενήσεται ἐκάστῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

6 Ταῦτα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μετεσχημάτισα εἰς ἑμαυτὸν καὶ Ἀπολλῶ δι' ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ὃ γέγραπται φρονεῖν, ἵνα μὴ εἷς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἑνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου.

7 τίς γάρ σε διακρίνει; τί δὲ ἔχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες; εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔλαβες, τί καυχᾶσαι ὡς μὴ λαβών;

6 These, my brothers, I applied to myself and to Apollos for your sake, so that in us you learn not to have opinions of yourselves beyond what is written, so that you do not become inflated with pride against one person for the sake of another.

7 For, who gives you a distinction? What of those that you have, you have not received? And if you have received these things, why are you boasting as if you had not received them?

In this passage, the apostle continues the same line of argument as in the one we have examined previously: he stresses the absurdity of "worldly" praise by tracing its main objects to their original source. At the same time, he argues against evaluation of oneself and one's fellow humans, which is closely related to *καύχησις*. Paul begins by stating that the real status of an apostle, as well as the evaluation standards in this respect, are that of a mere servant (4:1-2). Then, he elaborates on this statement, arguing that, since a servant is judged by his master only, it is pointless to try and evaluate oneself and others (4:3-5), and concludes by summarizing the main idea of his argument: there is no sense in making any distinction between people and establishing factions within the Christian community on this grounds (4:6-7). Besides the context of the argument itself, the verses are knit together into a unit by the use of *κρίνω* and other verbs of the same root, as well as by frequent repetition of *δέ*.

According to Paul, Corinthians are boasting in their personal qualities and achievements; the apostle, however, points out the fact that not a single thing of what they are boasting about, originates from themselves – the triple repetition of the verb *λαμβάνω* in 4:7 is used to emphasize this point<sup>1</sup>. The source, from which the Corinthians have received their gifts, is not mentioned explicitly; it is, however, made clear by the context that everything that Corinthians have, comes from God (cf. the "tracing pattern" in 3:22-23).

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<sup>1</sup> Collins (1999), pp. 179, 181.

Even the Graeco-Roman authors of the time note that it is absurd to boast in somebody else's gifts as if they constitute one's own achievements<sup>1</sup> (*ὡς μὴ λαβῶν*, as Paul puts it) – for Christians, this type of *καύχησις* is all the more unacceptable. Corinthians can name no quality as their own, belonging exclusively to them; thus, no distinction can be made between individual members of the Church (*τίς γάρ σε διακρίνει;*, 4:7 – cf. 3:22, *πάντα ὑμῶν ἐστίν*), and there is no valid grounds for putting certain people above the others, which includes the consequent factionalism and claiming superiority on the basis of qualities of one's spiritual leader (*εἶς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου*, 4:6).

The verb *φυσιοῦσθαι* Paul uses in 4:8, should be noted. Its meaning in this context, “to be inflated with pride”, definitely makes it a synonym of *καυχᾶσθαι*. The verb itself, however, is not a typical New Testament word: it does not occur anywhere else outside 1 Corinthians, except for Colossians 2:18, which is not regarded by most scholars as genuine Pauline, but was certainly influenced by genuine works of Paul. Thus, one could say that *φυσιοῦσθαι* belongs exclusively to Pauline terminology<sup>2</sup>. The apostle probably borrowed it from Greek rhetoric<sup>3</sup> (both Classical and Hellenistic), where it was used rather often to describe conceited people. In most cases, the word bears a negative connotation, and the result of this “inflation with pride” is usually the antisocial behaviour of the conceited and splitting up of the community, to which these people belong. Xenophon, for example, uses the expression *πεφυσημένος ἐπὶ δυνάμει* to describe Alcibiades and Critias, two notorious political figures from the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens<sup>4</sup>. Pseudo-Plato uses the verb to criticize conceited political speakers who pursue personal honour instead of their city's good

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.107; Seneca *Ben.* 4.5.1. Cf. Keener (2005), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Collins (1999), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Collins (1999), pp. 176-177.

<sup>4</sup> *Memorabilia*, 1.2.25.

(ἀνδρῶν ρητορικῶν πολιτικῶν φύσημα φυσώντων)<sup>1</sup>. Philo reproaches Gaius for being “inflated with pride” against other people (πεφύσησαι τῶν παραπλησίων)<sup>2</sup> – this strongly resembles the expression of Paul in 1 Cor. 4:6, where the apostle discourages the Corinthians from being “inflated with pride against another man” (ἵνα μὴ εἶς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου). Since most of the Corinthian Christians came from a Graeco-Roman background, they probably were familiar with these connotations. Thus, by associating φυσιοῦσθε with καυχᾶσαι, Paul demonstrates to the Corinthians that the καύχησις they indulge in, is in fact nothing but φύσημα, the negative and dangerous type of boasting rejected even by the dominant pagan society. The antisocial consequences of this boasting are clearly stated in the same verse 4:6 : Corinthians are inflated with pride for the sake of some at the expense of others (this evidently refers to the faction-forming problem of the Corinthian Church, that Paul has been discussing in the previous passage<sup>3</sup>), which leads to disruption in the local Christian community.

Another significant verb associated with καύχησις here, is διακρίνω (4:7). The rhetorical question of the apostle implies that the boasting of the Corinthians pushes them into drawing certain distinctions between themselves, and evaluating each other. The word itself, along with ἀνακρίνω and κρίνω, belongs to the Graeco-Roman judicial terminology, where it was widely used to describe courtroom judgements<sup>4</sup>. All three verbs are used by Paul in the immediately preceding verses, 4:3-5, in respect of the moral evaluation that the Corinthians are engaged in (again, these verses most probably refer to the formation of “parties” claiming the authority of different spiritual leaders<sup>5</sup>). The attitude of the apostle towards human judgement is, however, strongly negative: he argues that a human being

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<sup>1</sup> *Alcibiades II*, 145E.

<sup>2</sup> *Legatio ad Gaium*, 86.

<sup>3</sup> Collins (1999), p.180; Soards (1999), p.92; Orr, Walther (1976), p.181; Barrett (1968), p.107.

<sup>4</sup> Collins (1999), p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> Keener (2005), p. 42.

cannot adequately evaluate even himself (*οὐδὲ ἑμαυτὸν ἀνακρίνω*, 4:3, where Paul refers paradigmatically to his own case), for only the Lord knows all moral qualities and drawbacks of people (*τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν*, 4:5), which will be revealed on the day of the Last Judgement. Thus, only God can bestow genuine praise (*ἔπαινος*, 4:5) and honour on a human being, and the right of judgement is reserved for Him (*ὁ δὲ ἀνακρίνων με Κύριός ἐστιν*, 4:4) Moreover, the very notion of one leader being better than another, especially when this distinction is based on social values, is not valid, for any spiritual “leaders” are in fact no more than servants (*ὑπηρέτες*) and stewards (*οἰκονόμοι*) of the Lord (4:1), to whom He has entrusted a part of His grace (“mysteries”), and the only thing that is really valued in them is their loyalty, not their social qualities. As follows from all these, “worldly” boasting and the resulting fractionalisation not only lack proper grounds, but also are counterproductive and dangerous for the unity of the Church, for they imply premature evaluation that falls outside the sphere of human abilities.

#### 1.2.4 1 Cor. 5:1-8

5:1 ὅλως ἀκούεται ἐν ὑμῖν πορνεία, καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία, ἣτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὀνομάζεται, ὥστε γυναικᾶ τινὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν.

2 καὶ ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστέ, καὶ οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἐπενθήσατε, ἵνα ἐξαρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο ποιήσας.

(...)

6 Οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν. οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ;

7 ἐκκαθάρατε οὖν τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην, ἵνα ᾗτε νέον φύραμα, καθὼς ἐστε ἄζυμοι. καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός

8 ὥστε ἐορτάζωμεν μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ, μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας, ἀλλ' ἐν ἄζυμοις εὐκρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας.

5:1 Everywhere I hear of immorality that exists among you – such type of immorality that is not found even among the pagans, namely that someone lives with the wife of his father.

2 And still you are inflated with pride, although you should rather mourn and drive out from your midst the one who did such a thing!

(...)

6 Your boast is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole piece of dough?

7 Thus, cleanse yourselves from the old yeast, so that you become new dough, as you are unleavened. For our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed for us,

8 so that we celebrate not with the old yeast, nor with the yeast of evil and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Verses 5:1-7 represent a discussion of a particular instance of Corinthian anti-social arrogance: the tolerance of the Corinthians towards an act of immorality. Strictly speaking,



these verses form two units, 5:1-5 and 5:6-8, which are linked together by the use of *πεφυσιωμένοι* and *καύχημα*, derivatives of *φυσιοῦσθε* and *καυχᾶσαι* respectively; as we have already seen in the previous passage, these terms are closely related in meaning, and here evidently refer to the same object. Paul describes another outcome of the Corinthian “worldly” boasting, namely the immoral act left unpunished (5:1-5) and then generalizes the idea, stating that not only their boast in this case is not good (5:6a), but it is also dangerous for the life of their community as a whole (5:6b); he concludes by urging the Corinthians to improve their behaviour, in order to become a real Christian community (5:7-8).

The apostle points out a misdemeanour that exists among the Christians of Corinth: one of them is living with the wife of his father (5:1). This probably refers to a stepmother, not the mother, of the man (otherwise Paul would use a more precise word). Sleeping with such woman, however, is also regarded as incest, according to the regulations of the Old Testament that prohibit marrying the wife of one’s father<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, this practice was considered unacceptable by the Graeco-Roman society, which was generally more liberal than Jewish communities in matters of this kind. Many Graeco-Roman authors describe such relationships as an incestuous act that leads to tragic consequences<sup>2</sup>, disrupting the community. This is why Paul remarks with indignation that such an offence *οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὀνομάζεται* (5:1).

Normally, an offence of this kind should be severely punished, and a person who does not wish to abandon such immoral behaviour, should not remain a member of the Christian community. The Corinthians, however, seem to overlook the sin of the man in question and, instead of banishing him from their midst, are “inflated with pride” for his

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<sup>1</sup> *Leviticus*, 18:8.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Euripides *Hippolytus* 885-90; Heliodorus *Aethiopica* 1.9ff; Appian *Hist. Rom.* 11.10.59; Gaius *Inst.* 1.63. Cf. Keener (2005), pp. 48-9.

sake (5:2). As Chow, Clarke, and Keener suggest<sup>1</sup>, it is most probably not the sin itself that forms the object of boast for the Corinthians (there seems to be no grounds for this, especially considering the above-mentioned fact that the dominant society also disapproved of such actions), but the fact of the man's presence in the Church *per se*. The man in question was probably a member of the elite or an otherwise distinguished personality<sup>2</sup>, and the Corinthians felt proud because of his status and achievements, readily shutting their eyes to the spiritual drawbacks of that person for the sake of the honour they thought their Church would receive through such a distinguished member.

Thus, the problem of the Corinthians in this case is clear: once again, they are focusing on "worldly" human qualities, neglecting the spiritual ones, and are drawing distinctions between themselves on this basis (high class people are "allowed" to perform actions that are normally unacceptable for the less honoured members of the community). Their pride forces them to attach more importance to social status than to immoral behaviour, repudiated even by the dominant pagan society, from which most of them stem, and all the more by Christian ethics. Their boasting, therefore, "is not good" (*οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν*, 5:6), for it is based on wrong actions and wrong assumptions: no real honour is to be gained from it. On the contrary, it may cover the Church with shame, for the Corinthian *καύχημα* in this case is again nothing but the totally negative and dangerous *φύσημα*, which is able to divide and destroy the whole Church<sup>3</sup>, just like a little yeast leavens<sup>4</sup> the whole piece of dough (5:6b).

The use of *οὐ καλὸν*, however, implies that *καύχημα* (object of boast), and consequently the boasting activity itself, can be "good" and acceptable in certain cases, even

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<sup>1</sup> Chow (1992), pp. 139-40; Clarke (1993), ch. 7; Keener (2005), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Theodoretus, a 4<sup>th</sup> century commentator, expresses the opinion that this man is a highly educated church leader: μέγα γὰρ ἐφρόνουσιν, ὡς πεπαιδευμένον διδάσκαλον ἔχοντες, (*Interpret. in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli*, 82.261.12).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Barrett (1968), p. 27; Senft (1979), p. 74; Mitchell (1991), p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> This association of *καύχημα* with leaven (*ζύμη*) can also be regarded as a sign of negative connotation that both terms for "boasting" bear in this passage. Some Jewish authors use leaven as a symbol of evil: e.g. Philo *Spec.* 1.293. The same motif can be found in Plutarch, *Mor.* 289EF. See Keener (2005), p. 50.

though it is not so here. And Paul provides his audience with certain guidelines for this: in order for their boast to become good, they must cleanse themselves from “leaven” (ζύμη) and become “new unleavened dough” (φύραμα, ἄζυμοι, 5:7a). Once again, the apostle uses the metaphor of bread. Leaven, as we have already seen, could signify sin and evil in general<sup>1</sup>, while unleavened dough is definitely a symbol of the Passover: according to Jewish practice, all leaven should be removed from one’s house before the Passover, and only unleavened bread should be eaten during the feast. This imagery, however, would not be completely comprehensible apart from the second section of the same verse, where Christ is referred to as “our Passover” (τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν, 5:7b). Being “the Passover”, Christ is represented here as the centre of the Church, around which all Christians are grouped<sup>2</sup> and which, therefore, deprive any factionalism of sufficient grounds. Thus, the message of Paul becomes clear: in order for their boasting to become good, Corinthians must fully assume their new identity in Christ. The central aspect of Paul’s views on καύχησις comes into light: boasting cannot be positive and acceptable, unless one boasts “in the Lord” – and the Lord Himself, like in the previously discussed passages, represents the unifying factor within the Church. This unifying object of true Christian boasting is once again opposed to the divisive and harmful φύσημα.

### 1.2.5 1 Cor. 9:13-18

9:13 οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐργαζόμενοι ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐσθίουσιν, οἱ τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ προσεδρεύοντες τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ συμμερίζονται;

14 οὕτω καὶ ὁ Κύριος διέταξε τοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον καταγγέλλουσιν ἐκ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ζῆν.

15 ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδενὶ ἐχρησάμην τούτων. Οὐκ ἔγραψα δὲ ταῦτα ἵνα οὕτω γένηται ἐν ἐμοί· καλὸν γάρ μοι μᾶλλον ἀποθανεῖν ἢ τὸ καύχημά μου ἵνα τις κενώσῃ.

16 ἐὰν γὰρ εὐαγγελίζωμαι, οὐκ ἔστι μοι καύχημα· ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται· οὐαὶ

9:13 Do you not know that those who serve at the sanctuaries, earn their living from the sanctuary, and those who serve at the altar, receive a part of the offerings?

14 In the same way the Lord ordered those who proclaim the gospel, to live from the gospel.

15 Yet I never made use of these. I did not write these to you because I wanted such things happen to me; for it is better for me to die than to see someone rendering my boast void.

16 For if I preach the Gospel, I cannot boast of this, because it is a necessity for me to do it: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!

17 For if I do it of my own free will, I receive a salary; but if I do it against my will, I have been

<sup>1</sup> See note above.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mitchell (1991), p. 230.

δὲ μοί ἐστιν ἂν μὴ εὐαγγελίζωμαι·  
17 εἰ γὰρ ἐκὼν τοῦτο πράσσω, μισθὸν ἔχω·  
εἰ δὲ ἄκων, οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι.  
18 τίς οὖν μοί ἐστιν ὁ μισθός; ἵνα  
εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀδάπανον θήσω τὸ  
εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ  
καταχρησασθαι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ μου ἐν τῷ  
εὐαγγελίῳ.

assigned a task.  
18 So, what is my reward? It is that, while  
preaching the Gospel, I offer the Gospel of  
Christ free of charge, not misusing the rights I  
have in preaching the Gospel.

Verses 9:13-18 represent a unit of thought, introduced by a rhetorical question (9:13), which is consequently answered (9:14) and elaborated upon (9:15-17). The main object of the argument is Paul's refusal to accept wages for his work (9:15a), in spite of the fact that the right to such wages was granted to the apostles by the Lord Himself (9:13-14); the apostle sees this refusal as his *καύχημα* (9:15b), and thus links the whole argument to the notion of *καύχησις*. In 9:16-17, he explains his decision by stating that one cannot expect wages for something he does not of his own free will. The verse 9:18, introduced by *οὖν*, forms the conclusion of the unit: Paul summarizes his ideas on the matter by stating that the best reward for him lies in the very fact of his preaching the Gospel for free.

In the beginning of the passage, Paul claims that there is something for him to boast about, and that he would prefer to die than to let this object of his boasting be rendered void<sup>1</sup>. One would have assumed this object to be his apostolic status and the important mission of spreading the Gospel. However, in the very next verse Paul categorically states that this cannot be a thing for him to boast of: *ἂν γὰρ εὐαγγελίζωμαι, οὐκ ἔστι μοι καύχημα* (9:16a). For him, preaching the Gospel is not a matter of personal preference, but a duty that he has to perform (*ἀνάγκη*, 9:16a), whatever the circumstances may be. Even in case he is unwilling (*ἄκων*, 9:17b) to continue his missionary work, he still has to carry out the task assigned to him (*οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι*). The word *οἰκονομία* (lit. "household management") reminds one of the verses 4:1-2 of the same letter, where Paul argues that

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars prefer the reading "nobody will ever render my boasting void": e.g. Barrett (1968), p. 208; Collins (1999), p. 347.

apostles are nothing but stewards (*οἰκονόμοι*) of the mysteries of God, and the only thing required from them is to prove themselves to be trustworthy (*πιστός* – cf. *πεπίστευμαι*). In the Graeco-Roman world, *οἰκονόμοι* usually were trustworthy slaves of the household; thus, by applying this term to himself, Paul willingly assume the status of a slave – that is, a slave of the Lord<sup>1</sup>. This attitude reveals the reason why it is not possible to boast in one's apostolic mission or to claim that one preacher is superior to another: a slave does not have the right to follow his own will, he is a mere instrument in his master's hands, and therefore even his own actions do not really belong to him.

What, then, is the real object of Paul's boast? This is summarized in the first part of the verse 15: *ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδενὶ ἐχρησάμην τούτων*, where *τούτων* refers to privileges and wages that many other apostles receive from their flocks and that, as Paul himself proves at length in the preceding verses (9:1-14), constitute a legitimate and justified outcome of their labours. Paradoxically, in spite of the fact that he has just been defending these rights of the apostles, Paul himself refuses to use them, and even makes this refusal the object of his boasting. The explanation of this paradox can be found in the "servile" attitude towards missionary work, which has been discussed earlier: free people, who follow their own will, especially teachers (that Paul and other apostles are supposed to be) are expected to receive salary for the work they do for others. Slaves, on the contrary, cannot expect any fixed wages for carrying out their master's orders, except for cases when the master decides to give them a reward for some especially diligent work (this is, most probably, the meaning of *μισθός* in 9:17a, that Paul is to receive if he willingly carries out his task). Thus, wages and privileges indicate a free man; absence of them indicates a slave.

By refusing to accept wages and make use of his privileges, Paul renounces the status of a free man and assumes that of slave (the same, as we have seen, is implied by the

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<sup>1</sup> Collins (1999), p. 348.

use of *ἀνάγκη* and *οἰκονομία*). It is not, however, just an ordinary slave, but that of the Lord (*ὑπηρετάς Χριστοῦ*, as it is put in 4:1). Thus, the object of Paul's boasting consists in the fact of being a slave of Christ – that is, belonging to the Lord. This comes perfectly in line with the principle of *καυχᾶσθαι ἐν Κυρίῳ* in 1:31 : Paul is not boasting in his own qualities and achievements, but in the fact that everything he has and does, belongs to the Lord.

### 1.2.6 1 Cor. 15:29-32

15:29 Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν, εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται; τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν;  
 30 τί καὶ ἡμεῖς κινδυνεύομεν πᾶσαν ὥραν;  
 31 καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκω, νῆ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν ἣν ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.  
 32 εἰ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον ἐθηριομάχησα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, τί μοι τὸ ὄφελος; εἰ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, φάγωμεν καὶ πίνωμεν, αὐριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν.

15:9 Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the sake of the dead, if the dead are not raised at all? Why, then, are they baptized for the sake of the dead?

10 And what is the purpose of the dangers we endure every hour?

31 I die every day – let the boasting I have in you in our Lord Jesus Christ, be my witness!

32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for human reasons, what is the benefit for me? If the dead are not resurrected, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die.

The verses 15:29-32 represent an elaboration of the general argument of the section, which starts from 15:1: the reality of resurrection, both that of Christ and that of humans. The above-mentioned verses form a group of rhetorical questions, united by a common purpose: to emphasize the importance of resurrection for the Christian faith and life. The main idea of these questions is summarized at the end of the unit in a proverbial formula (15:32b), stating that, if the faith in resurrection is rejected, the whole Christian teaching is of no use. This is the last passage in 1 Corinthians where *καύχησις* is mentioned – here, it is not the main topic, but simply an elaboration on one of the rhetorical questions of the unit.

Paul states that his boasting is “in the Lord” (*ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν*, 15:31) – that is, it belongs to the positive type, already mentioned in 1:31<sup>1</sup>. The particle *νῆ*, denoting strong affirmation, implies that Paul has sufficient ground for boasting: otherwise

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Conzelmann (1975), p. 277.

he would not be so confident of it. *Υμετέραν* defines the object of *καύχησις* in the passage: Paul, most probably, boasts of his Corinthian flock<sup>1</sup>, whom he has converted to Christianity and who, in spite of certain drawbacks, do give him reasons to be proud of them<sup>2</sup>. Another object of this boasting can be the sufferings that Paul and other apostles constantly endure for the sake of the Lord and their flocks<sup>3</sup> (*κινδυνεύομεν πᾶσαν ὥραν, καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκω, 15:30-31*)<sup>4</sup>. Thus, Paul's boasting displays all the necessary characteristics of "godly" *καύχησις*: it is not based on human qualities, status and achievements, but on deeds of the Lord: as we have already seen in the previously discussed passages, the apostles are regarded as mere instruments, *οἰκονόμοι*, of the mysteries of God, and things such as conversion cannot be attributed to anyone personally except for the Lord Himself. On the other hand, Paul's *καύχησις* appears to be well-grounded, which is also necessary for acceptable boasting.

As mentioned above, the notion of "godly" boasting is here closely connected with resurrection. Having the final resurrection in mind, Paul can suffer purely for the sake of Christ; if, however, his life were to end with death, his suffering could only aim at "human reasons" (*κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, 15:32a*), and would be of no real gain to him. The expression *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον* reminds one of 3:21, where Paul discourages the divisive "boasting in humans", as well as of other uses of *ἄνθρωπος* and its cognates, which are often used as synonyms for everything "worldly" (as opposed to "godly"). Thus, we can assume that the "human reasons" of 15:32 also consist of "worldly" human values, such as honour, status, power, and the like<sup>5</sup> - and they are certainly associated with factionalism and the formation of parties around different *ἄνθρωποι*, which Paul so diligently combats in his letter. All

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<sup>1</sup> Barrett (1968), p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 1:12, 7:4.

<sup>3</sup> Keener (2005), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-30.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Barrett (1968), p. 366.

these, just like in other passages throughout the letter, have no real value in Paul's eyes.

One can also see that there are two types of suffering, similar to those of boasting: "godly" and "worldly". As has been mentioned earlier, positive boasting in 15:31 is based on suffering. It is clear, however, that "godly" boasting can only be based on "godly" suffering, which one endures for the sake of Christ. Thus, we come once again to the main point of Paul's argument on *καύχησις*: it can be acceptable for Christians, only if it is "in the Lord".

### **1.3 Conclusion**

We have seen that Paul discerns between two main types of *καύχησις*: "worldly", of which he disapproves, and "godly", which he regards to be acceptable. "Worldly" boasting is based on human qualities and achievements held in high regard by society (wealth, status, rhetorical skills, education, impressive personality, even wisdom in its usual sense), as well as on human authority; it is associated with flesh (*σάρξ*, 1:26,29) and brings shame (*καταισχύνη*, 1:27) to those who indulge in it. A synonym for this type of *καύχησις* is *φύσημα* (4:6, 5:2), a distinctly negative and anti-social term. Paul uses it, along with the above-mentioned words, to emphasize that such boasting divides and destroys the Christian community: in the specific Corinthian case, it results in the formation of mutually opposed factions within the Church. *Καύχησις* of this kind, as well as the resulting faction formation, are based on a wrong understanding of status: the Corinthians try to evaluate their leaders and other important persons in accordance with the Graeco-Roman social standards, whereas Paul argues that a Christian community must be centered around God, and in the eyes of God such things have no real value – they are nothing but *μωρία* (3:19). Therefore one's boasting cannot be legitimately based on anything human (*ἐν ἀνθρώποις*, 3:21) – all the more so, as human-based *καύχησις* implies premature human evaluation of others' qualities, which, according to Paul, lies beyond human abilities.



“Godly” boasting, on the contrary, centres around God. It is based on the assumption that any quality one possesses and any good deed one performs, do not belong to the human sphere: all these are gifts of the Lord and works of divine grace that acts through humans. Another object of this boasting is one’s special relationship with God and future salvation, which were attained through Christ – these, however, are also regarded as something granted, not earned, as something that humans owe exclusively to God. This *καύχησις* is not really “boasting” (that is, taking pride), but another way of giving thanks to the Lord and rejoicing in one’s knowledge of and relationship with Him – in this way, “godly” *καύχησις* unites and consolidates the Church (as opposed to the harmful and divisive *καύχησις/ φύσημα*), grouping it around and directing it towards one and the same centre: Christ. The essence of this kind of boasting is summarized in the words *ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω* (1:31), which also serve to link Paul’s attitude towards *καύχησις* with recommendations of the Old Testament.

In general, Paul’s ideas about boasting in 1 Corinthians constitute an overturn of traditional values of the dominant agonistic society, based on the principles of constant competition of its members with each other. According to Paul, pursuit of human qualities and personal honour that such a society encourages, is dangerous, for it causes inner divisions and eventually weakens the society as a whole. His own social ideal is a competition-free community, where everything good that happens is reflected away from an individual and attributed exclusively to God, so that no valid cause for inner discords remains. A society of this kind, where “humblest is best” (cf. 1:27-28) and the usual order is overturned, corresponds with Jesus’ words about the Kingdom of God: *πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι* (Matthew 19:30).

## **2. 2 Corinthians**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2 Corinthians was written some years after the first letter, between A.D. 55 and 56. In the meantime, the situation within the local community did not improve – quite the opposite, it deteriorated even more. At the time of compilation of 1 Corinthians, the Corinthian Christians were struggling amongst themselves; now a group of them made Paul an object of their attack. Apparently, a certain group of people appeared among them, who claimed the authority of spiritual leaders and disputed Paul’s apostolic status (most probably trying to take over his place in the Christian community of Corinth). Their main accusations, which can be identified by analyzing Paul’s responses, appealed to contemporary Graeco-Roman mentality, governed largely by notions of honour and shame: the opponents claimed that Paul was not a true apostle (or rather not the right type of apostle), because he did not support his own apostolic prestige through visions and miracles, did not have (or refused to have) a high status in society and did not accept any reward for his missionary work. All these were closely connected with notions of pride and boasting, and this is why in his second letter Paul pays considerable attention to various types and instances of *καύχησις*.

As already mentioned, by the time of compilation of this letter the situation in Corinth had worsened. The claims of Paul’s opponents and the consequent recurrence of pagan “social arrogance” into the life of Christians constituted a more serious problem than that of factions, for it threatened to separate Corinth from the rest of the Church and flood the Christian community of the city with teachings quite different from those of Paul (if Paul was proved to be a “false apostle”, his authority and all his teachings would be annulled, and the opponents would then be free to manipulate the Corinthian flock). Thus, deliberative rhetoric is not appropriate anymore: in this letter, Paul uses the more forceful forensic rhetoric. Speeches of this kind could be either apologetic or accusing; Paul combines both

types, simultaneously refuting his opponents' arguments against him and reproaching them back. This is why *καύχησις* in this letter refers mostly to the immediate social context, and little attention is paid to eschatological aspects.

## 2.2 Analysis of occurrences

### 2.2.1 2 Cor. 1:12-14

12 Ἡ γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστὶ, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἀπλότητι καὶ εὐλικρινείᾳ Θεοῦ, οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ, ἀλλ' ἐν χάριτι Θεοῦ ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

13 οὐ γὰρ ἄλλα γράφομεν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἢ ἃ ἀναγινώσκετε ἢ καὶ ἐπιγινώσκετε, ἐλπίζω δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἕως τέλους ἐπιγινώσεσθε,

14 καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους ὅτι καύχημα ὑμῶν ἐσμεν, καθάπερ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἡμῶν, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

1:12 For this is what makes our boasting: the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world, especially towards you, in simplicity and sincerity of God, not in the wisdom of the flesh, but in the grace of God.

13 For we do not write anything to you, except for what you will read and understand, and I hope you will understand it all in full,

14 as you have partly understood us – that we are your boast, just as you are our boast, on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The unit of 1:12-14 is introduced by *γὰρ*; in a typical Pauline way, this particle serves not so much as a cause link to the preceding section, but rather as a discourse marker, indicating the beginning of a new line of thought. The main object of argument, which unites the verses into a coherent unit, is Paul's *καύχησις* and its connection to his relationship with the Corinthians (see the parallelism of *καύχησις ἡμῶν* and *καύχημα ὑμῶν/ ἡμῶν* in 1:12 and 1:14). The apostle begins by stating that his conduct towards the Corinthian flock is an object of his boast (1:12a), and proceeds to explain this in detail (1:12b-13); then, he puts this boasting on a larger scale, stating that not only can he boast in his behaviour, but the Corinthians also have reasons to boast in him, and he in them (1:14). This mutual boasting is them linked to the source of "godly" boasting: Jesus Christ.

In this passage, we come across the first indications of the difficult situation in the Christian community of Corinth. Paul seems to be defending his own moral integrity, especially that of his behaviour towards the Corinthians. This, according to most scholars,

implies that certain accusations have been made against the apostle in this respect, to which he is now trying to respond. Moral integrity is, to Paul, closely connected with the notion of boasting. The situation now calls for a reappraisal of the notion, and Paul offers a different approach to its use.

Paul mentions boasting as a way of behaviour acceptable to Christians, including the apostles themselves: both the act (*καύχησις*) and the object (*καύχημα*) of boasting are referred to without any trace of censure. The term itself is linked here to such obviously moral notions as simplicity (*ἀπλότης*), sincerity (*εὐλικρίνεια*), and grace of God (*χάρις Θεοῦ*). As is clear from the text, *καύχησις* is here considered to be acceptable enough to be allowed even in the presence of Christ Himself (*ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*).

This does not mean, however, that Paul accepts pride and boasting in their totality: boast in this passage is bound to a specific object, namely the apostle's conduct towards his flock, which is described in strictly "godly" terms (this blamelessness of conduct was probably questioned by some, and Paul now brings his own conscience – *συνείδησις* – as a testimony). The apostle distances himself from a negative kind of behaviour, caused by and based on merely human considerations or knowledge (*ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ*), and argues that the principles of his conduct are exactly the opposite: they are not connected with humans, but with God. The word "God" (*Θεός*) here qualifies not only the term *χάρις* (with which it forms a kind of idiom, frequently used in the New Testament), but also the term *εὐλικρίνεια*. Thus, such positive features and moral behaviour based on them, are not mere human achievements, but God's gifts, and therefore, when one boasts in them, one's boasting is not based on oneself personally, but on God. The use of the above-mentioned idiom of *χάρις Θεοῦ* also helps to emphasize God's priority in this kind of "godly" conduct and the related boasting: "God" (*Θεός*) is here contrasted with "human flesh" (*σάρξ*), and "grace" (*χάρις*) is contrasted with "wisdom" (*σοφία*). Thus, Paul claims that he relies on and is guided by the

grace of God (*χάρις Θεοῦ*) rather than by wisdom in the usual sense. Therefore, everything positive that he has achieved (in this case, his moral conduct), is in fact achieved through God, and can be (rightfully) boasted of as gifts of the Lord. This, in the present case, is especially applied to Paul's relations with the Corinthian Christians: he argues that he has always been morally integral in this relationship, and acted towards them according to the grace of God. Thus, he has every right to hold them (that is, the fact of having founded their community, as well as their present spiritual progress) as the object of his (legitimate) boasting<sup>1</sup> (*καύχημα*) even on the very day of the final judgement. Moreover, Corinthians themselves can find in Paul a justified reason to boast. This reason evidently consists in the fact that Paul has converted the Corinthians to Christianity and given them the possibility to face the Lord on the day of the final judgement<sup>2</sup>, as well as in his morally blameless behaviour towards them<sup>3</sup>, which he has proved and which defines him as a genuine spiritual leader of the community – all these allow Corinthians to boast in their relationship with him before God. The future boasting of the Corinthians must inevitably have an implication on the present relations between Paul and his flock. If Paul is the object of their boasting as their founder and spiritual leader (as he has now proved himself to be), the Corinthians cannot despise or dispute his apostolic status any more<sup>4</sup>. Thus, in this passage Paul makes use of “godly” boasting to strengthen his (probably disputed) position of apostle within the Corinthian community.

### 2.2.2 2 Cor. 5:12

12 οὐ γὰρ πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν ὑμῖν, ἀλλὰ ἀφορμὴν δίδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ἔχητε πρὸς τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ οὐ καρδίᾳ.

5:12 For we are not commending ourselves to you, but we are giving you an opportunity to boast of us, so that you have something to say to those who boast in the face and not in the heart.

The verse 5:12 is an elaboration of the topic discussed throughout the first five

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1995), p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Thrall (1995), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 362.

<sup>4</sup> Thrall (1995), p. 135.

chapters of the letter. In the preceding passages, Paul has described various aspects of the apostolic mission. He has said that apostles are zealous and sincere preachers of Christ's teaching (2:12-17), that their mission is superior to that of Moses (3:1-18), that they are ready to endure any hardships for the sake of the Lord (4:1-12), and that their chief hope is to enter Paradise after the universal Resurrection (4:13 – 5:10). All these could be easily classified as “boasting”, and therefore require some justification<sup>1</sup>. In the present verse, Paul argues that this boasting is legitimate, because he does not give credit to himself through it, but rather gives the Corinthians an opportunity to boast for the sake of their spiritual preceptor<sup>2</sup>. This kind of boasting is not prohibited, as it is based on other people rather than on oneself, and is in fact a boasting in God's work through another person<sup>3</sup>.

Another positive aspect of this boasting, which makes it a justified and acceptable way of behaviour for Christians, is the fact that it is not caused by "worldly" human achievements, but rather by inner qualities (*καρδία*) of the one, about whom the people boast. As could be seen from 2 Cor. 1:12-14, Paul regards such qualities as gifts from God; thus, boasting about them is not sinful, for they are directly related to God and His grace.

Boasting about inner qualities (*ἐν καρδίᾳ*) is contrasted with boasting about “outward appearance” (*ἐν προσώπῳ*) – possibly one's social skills and status. This alternative kind of boasting is probably associated with Paul's opponents; and one of the reasons why Paul wants to give Corinthians an opportunity to boast about the inner qualities of their teacher, is to help them counter with a strong response the boastful attacks of their opponents (*ἵνα ἔχητε πρὸς τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους*)<sup>4</sup> – those who boast “in the wisdom of the flesh” (1:12) and “in appearance” – and possibly respond to these people's

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<sup>1</sup> Lambrecht (1999), pp. 92-93, argues that *πάλιν* here probably refers to apologetic behaviour and certain defensive actions Paul was engaged in before the compilation of the letter, which could be misinterpreted as a wrongly self-centered recommendation. This is why Paul tries to justify his present boastful behaviour as being “godly”.

<sup>2</sup> Keener (2005), p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 393.

<sup>4</sup> Plummer (1915), p. 170, argues that the phrase *τι λέγειν* could be inserted here. See also Thrall (1995), p. 403.

criticism of Paul himself<sup>1</sup>. In this case, Christian *καύχησις* becomes a weapon, with which one can defend one's faith and the integrity of the church.

### 2.2.3 2 Cor. 7:4-14

4 πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς, πολλή μοι καύχησις ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· πεπλήρωμαι τῇ παρακλήσει, ὑπερπερισσεύομαι τῇ χαρᾷ ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν.

(...)

14 ὅτι εἶ τι αὐτῷ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κεκαύχημαι, οὐ κατησχύνθην, ἀλλ' ὡς πάντα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ἐλαλήσαμεν ὑμῖν, οὕτω καὶ ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν ἢ ἐπὶ Τίτου ἀλήθεια ἐγενήθη.

4 Great is my confidence with regard to you, great is my boasting about you; I am greatly encouraged and full of joy beyond all our distresses.

(...)

14 For if I have boasted about you to him [Titus], I was not put to shame; but just as all we had said to you was true, in the same way our boasting before Titus has come out true.

The unit of verses 7:4-14 is introduced by a statement that Paul has strong reasons to boast of his flock (7:4). The apostle then proceeds to elaborate on this topic, adducing facts and arguments that support the initial statement (7:5-13), and draws the conclusion that his *καύχησις* is fully justified, because it is based on completely true facts of his flock's commendable attitude and behaviour (7:14); the beginning and the end of the unit are marked by the repetition of *καύχησις*.

The boasting of Paul in this passage, just like in the previously discussed ones, is not self-centered: it does not derive from himself or other apostles, with whom he does common work, but from his spiritual flock, the Corinthians (*πολλή μοι καύχησις ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*). As we have already seen in other passages, this type of boasting is not regarded to be negative. Here, it is closely linked with confidence (*παρρησία*)<sup>2</sup>, and its immediate consequences are said to be (spiritual) consolation (*παρακλήσις*) and great joy that overcomes every distress (*ὑπερπερισσεύομαι τῇ χαρᾷ ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν*). The purpose of this boasting also does not consist in personal glory or any other "worldly" goals: Paul boasts in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1995), p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> Τρεμπέλας (1998), p. 729.

encourage others. Apparently, a letter of severe reprimand had been sent by Paul to Corinth some time before the compilation of the 2 Corinthians (7:8)<sup>1</sup>, and caused a favourable effect on the Corinthian Christians, who showed repentance for their misdeeds and willingness to restore their (apparently broken) relationship with the apostle<sup>2</sup> (7:7b). Now, Paul makes up for the grief he caused with his previous severity, by telling the Corinthians that he is proud of them (most probably in the same sense as pride acquires in 2 Cor. 1:14), and in this way strengthens the re-established relationship further without having to apologize for the “painful letter”.

Nevertheless, Paul does not forget that any form of boasting, however altruistic its cause and object may be, is a rather suspicious way of behaviour, and therefore has to be properly justified in order to be acceptable. Thus, he emphasizes the fact that his boasting in his Corinthian flock is supported by appropriate facts (*οὕτω καὶ ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν... ἀλήθεια ἐγενήθη*). This emphasis on the genuineness of the object of boasting will become even more prominent further in the letter, especially in 2 Cor. 9:1-4.

#### 2.2.4 2 Cor. 8:23-24

23 εἴτε ὑπὲρ Τίτου, κοινωνὸς ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός· εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, δόξα Χριστοῦ.

24 Τὴν οὖν ἔνδειξιν τῆς ἀγάπης ὑμῶν καὶ ἡμῶν καυχήσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐνδείξασθε εἰς πρόσωπον τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

23 As for Titus, he is our companion and co-worker among you; as for the others, they are our brothers, apostles of the Church, the glory of Christ.

24 So, show them, before the face of the whole Church, the proof of your love and of our boasting about you.

In this passage, we see once again one of the basic requirements that Paul establishes for an acceptable kind of boasting: such boasting must be provided with proper grounds and proofs. The verse 8:23 formulates the reason for the exhortation of 8:24: as becomes evident from the previous chapter (7:14), Paul has praised (“boasted of”) the spiritual qualities of his

<sup>1</sup> The same letter is mentioned in 2:3-4. Scholarly views on the nature of this “painful letter” are divided: whereas the above-mentioned verses have been traditionally considered as a reference to 1 Corinthians, an alternative theory upholds the view that what Paul mentions here, is another letter, which has apparently been lost (see Bleek, pp. 614-632; Thrall, pp. 57-51). These theories, however, will not be discussed here, as this goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

<sup>2</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 489.



Corinthian flock to Christian congregations of other local Churches (here, these qualities are summarized as *ἀγάπη* of the Corinthians towards the apostles). The validity of this boasting has recently been confirmed by Titus (7:14); now, the same proof (*ἔνδειξις*) must be given to the rest of the Christians (*εἰς πρόσωπον τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*) – this is emphasized by repetition of *ἐκκλησιῶν* at the end of each verse. This is why Paul is now asking his Corinthian flock to act accordingly: he wants his boasting in them to be confirmed before other Christians, otherwise it will cover him with shame (7:14a).

### 2.2.5 2 Cor. 9:1-5

1 Περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους περισσὸν μοί ἐστι τὸ γράφειν ὑμῖν·  
 2 οἶδα γὰρ τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν ἣν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καυχῶμαι Μακεδόσιν, ὅτι Ἀχαΐα παρεσκευάσται ἀπὸ πέρυσιν καὶ ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν ζῆλος ἠρέθισε τοὺς πλείονας.  
 3 ἔπεμψα δὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς, ἵνα μὴ τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κενωθῆ ἔν τῳ μέρει τούτῳ, ἵνα, καθὼς ἔλεγον, παρεσκευασμένοι ᾗτε,  
 4 μήπως ἐὰν ἔλθωσιν σὺν ἐμοὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ εὐρωσιν ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους, καταισχυρθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα μὴ λέγωμεν ὑμεῖς, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῆς καυχήσεως.  
 5 ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἡγησάμην παρακαλέσαι τοὺς ἀδελφούς ἵνα προέλθωσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ προκαταρτίσωσι τὴν προκατηγγελημένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν, ταύτην ἐτοίμην εἶναι, οὕτως ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν.

1 It is unnecessary to write to you about ministering towards the holy ones;  
 2 for I know your zeal, about which I boast before the Macedonians, saying to them that Achaia has been prepared since last year; and your zeal has encouraged many people.  
 3 I sent the brothers to you, so that our boasting about you is not rendered void in this case – so that, as I said, you are ready,  
 4 least the Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared – in this case, we will be put to shame, and all the more will you, having been so confident of our boasting.  
 5 Thus, I deemed it necessary to ask the brothers to visit you before me and make sure beforehand that your proclaimed alms of hospitality are ready – that is, ready as alms, and not as requisitions.

The particle *γὰρ*, introducing the unit of verses 9:1-5, is once again used here as a discourse marker, though it also helps to link the topic of this unit to the preceding one. The main idea of both units is similar: Paul tries to ensure the justification of his boasting before the rest of the church. However, in verses 9:1-5 he not only exhorts the Corinthians to prove their qualities, but also speaks about his own actions in respect of this proof; therefore, these verses can be seen as a separate unit. The passage opens with Paul's assertion of his confidence in the Corinthian hospitality (9:1-2). Yet, in spite of this confidence, he has sent

some of the brothers to prepare the Christian community of Corinth for his visit – why? The explanation for this is given in 9:3-4: although Paul knows his Corinthian flock, he wants to be completely sure about everything, otherwise some accident may render his boasting about them void (9:3) and cover him with shame (9:4). This is the only reason he deemed it necessary to send the brothers to Corinth beforehand (9:5).

In this passage, Paul once again admits that he has been boasting about his Corinthian flock to Christians of other regions (in this case, to the Macedonians), and names the main subject and reason of this boasting: the eagerness (*προθυμία*) and zeal (*ζήλος*) of the Corinthians to serve God and their fellow Christians. Such behaviour is included in manifestations of *ἀγάπη* that Paul mentioned in 8:24 as the subject of his boasting in respect of the Corinthians.

The main topic of the passage is not, however, the object, but rather the groundedness of *καύχησης*, – that is, whether Paul’s boasting is justified or not. In other passages of the letter we have already seen that any legitimate boasting must be well-grounded and supported by facts. If this requirement is fulfilled, “boastful behaviour” can give credit to those, for whose sake one boasts, and serve the Church by demonstrating the gifts of Divine Grace that has been bestowed upon it and thus increasing its honour and rebutting its rivals (5:12). In the present passage, the focus is shifted towards the ungrounded *καύχησης*: we learn that such boasting, though aimed at gaining honour, brings the boaster exactly the opposite – in this case, it is followed by complete disgrace. Paul warns the Corinthians that, unless they remain consistent in their virtuous attitude and behave towards the brothers from Macedonia in the same righteous and hospitable way as they have previously behaved towards Paul and Titus, they will cover Paul and other apostles, who have praised Christians of Corinth in Macedonia, as well as themselves, with disgrace, because in this case Paul’s boasting in them will turn out to be ungrounded and fake and become mere vanity (*κενότης*, as is suggested by the verb *κενωθῆ* in the preceding

line): *καταισχυνθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα μὴ λέγωμεν ὑμεῖς, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῆς καυχήσεως.*

This is why Paul makes every effort to ensure that the Corinthians are well prepared for the visit of Macedonian Christians and do not give them any cause to doubt the praise that the Corinthians have received from the apostle, as well as Paul's confidence in his flock (1:14).

The link between (ungrounded) boasting and disgrace has already been suggested in 7:14, where Paul says that he did not disgrace himself by boasting about the Corinthians, since their virtuous behaviour proved his words of praise to be true (*ὅτι εἶ τι αὐτῶ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κεκαύχημαι, οὐ κατησχύνθην*). However, 9:1-4 is the first passage in the letter where this link is stated as clearly.

### 2.2.6 2 Cor. 10:1-11

1 Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραότητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπῶν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς·

2 δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρῶν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμῆσαι ἐπὶ τινὰς τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας.

3 Ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα·

4 τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικά, ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ Θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων·

5 λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

6 καὶ ἐν ἐτοιμῷ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή·

7 Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε! εἶ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς Χριστοῦ.

8 ἐάν τε γὰρ καὶ περισσότερόν τι καυχῶμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν, ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῖν εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι,

9 ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν.

10 ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἐπιστολαί, φησί, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος.

11 τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος, ὅτι οἱοί

10:1 I, Paul, who is insignificant in your presence and confident before you when being away, ask you for the sake of meekness and clemency of Christ;

2 I ask you, so that, when I visit you, I do not have to do those bold and confident things that I think to dare and do to those who regard us as acting according to the flesh.

3 For, although we are in the flesh, we do not fight according to the flesh;

4 for the weapons of our fight are not of the flesh, but are made strong by God to destroy fortresses;

5 we destroy every argument and exaltation that is raised against the knowledge of God, and make every thought a prisoner of the obedience to Christ;

6 we are ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience will become complete.

7 You see the outward things! If someone is sure that he belongs to Christ, let him consider once again that, just as he belongs to Christ, so we also belong to Christ.

8 For if I boast even more about my authority among you, which the Lord has given me to edify you, and not to destroy you, I shall not be ashamed,

9 [but let me restrain myself from this], so that it does not seem that I am trying to intimidate you with my letters.

10 For some say that my letters are severe and strong, while when I am present myself, I am weak, and my speech is feeble.

11 Let him [who says so] consider this: our speech, that we use through letters when being absent, is similar to the works we perform when being present.

ἔσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες,  
τοιούτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ.

The unit of 9:1-11 opens with an exposition of the two problems that Paul is going to speak about: apparently certain people have criticized him for the lack of rhetorical skills (10:1) and disputed his spiritual status (10:2). He then proceeds to deal with these accusations, beginning from the second one (10:3-8); these verses are united by the common “military” vocabulary (*στρατευόμεθα, ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας, αἰχμαλωτίζοντες*) and the emphasis on the authoritative confidence of the apostle (*θαρρῶ, τολμῆσαι, ἐκδικῆσαι*). All these serve as a proof of his status, and are therefore summarized in 10:8 as *ἐξουσία*, which Paul finds possible to boast of. Then, the first accusation is repeated (9:10) and answered briefly: even though Paul’s speeches may be not very impressive, the works he performs are in no way inferior to his letters, and therefore he cannot be considered a “weak” preacher (9:11).

In this passage, we can notice a considerable change of tone: although the validity of Paul’s boasting is still an important issue here, the apostle does not support his case by adducing mere facts, but describes his attitude and principles as the main proof of his genuineness – that is, genuineness of his apostolic authority (*ἐξουσία*) and related boasting. As many scholars point out, this change is due to the fact that Paul has to answer the accusations of his opponents and expose “false apostles” that appeared in Corinth<sup>1</sup>. These adversaries, being (most probably) recent converts of Graeco-Roman origin, employ rhetorical methods and ways of behaviour that are common to the culture, from which they stem, and their accusations, as can be derived from 10:10, are most probably directed at Paul’s inability to correspond to the social standards of contemporary Graeco-Roman society: he does not try to make his outward appearance and behaviour impressive and “important”, and his rhetorical skills leave much to be desired, as he has not received any

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Thrall (1994), p. 597; Keener (2005), pp. 216f; Witherington (1995) pp. 429f; Savage (1996), pp. 55f.

formal training in his field. Another possible accusation is that Paul acts “in a merely human way” (*κατὰ σάρκα*) – we will presently consider the possible meaning of this expression here. In response to these accusations, Paul now proceeds to demonstrate that his own principles has nothing to do with those of “the world”; he received his authority from God, and therefore should not be judged according to “worldly” standards.

The first possible accusation (or false assumption) Paul mentions in the passage, is that of living and acting *κατὰ σάρκα*. The term *σάρξ* bears pejorative connotations throughout both Testaments, and is often opposed to *πνεῦμα* (e.g. Rom. 8:3-9); it stands for everything human and “worldly”, in contrast to “godly”. Thus, the expression is rather wide; we can, however, suggest a few interpretations in the light of the social situation in Corinth:

- 1) Paul’s apostolic authority is disputed; he is said to be guided by merely human motives instead of the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>;
- 2) The fact that Paul did not act towards the Corinthians in a violent and authoritative manner (“painful letter”), is supposed by his opponents to be a sign of his weakness and bondage to the flesh (an additional argument for this accusation could be Paul’s illness, mentioned in 12:7, that he is unable to cure), which imply lack of charismatic power and authority, as well as illegitimateness of Paul’s *καύχησις*<sup>2</sup>;
- 3) Paul’s refusal to accept any wages for his missionary work, as well the fact that he supported himself by means of tent-making, is regarded here as his inability to focus on the spiritual aspect and fully assume the position of a spiritual leader, similar to a Cynic itinerant teacher, who would be supported by his followers and proclaim to be completely free from concerns about such matters<sup>3</sup>.

As we can see, the main object of controversy here is Paul’s apostolic status and his right to proclaim it (“boast”). To answer the accusations, Paul states that he and other

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 605.

<sup>2</sup> Furnish (1984), p. 461; Lambrecht (1999), p. 154; Thrall (1994), pp. 605-6; Jewett (1971), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Thrall (194), p. 606; Furnish (1984), p. 461.

apostles are not guided by "worldly" standards and conventions (*οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατενόμεθα*, v. 3), and that the methods they employ are not merely "worldly" or human (*τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικά*, v.4), but originate from and aim at the glory of God (*τῷ Θεῷ*, v. 4). Therefore, everything that Paul and other apostles do, must not be regarded just as their own human achievements, but as works (or gifts) of Divine Grace. Consequently, the authority of genuine apostles over their flock is also a gift of the Lord (*ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῖν*, v. 8), granted to them for no other purpose but that of edifying the Christian community (*εἰς οἰκοδομήν*, v. 8). In the light of all these, it becomes clear that Paul has the right to boast of his authority (*ἐξουσία*) over the Corinthians: his boasting is well-grounded, for it is based on the will of God rather than on human power. Thus, if Paul openly proclaims his authority (*ἐάν... καυχῆσομαι*, v. 8) and uses it in a rather harsh way sometimes, he does not run the danger of covering himself with disgrace (*οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι*): his *καύχησις* is completely justified.

### 2.2.7 2 Cor. 10:12-18

12 Οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς τισὶ τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων· ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς οὐ συνιοῦσιν.

13 ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐχὶ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς μέτρου, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν.

14 οὐ γὰρ ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτοὺς· ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

15 οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτριῶν κόποις, ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες, αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσεΐαν,

16 εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι.

17 ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω

12 For we do not dare reckon ourselves among or compare ourselves to some of those who commend themselves; but these people, who measure themselves according to their own standards and compare themselves to each other, act foolishly.

13 Yet we do not boast beyond measure, but according to the measure of the limit that God has set for us, so that we reach as far as your country.

14 We do not overstretch the boundaries of our authority in spite of the fact that we had never come to you; for we have truly reached your country while preaching the Gospel of Christ.

15 We do not boast beyond measure about achievements of other people, but we hope that, as your faith will increase, we will also grow more powerful through you within the limits set for us,

16 and we will preach the Gospel to people beyond your country, without boasting within other people's field, about things that other people have prepared.

17 Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord;

18 for it is not the one who commends himself that is found true, but the one whom the Lord commends.

18 οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστῶν, ἐκεῖνός ἐστι  
δόκιμος, ἀλλ' ὁν ὁ Κύριος συνίστησιν.

The beginning and the end of the unit 10:12-18 is marked by the use of the expression *ἑαυτὸν συνίστημι*: Paul introduces the problem of self-commendation and self-measurement (10:12), discusses it at length, contrasting his own attitude towards the matter to that of his opponents (10:13-16), and repeats the expression once again in the conclusion (10:17-18), where he summarizes his views on self-commendation by stating that only the Lord may truly evaluate and commend humans. The particle *γὰρ* here is used again as a discourse marker, serving at the same time to link the present discussion to the previous passage on *ἐξουσία*: having replied to the accusations, Paul proceeds to making a counter-attack on his opponents.

According to Paul, these people – whom he later calls “false apostles” – are also boasting, but in a different way: they are commending themselves on the basis of their own (imperfect) human judgment, instead of relying on God<sup>1</sup>. He ironically observes that *he* is not “bold” (or insolent?) enough (*οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν*, v. 12) to compare himself to the people who are praising themselves in this manner (*τισι τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων*); but in the second part of the line he demonstrates that there is in fact no sense in drawing such comparison, for his adversaries are comparing themselves to nobody else but each other (*συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς*) and measuring their qualities and achievements according to standards that they have contrived themselves (*ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες*)<sup>2</sup>. Thus, Paul argues that his opponents have committed a grave error: they have replaced divine standards and measures by self-made standards<sup>3</sup>, and thus shifted the focus from the works and gifts of

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<sup>1</sup> The expression *ὑψῶμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ* in 10:5 probably also refers to the opponents' boasting: the term *ἐπαίρεσθαι* is used to describe them in 11:20 of the letter. See Thrall (1994), p. 612.

<sup>2</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 635.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Keener (2005), p. 440; Savage, T. B. (1996), p. 55.

Divine Grace to their own achievements, from which they have excluded God by their excessive self-confidence. Paul emphasizes the unacceptability of such boasting, stating that the behaviour of a boasting person can only be approved if it is the Lord, and not himself, who commends him (*οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστῶν, ἐκεῖνός ἐστι δόκιμος, ἀλλ' ὁν ὁ Κύριος συνίστησιν*, v. 18) – that is, if this boasting is based on God's grace and deeds instead of human achievements, and does not aim merely at personal glory. Thus, by boasting in the self-righteous way that has just been described, the opponents of Paul are acting foolishly (*οὐ συνιοῦσιν*, v. 12).

Another possible attack on the opponents can be found in Paul's words about boasting of the achievements of other people (*ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις*, v. 15) – in this case, the foundation and spiritual support of the Christian community in Corinth. Paul begins this part of the discourse by repudiating this kind of boasting and stating that he is in no way involved in it: Paul himself certainly has the right to boast about Corinthians, because it was he who first brought the Gospel to them and instructed them in the teaching of Christ (*ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, v. 14). Thus, the Corinthians are *his* flock, and their achievements are closely linked to Paul's ministry. At the same time, the emphatic *ἡμεῖς*, by which Paul begins the sentence, suggests that this also contains an indirect accusation directed against his opponents: Paul contrasts himself with them, by applying to them the charge he repudiates for himself<sup>1</sup>. The opponents have nothing to do with the above-mentioned missionary accomplishments, and therefore their boasting oversteps the limits (*ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐχὶ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα*, v. 13, and *οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι*, v. 15, probably represent allusions to the opponents) and intrude into the field

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 644; Lambrecht (1999), p. 165; Wolff (1989), p. 205.



of another person's authority (*ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι*, v. 16)<sup>1</sup>. All spheres of authority, including this specific one, are defined and assigned by God (*ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῖν*, v. 8, *οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς μέτρον*, v. 13)<sup>2</sup>; thus, by intruding into somebody else's field, the opponents of Paul are trying to appropriate the authority and works of God Himself<sup>3</sup>.

Paul claims his boasting to be vastly different from this arrogant behaviour. As we have already seen, Paul does not intrude on the jurisdiction of another person, but sticks to the field of ministry that God has given him. Neither he nor other apostles overstep the divine limits of measurement (*οὐχὶ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα*, v. 13, *οὐ... ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς*, v. 14) and do not rely solely on their own human abilities; therefore Paul's boasting, unlike that of his opponents, is well-grounded and justified.

Having proved this, Paul proceeds to define the acceptable kind of boasting: whoever wants to boast (righteously), must base his boasting on the Lord (*ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω*, v. 17). Here, just as in 1 Corinthians 1:31, the apostle quotes Jeremiah 9:23 (*ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, συνίειν καὶ γινώσκειν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι Κύριος*), in order to emphasize the futility of any "worldly" boasting. In general, this verse represents a kind of summary of Pauline views on boasting, which have been expressed earlier in the text: boasting can only be legitimate, if it is caused by and based on works and gifts of the Lord (missionary work and/or authority being such gifts – see 10:8b, *ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῖν*), and not on mere human achievements<sup>4</sup>. It must be intended as a way of praising God or defending the Church, but not as a means to achieve personal honour. In any case, boasting must always be kept within limits set by the Lord. Thus, the manner of

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<sup>1</sup> *Κανὼν* in this case most probably refers not only to the measuring standard, but also to the (geographical) boundaries of one's sphere of authority. See Martin (1981), p. 320; Furnish (1984), p.465; Keener (2005), pp. 222-223; Witherington (1995), p. 440; Savage (1996), p. 55; Τρεμπέλας (1998), p. 737.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Keener (2005), pp. 222.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Savage (1996), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 652.

boasting that Paul accepts is a kind of “boasting with humility”<sup>1</sup>; in the next two chapters he develops this argument further, delivering the well-known Fool’s Discourse.

### 2.2.8 2 Cor. 11:1-21a

1 Ὅφελον ἀνείχεσθέ μου μικρὸν τῇ ἀφροσύνῃ· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέχεσθέ μου·

2 ζηλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς Θεοῦ ζηλω· ἡρμοσάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ, παρθένον ἀγνὴν παραστήσαι τῷ Χριστῷ·

3 φοβοῦμαι δὲ μήπως, ὡς ὁ ὄφεις Εὐὰν ἐξηπάτησεν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ, οὕτω φθαρῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν.

4 εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνείχεσθε.

5 λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκέναι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων.

6 εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῇ γνώσει, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ φανερωθέντες ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

7 Ἡ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δωρεὰν τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν;

(...)

10 ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασι τῆς Ἀχαΐας.

11 διατί; ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ Θεὸς οἶδεν·

12 ὃ δὲ ποιῶ, καὶ ποιήσω, ἵνα ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν τῶν θελόντων ἀφορμὴν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσι καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς.

13 οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ.

14 καὶ οὐ θαυμαστόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός.

15 οὐ μέγα οὖν εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης, ὧν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.

16 Πάλιν λέγω, μὴ τίς με δόξη ἄφρονα εἶναι· εἰ δὲ μή γε, κἂν ὡς ἄφρονα δεξασθὲ με, ἵνα καγὼ μικρὸν τι καυχῆσωμαι.

17 ὃ λαλῶ οὐ λαλῶ κατὰ Κύριον, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως.

18 ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ τὴν σάρκα,

1 I wish you could tolerate my foolishness a little; please do!

2 For I am impelled by God’s zeal for your sake; for I betrothed you to the one husband, to present you to Christ as a chaste virgin;

3 yet I am afraid that, just like the snake deceived Eve in his cunningness, in the same way your thoughts might be distracted from the simplicity in Christ.

4 For if someone comes to preach another Christ that we did not preach, or if you receive another spirit that you did not receive, or another gospel that you were not given, you would be very tolerant.

5 For I reckon myself to be in no way inferior to those super-apostles.

6 Even though I am an amateur in speech, yet I am no amateur in knowledge; but we are known to you in everything.

7 Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself, so that you might be exalted, by preaching you the gospel of God for free?

(...)

10 The truth of Christ is in me: this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.

11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows that I do.

12 As regards my behaviour, I shall continue doing so, in order to deprive of any opportunity those who look for an opportunity to be regarded equal to us in what they are boasting about.

13 For they are false apostles, wicked workers, who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And it is not wonder, for Satan himself can be disguised as an angel of light.

15 So, it is not difficult for his servants to disguise themselves as servants of justice, and their end will be in accordance with their deeds.

16 I repeat, let no one think I have become a fool; in any case, accept me even as a fool, so that I, too, can boast a little.

17 What I am saying, I am not saying according to the Lord, but as in folly, in this boastful confidence.

18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I shall also boast.

19 For you, being wise, gladly tolerate fools;

20 for you tolerate it when someone enslaves you, devours you, take advantage of you, get inflated with pride, or slap you in the face.

21 I admit with shame that we have been too weak for such things.

<sup>1</sup> Τρεμπέλας (1998), p. 738: “θὰ καυχώμεθα μὲ ταπεινώσιν”.

κάγῳ καυχῆσομαι.

19 ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων  
φρόνιμοι ὄντες·

20 ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ  
τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις  
ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εἰς πρόσωπον δέρει.

21a κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς  
ἠσθενήσαμεν.

The verses 11:1-21a can in fact be seen as two separate units: that of 11:1-15 and that of 16-21a. However, due to the important parallels that exist between the two units, for the purpose of this study I prefer to examine both as a single passage.

Paul introduces the first unit by warning the Corinthians that he is now going to act “foolishly” (*ἀφροσύνη*, 11:1) and gives reasons for this: such drastic measures are necessary, because he fears for his flock that can easily be deceived by spiritual swindlers (11:2-4). Then, he proceeds to elaborate on these topics, by first asserting his apostolic status (praising himself, 11:4-10), and then providing a justification for this “foolish boasting” (11:11-12) and finally defining the cause of his fears (11:13-15): the “false apostles”, which parallels *ὄφις* in 11:3. The next unit is introduced by the repetition of Paul’s request to tolerate his foolish acts (11:16-17 – *πάλιν* emphasizes this repetition further), followed by another attempt to provide a reason for this foolishness: the Corinthians more eagerly obey those who act in an arrogant way (11:18-20). The apostle concludes the unit with an ironical remark that up to this moment he has been too weak, indeed, to indulge in such things (*ἠσθενήσαμεν* echoing *ἀσθενῆς* in 10:10).

In these verses, Paul makes a sudden and somewhat shocking transition from one kind of boasting to another: while in the previous chapters of the letter he has been opposing his own “godly” boasting to the “worldly” and sinful self-commendation of his rivals, now he deals exclusively with the sinful side of boasting, probably responding to charges of lack of authority, which in the minds of his audience (and, hence, of his opponents) would be closely connected with notions of social honour, despised by Paul. His attitude and tone

change accordingly; but, strangely enough, this negative view of sinful boasting “according to the flesh” (*κατὰ σάρκα*, 11:18) does not prevent him from engaging in this kind of self-praise. How can this paradoxical combination be possible? Let us now take a closer look at the passage.

Paul is fully aware of the fact that the boasting he is dealing with in the present passage, is of a kind he would not approve of in other circumstances, and defines it as such (*ὁ λαλῶ οὐ λαλῶ κατὰ Κύριον*, 11:17; *ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ τὴν σάρκα*, 11:18). And it is so, indeed, as the main subject of boasting mentioned here, namely the fact of preaching the Gospel without becoming a burden (that is, without demanding wages), is closely connected with “worldly” standards: as Keener argues, Paul describes himself here as a typical Graeco-Roman patron (benefactor) who contributes to his clients (protégés) completely “free of charge” (*δωρεάν*, 11:7) and demands nothing but honour and respect in return<sup>1</sup>. This kind of patron-client relationship was very common in the Graeco-Roman world, of which Corinth formed a part; but it has much more to do with rules and conventions of their contemporary society than with the teaching of Christ<sup>2</sup>. Paul repeatedly admits that this kind of boasting, being “worldly”, is nothing but foolishness (*ἄφροσύνη*, 11:1, 17), and that whoever seriously engages in it, can only be described as a fool (*ἄφρων*, 11:16, 19). Thus, his attitude to the “worldly” boasting remains strongly negative; in fact, it becomes even more manifest than in the previous chapters of the letter, for now Paul focuses on the sinful side of boasting *per se*.

What can one do to put a fool in his place? One of the most popular methods that Graeco-Roman literature used in such cases, was irony, and Paul does not fail to employ the same device. In order to expose the foolishness of his opponents’ boasting, he pretends to

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2005), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> We must note, however, that the image of a patron-client relationship (along with the image of matrimonial union) was often used in the Old Testament to describe the relationship between God and the people of Israel. But it is unlikely that Paul, who was aware of the above-mentioned use of the image, would seriously assume the position of God in this description – and what is more, try to boast about it.

stand on the same level with them and assumes the similar role of a “fool” who boasts “according to the flesh” (*ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ τὴν σάρκα, κἀγὼ καυχῆσομαι*, 11:18). This does not mean, however, that Paul’s negative attitude towards “worldly” boasting has been moderated in some way. The apostle remains constant in his rejection of self-commendation and takes care to define this position clearly: in spite of the fact that he defiantly declares his intention to boast in the “worldly” way, he nevertheless remarks that it is merely a pretence, which is not going to last long (*ἀνείχεσθέ μου μικρὸν τῆ ἄφροσύνη*, 11:1; *μικρὸν τι καυχῆσομαι*, 11:16), and warns the Corinthians that they should not take it all seriously, as he has not become a fool in reality (*μὴ τίς με δόξῃ ἄφρονα εἶναι*, 11:16). The apostle carefully avoids the possibility of objectionable boasting being *really* associated with him.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, even the “godly” kind of boasting requires proper justification to become acceptable. Paul’s present behaviour, based on a “worldly” boasting, requires justification all the more, and the apostle immediately proceeds to providing it. This justification does not make the “worldly” boasting positive, but at least gives Paul the possibility to employ it as a rhetorical device to refute the arguments of his rivals without transgressing his own principles.

The main reason why Paul assumes the unattractive role of a fool – and which justifies his present boasting “according to the flesh”, completely unacceptable in other cases – is his concern for his Corinthian flock<sup>1</sup>. Paul describes the current situation in Corinth as very dangerous: he claims that the Corinthian Christians have been deceived by people who proclaim themselves to be apostles of Christ, whereas in fact the goals of these preachers are selfish (Paul poses an angry rhetorical question of whether his own wage-free preaching of the Gospel has been a mistake; this suggests the idea that his opponents demanded some kind of payment for their services), and the ideas they preach are not fully

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2005), p. 224.

compatible with Paul's own, which he considers to be the genuine teaching of Christ. The Corinthians, nevertheless, accept these people as true apostles; why? As Savage<sup>1</sup> and Witherington<sup>2</sup> argue, this is a result of certain prejudices that existed in Graeco-Roman culture, and of which the Corinthians have not yet distanced themselves completely, even though they have embraced Christianity. This culture favoured self-confident people who were not afraid to promote themselves by referring to their social status and who looked down on those who failed to position themselves as important and influential members of society. Apparently, the opponents of Paul were aware of this principle and made full use of it to their own advantage, recommending themselves to the Corinthians. The latter, still bound to the values of the dominant society and deceived by the outward dazzle of the newly arrived preachers, are now inclined to trust them more than Paul, who has always been fervently against self-commending, refuses to accept any reward for his labour (which could be seen by people of the Graeco-Roman world as refusing his fair share of honour) and satisfies his needs by means of the humble profession of tent-making, thus placing himself among the lower classes of society. Paul points out this attitude of the Corinthians by making a bitter remark that they readily accept those who behave arrogantly (11:20)<sup>3</sup>.

Of course, the kind of self-commendation that these false apostles employ, is in fact a principle of the dominant non-Christian culture, and fits ill with Paul's views: the apostle clearly states that this is an example of boasting *κατὰ τὴν σάρκα* (11:18), which he always vehemently condemned. He would never engage into anything of this kind on his own accord; but in this case, the spiritual health of his flock is at stake, and drastic measures are needed. Paul feels responsible for the spiritual well-being of the Corinthians and realizes the imminent danger: unless he exposes the fraud of the self-styled apostles, the Church will be deceived and corrupted in the same way as Eve was once deceived by the snake in Paradise

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<sup>1</sup> Savage (1996), pp. 62-69.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington, (1995), p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> ἑπαίρεσθαι in this case can be regarded as a synonym for καύχεσθαι, for it is evidently used to describe the same kind of worldly self-extolling. Cf. Τρεμπέλας (1998), p. 740.

(11:2-3). “Desperate times call for desperate measures”<sup>1</sup>, and that is why Paul decides to use the same technique of (human) self-boasting as his opponents do: he has to prove their arguments to be false and to destroy their authority by showing the Corinthians that, whatever grand things these false preachers may say about themselves, *he* is by no means inferior to them (*λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκένοι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων*, 11:5). As Keener<sup>2</sup> points out, this strongly reminds one of methods of apologetic rhetoric, which was often used by public speakers in the Graeco-Roman environment of the Corinthians for purposes of self-defense against one’s rivals. Boasting of a reasonable level was regarded to be acceptable in this case; so, it would neither scandalize and give a bad example to the Corinthians, already familiar with principles of rhetoric, nor provide the adversaries with a reason to blame Paul for having trespassed the rules that he had set himself.

Perhaps the above-mentioned comparison, which places Paul on the same level with his adversaries, would be enough in some other cases – that is, if Paul’s main goal really consisted of merely defending his personal honour (as is normally implied in cases of “worldly” boasting that the apostle now professes to be using). But, as we have already seen, “personal honour” and “self-defense” for him are merely means for achieving a greater goal: defeating his opponents and depriving them of their authority in the Christian community of Corinth. Thus, placing himself on the same level with the opponents does not really suffice – quite the reverse, it may give the opponents the very thing they aim at. If Paul condescends to compare himself with these newly brought preachers and even take pains to prove that he is *like them*, it implies that they are *like him*, too – that is, their authority is no less than his. If the Corinthians got this impression from Paul’s apologetic speech, they would perhaps trust and respect the false preachers even more than before.

To avoid this misconception, Paul develops his speech further. He states that the purpose of his present boasting is to remove every possibility for the false apostles to

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<sup>1</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> Keener (2005), p. 229.

assume the position that belongs to him and other genuine apostles of the Lord (11:12)<sup>1</sup>. The spiritual swindlers can never be on the same level with the apostles.

But even though Paul condescends to employ the methods of his opponents, he nevertheless does not let himself be fully absorbed by these. As we have already seen in 11:16, Paul does not become ἄφρων, but merely pretends to do so. Therefore even the “illicit” methods of false apostles, when he uses them, turn into something completely opposite to what his adversaries have been doing. As Witherington<sup>2</sup> points out, the behaviour of Paul in this case is an exact antithesis of that of his opponents: whereas they are described as servants of Satan (11:14-15) who disguise themselves as angels to gain honour and deceive Christians, Paul disguises himself as a fool and a sinner (for human-based boasting is sinful), being in fact righteous, and is not afraid of covering himself with shame (which, as we have seen in previous passages, "worldly" boasting usually brings) in order to save the Church.

### 2.2.9 2 Cor. 11:21b-33

21b ἐν ᾧ δ' ἂν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ καὶ γώ.  
22 Ἐβραῖοί εἰσι; καὶ γώ· Ἰσραηλιταί εἰσι; καὶ γώ· σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσι; καὶ γώ·  
23 διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσι; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις· (...)  
29 τίς ἀσθενεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενῶ; τίς σκανδαλίζεται, καὶ οὐκ ἐγώ πυροῦμαι;  
30 εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι.  
31 ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.  
32 ἐν Δαμασκῶ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν Δαμασκηνῶν πόλιν πιάσαι με θέλων,  
33 καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθην διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ.

21b Yet whatever one may dare [boast about] – I am speaking in folly – I also dare.

22 Are they Jews? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ? I am speaking like a fool – I am more: I have endured more labours, more wounds; I have been in prisons more often, many times in danger of death (...)

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is tempted, and I do not blaze?

30 If it is necessary to boast, I shall boast of my weaknesses.

31 Our God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – may He be blessed for ever! – knows that I am not lying.

32 In Damascus the ethnarch of king Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to arrest me,

33 but I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 691.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 449.



The verses 21b-33 represent the core of the Fool's Discourse: they contain a list of what Paul is "foolishly" boasting about. The list is introduced by the statement that Paul is in no way inferior to his opponents, and has reasons to boast in the same things as they do (11:21b); then, he proceeds to elaborate on this topic, enumerating the objects of boast (11:22-28) and once again paraphrases the initial statement (11:29), declaring that, as he has just proved, he is no different from "the others". However, the objects of Paul's boast are somewhat strange: from honourable things like being a Jew and an Israelite, he passes to humiliating episodes like imprisonment and flagellation (11:23-28). This is not a mere coincidence: the apostle ensures that his audience notices this strange phenomenon by stating explicitly that he prefers to boast in his weakness (11:30). The unit is concluded by adding some more objects to the list (11:31-33).

In this passage, the mock "fool's" boasting of Paul reaches its culmination. The apostle seems to be fully absorbed into the "worldly" kind of boasting and rhetoric competition with his opponents: the very beginning of this "apologetic" speech is an example of a typical rhetoric device. Paul engages into comparing himself with the opponents, point-by-point (vs. 11:23), demonstrating that in no way is he inferior to them. Immediately after this, he proceeds to claim his own superiority (vs. 11:24, *ὑπὲρ ἐγώ*), declaring that, as regards the ministry work, he has already done and is currently doing much more than the opponents (vs. 11:23, *περισσοτέρως, ὑπερβαλλόντως*), in spite of their attempts to present themselves as "super-apostles" (vs. 11:5). As Keener points out, comparisons of this kind were often used by Graeco-Roman rhetoricians, who, just like Paul in the present passage, cited not only their deeds, but also their origin and place of birth as objects of boast<sup>1</sup>.

As proof of his superiority, the apostle provides a long list of sufferings that he has endured for the sake of spreading the Gospel. Such lists were also not uncommon among

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2005), p. 233.

secular rhetoricians and historians of Paul's times: e.g. Stoics adduced their endurance in sufferings as an evidence of their genuineness. Certain writers expressed their admiration of philosophers by emphasizing the fact that these men suffered for their teachings (e.g. Maximus of Tyre, 15:9, 34:9, 39:5). Suffering for one's country could also be an object of boasting, often appearing as such in the writings and speeches of politicians and military leaders (e.g. Aeschines *Fals. leg.* 168-169, Cicero *Cat.* 4:1:2, Sallust *Letter of Gnaeus Pompeius* 1, Arrian *Alex.* 7:10:1-2, etc.)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, from the first glance Paul appears to be fully engaged in exactly the same "worldly" kind of rhetorical competition as his Corinthian opponents do.

If we, however, examine these verses more closely, we will see that there is in fact a considerable difference between the boasting of Paul and that of his opponents. As is implied in the first part of the speech, the opponents boast in their personal qualities, that is, of being Hebrews (implying that they preserve their native language and customs), Israelites (implying their allegiance to Judaic religion), and descendants of Abraham (implying their honourable ancestry). All these could probably be used by Paul's opponents to support their claims for authority and status in the Christian community, for one's "Jewishness" implied one's close bond with the ancient tradition, proved one's belonging to the holy people of God<sup>2</sup>. To counter these claims, Paul now states that he possesses the same qualities to no lesser degree than his opponents; his attitude towards such things, however, is different from theirs. Having mentioned all three points briefly, he passes on to a long list of what he consider to be really honourable and worthy of boasting from his own point of view: his sufferings for the sake of Christ. These, according to Paul, are the necessary attributes of a genuine Christian minister – and in these he is not just equal to the opponents, but greatly surpasses them. That is, instead of boasting of one's qualities and achievements, Paul boasts in and bases his authority on the sacrifices he has made; not in the things he got, but rather

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<sup>1</sup> In Keener (2005), p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Thrall (1994), pp. 729-30.

in the things he gave. To emphasize this point, he stresses the fact that he endured sufferings from all possible sides, both from humans and the forces of nature: rivers, city, wilderness, and sea in his list represent the environmental dimension of hardships, while robbers, Jews, Gentiles, and false brothers represent the human dimension<sup>1</sup>. The whole attitude is summarized in his words “*εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι*” (11:30), with which the apostle concludes his list.

If, however, Paul stopped at this, his boasting would not in fact differ radically from that of “the world”, in spite of being evidently superior (in a moral sense) to that of his opponents: as has been mentioned above, many Graeco-Roman philosophers and leaders also boasted in sacrifices they had made for their teachings or their country. By engaging in this kind of boasting, Paul appears as a suffering sage and silences the arguments that his opponents adduce against him – but his goal evidently consists of something more than that. As Savage points out<sup>2</sup>, the phrase *καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ* that Paul uses in 11:30 and repeats again in 12:1, is very suggestive: it probably represents a summary of the general moral values and principles that existed in ancient Corinth and influenced the local Christian community to a great extent. Pride and boasting of the “worldly” kind played a prominent role in the life of Corinthians; however, Paul’s own attitude towards this remained strongly negative. We have seen it already in previously discussed passages, and the present one is no exception. Here, *καύχησις* is once again associated with foolishness (*ἀφροσύνη*, 11:21; *παραφρονῶν λαλῶ*, 11:23). This negative attitude is emphasized further by the use of the word *τολμῶ* (11:21): according to Thrall, this word has a pejorative connotation here, pointing out the recklessness of boastful behaviour and reinforcing the meaning of the term *ἀφροσύνη*, used in the same verse<sup>3</sup>. Paul’s goal, therefore, is not only to respond to the accusations of the

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2005), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Savage (1996), p.54.

<sup>3</sup> Thrall (1994) p.722.

opponents and counter their claims, but also to combat the very reason of the problem: the focus on "worldly" boasting that the Corinthians seem to support.

To achieve this, Paul deliberately travesties the kind of boasting, which is so popular in Corinth. If we examine his own boasting closely, we will see that it is in fact absurd from the common point of view. The very phrase “τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι” bears the mark of the absurd: the goal of boasting is honour, while the term ἀσθενεία (weakness) is associated with shame. The same contradictory combination is found in the list of sufferings itself. Along with traditional elements of “honourable sufferings”, such as shipwrecks, dangerous land journeys, and labours, he mentions hardships that can almost be regarded as synonyms of humiliation: flagellation, stoning, and imprisonment. At the end of the passage, we find an even more striking example of these: the story of Paul’s escape from Damascus, when he was lowered from the city wall in a basket. Many scholars argue that this account is in fact a parody of Graeco-Roman views of military honour<sup>1</sup>. Livy<sup>2</sup> mentions a Roman custom to award a special wreath, the so-called *corona muralis*, to the soldier that first climbs the wall of the enemy fortress: “The special distinction of a mural crown belonged to the man who had been first to climb the wall”. This award was highly honourable and, naturally, represented an object of boast. But Paul’s behaviour in the above-mentioned story is exactly the reverse of this practice: he boasts not of scaling the enemy’s wall (active position of a victorious soldier), but rather of being furtively taken down the wall in a basket (passive position and a flight), which would be regarded as profoundly humiliating by Graeco-Roman society of the time. The whole attitude of the apostle in this case should seem quite demeaning to the people of Corinth, who were, most probably, aware of the *corona muralis* custom. Some scholars<sup>3</sup> also note that there seems to be a

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<sup>1</sup> Travis (1973), p. 530; Furnish (1984), p. 542; Martin (1981), p. 384; Keener, (2005), p. 235; Witherington (1995), p. 458; Judge (1966), pp. 44-5; Savage (1996), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> 28:48:5

<sup>3</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 756-7; Ebner (1991), p. 131; Travis (1973), pp.529-30; Keener (2005), p. 233; Witherington (1995), p. 444, 451.

strong resemblance in form between Paul's list of sufferings and the famous *Res gestae* of Octavian Augustus, a widely circulated piece of imperial propaganda. The emperor begins by identifying himself as "divine Augustus", proceeds to boastful enumeration of his feats and achievements, and concludes with describing his acclamation as "father of the country" by the Roman nation. The same pattern can be found in 2 Corinthians: Paul begins by identifying himself (11:22-23), enumerates his deeds, and concludes by claiming the title of apostle (12:12). But, in spite of the similarity in form, there is a vast difference between the content and the attitude of the two works. Augustus boasts in his achievements and the honour given to him, deliberately omitting all instances of weakness and failure, which also occurred in his life (as described later by historians). Paul does exactly the opposite: he speaks exclusively about the hardships and humiliation he endured, without mentioning any of his personal achievements (being a Jew, an Israelite, and a descendant of Abraham cannot be regarded as such, for these are parts of an identity one gets by birth). Even the founding of Churches is only mentioned in the context of constant anxiety for their members (11:28). The anti-pride and anti-worldly pathos of the passage culminates in the earlier discussed verse of 11:30 (*εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι*), as well as the somewhat provocative declaration of 11:29 (*τίς ἀσθενεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενῶ;*), an exact opposite to the principles of Augustus, who prefers to suppress every sign of his *ἀσθενεία*. Thus, Paul seems to be deliberately challenging the public opinion and the conventions of his contemporary society, saturated with pride and imperial propaganda that the Corinthian Christians lived in, demonstrating to them in this way the complete subversion of "worldly" views on honour and boasting for members of the Church.

Besides the obvious polemical meaning discussed above, Paul's "boasting in weaknesses" has yet another semantic dimension, which once again reflects the apostle's views on the legitimate kind of boasting. In 2 Cor. 12:9, Paul cites the words of the Lord he heard in a vision, stating that the power of God springs into action in instances of human

weakness: *ἡ γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται*. Therefore, when Paul boasts in his *ἀσθενείᾳ*, he is in fact boasting in the actions of God’s power – that is, not in his own human qualities, achievements, and honour, but rather in the works and gifts of divine Grace<sup>1</sup>. Paul’s boasting in this case corresponds with his views on this subject that we have seen in previously discussed passages: the apostle boasts “in the Lord” (cf. *ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω*, 10:17)<sup>2</sup>.

Another aspect of Paul’s boasting that emphasizes its “godly” nature, is his care for the Churches he founded (*χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτός ἢ ἐπισύστασίς μου ἢ καθ’ ἡμέραν, ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*, 11:28). Even in secular literature of the time it was considered honourable to suffer for the troubles of others<sup>3</sup>: care and anxiety in this case were regarded as signs of affection. In a Christian context, such anxiety becomes an expression of love, the virtue most highly valued in the Gospel. Nothing based on love can be negative – therefore, Paul’s boasting is also acceptable.

As we have seen in previous passages, any kind of boasting has to be substantiated and justified in order to be considered legitimate. Paul does not forget about this principle here: he adduces God Himself as a witness to the fact that his boasting is well-grounded (*ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι*, 11:31). This calling on God, besides being a proof of Paul’s genuineness, also helps to emphasize that the apostle’s boasting is different from that of his opponents.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Savage (1996), p. 63; Witherington (1995), p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> Another relevant verse from the same letter is 13:4b (*ἡμεῖς ἀσθενοῦμεν ἐν ἀντῷ* [i.e. ἐν Χριστῷ]). Two closely related patterns, semantic and structural, can be traced between this verse, 10:17, and 12:5 (which will be discussed later in this paper): the common structure of verb+ ἐν[noun], where *ἀσθενοῦμεν* alternates with *καυχάσθω* / *καυχῆσομαι* in relation to *ἐν Κυρίῳ* / *ἀντῷ* [Χριστῷ], and *ἀσθενείαις* alternates with *Κυρίῳ* in relation to *καυχάσθω* / *καυχῆσομαι*, which is, most probably, used to emphasize the close correlation between (the grace of) God, human weakness, and positive boasting.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Cicero *Fam.* 14.3.1, Seneca *Nat. Q.* 4.pref.15.

## 2.2.10 2 Cor. 12:1-6

12:1 Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, οὐ συμφέρον μὲν ἐλεύσομαι γὰρ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις Κυρίου.

2 οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων· εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ Θεὸς οἶδεν· ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.

3 καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον· εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ Θεὸς οἶδεν·

4 ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα, ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλήσαι.

5 ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιοῦτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου.

6 ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων· ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ· φεῖδομαι δὲ μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ.

1 It is necessary to boast, though it is of no use; let me pass on to the visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ, who, fourteen years ago – whether in body or out of body, I do not know, God knows – was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know that this man – whether in body or out of body, I do not know, God knows –

4 was caught up to the paradise and heard unutterable words, which a human being is not permitted to tell.

5 I shall boast about such, but about myself I shall not boast, except about my weaknesses.

6 If I decide to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall speak the truth; yet I restrain myself from this, least anyone esteems me above what one actually sees or hears from me.

The beginning of unit 12:1-6 is marked by the repetition of the phrase *καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ*, followed by a specification remark of *οὐ συμφέρον*, and then by the precise definition of a new object of Paul's boasting: namely God's revelations. The apostle then elaborates on this topic, describing one such revelation (12:2-4) and concludes by explaining why he finds it possible to engage in such boasting, as well as why he prefers to boast about others, and not about himself (12:5-6).

In this passage, Paul draws a further distinction between two different types of boasting. Right from the beginning, however, he admits that, whatever the kind of boasting one may be employing, it should be treated with caution. As mentioned above, Paul begins the passage by repeating the social slogan he picked up from the Corinthians: *καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ*<sup>1</sup> (discussed earlier in this paper). Just like in the previous passage, these words acquire an ironical flavour in Paul's usage, for they are immediately followed by the phrase *οὐ*

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<sup>1</sup> Also read as *δή* or *δέ*. However, most scholars argue that *δεῖ* is the most attested reading of the three (see e.g. Thrall, 1994, p. 772), and therefore this reading is being preferred in this paper.

*συμφέρον μὲν* – “though it is of no use”<sup>1</sup>. This brings “worldly” boasting into conflict with the ancient moral criterion of usefulness, often referred to by Graeco-Roman philosophers and rhetoricians when taking decisions and making choices on ethical matters<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the Corinthian slogan is now being mocked at: it is being presented here as a mere social convention that compels people to perform useless actions, frowned at by the very same society in which the slogan originated. As Thrall points out, this combination of the two phrases is also used by Paul as a warning to his audience: whatever the reason for boasting may be, such behaviour is by no way expedient. The focus on the “uselessness” of boasting reveals Paul’s own dislike of it: even when boasting is used for the good of the Church, it nevertheless remains a “suspect emergency measure”<sup>3</sup>.

*Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ*, however, fulfils yet another function. As Keener points out<sup>4</sup>, the verb *δεῖ* here helps to emphasize necessity, i.e. the fact that Paul employs boasting only because he is compelled to do so by people and circumstances – not because he endorses such behaviour himself. In the Graeco-Roman world, necessity of this kind was considered a sufficient justification for actions that would be normally unacceptable<sup>5</sup>. We can see here a partial repetition of Paul’s previously stated principles: in order to cease being negative, one’s boasting should be properly justified. The same idea is clearly stated a few verses later, in 12:6a, where Paul contrasts the two types of boasting: *ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων· ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ*. Paul’s boasting is not negative, for he is telling the truth (compare 11:31, discussed earlier: *ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἶδεν, ὃ ἂν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι*);

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<sup>1</sup> This is also read sometimes as *οὐ συμφέρον μοι* – “though it is of no use *to me*”, which can probably indicate another ironic remark: unlike his opponents, who are boasting in order to get honour, Paul is not seeking any personal profit.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. *Rhet. Alex.* 1, 1421b.25 – 1422a.22; 6, 1427b.39 – 10, 1430a.28; 34, 1440a.1-2; Musonius Rufus 16, p. 102.33 – 35; Hermogenes *Issues* 76.5 – 77.19. Cf. Keener (2005), p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Thrall (1994), V.II, p. 773.

<sup>4</sup> Keener (2005), p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Hermogenes 77.6 – 19.



otherwise his behaviour would be completely foolish (*ἄφρων*). We can also notice a slight digression from the rules of “godly” boasting: whereas Paul previously rejected or accepted *καύχησις* on the grounds of it being “worldly” or “godly”, in this verse the only necessary criteria seems to be validity of the object of boast. However, this digression is extenuated by the fact that the object itself is “godly”.

Another division of boasting into two opposite types is made in vs. 12:5: *ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιούτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου*. The word *τοιούτος* here refers to the vision described in 12:2-4. Paul offers us a third-person narrative, but Witherington and Thrall<sup>1</sup> argue that he in fact describes his own experience. The use of the third person possibly represents an attempt to distance himself from the object of his boast, in order to make the boasting less evident and offensive – a kind of indirect boasting “tongue-in-cheek”<sup>2</sup>. By employing this rhetorical device, Paul once again reveals his general attitude towards boasting: whatever its reason and object may be, it should be dealt with great caution. In this passage, however, the device acquires another semantic dimension: Paul is probably trying to remove the “human element” from the story as far as possible, so that the vision appears as a pure work of God, not owing anything to any human being, be it Paul or some other man. In this way, the apostle emphasizes the fact that the object of his boast consists exclusively of Lord’s grace and gifts, rather than of his own human achievements. The same point is stressed further by the use of *ἀρπαγέντα / ἠρπάγη* (vs. 12:3-4) in the description of the vision. Both words are put in the passive voice, and the verb *ἀρπάζω* itself suggests a rather violent behaviour from the active subject’s part, almost completely excluding any participation from the part of the passive subject. Thus, Paul stresses the complete passiveness of the man in the vision: he did not seek – in fact, did not even expect – the ascent to Heaven. Therefore, it was not in the least

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<sup>1</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 459; Thrall (1994), p. 781.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington (1995), p. 459.

due to his personal actions and achievements, but depended completely on the power and grace of the Lord.

Lincoln<sup>1</sup> suggests that the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ* in v. 12:2 is also used by Paul to emphasize the leading role of the Lord's power in the vision. The apostle is trying to say that everything he now narrates, was done exclusively by Christ, and was not a result of Paul's (or simply – the man's) "special psychic powers or a unique capacity for mystical experience"<sup>2</sup>. Thus, *ἐν Χριστῷ* may serve as a complement to the rhetoric device discussed above.

All these show us clearly that *τοιοῦτον*, about which Paul finds it acceptable to boast, refers exclusively to God, His power, grace, and gifts. The apostle refuses to boast in anything that belongs to his personal human sphere, his own qualities or achievements: *ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι*. The only object in this sphere, which is considered worthy to be included in Paul's boasting, is his *ἀσθενεῖαι*; but, as we have already seen in the previous passage, this notion is also used to refer to the works of God in one's life. Thus, Paul once again reveals his views, expressed several times throughout the letter: in order to be "godly" and acceptable, boasting must have God – not humans – as its object.

But, has Paul abandoned his parody of "worldly" boasting, which he has been displaying in previous passages? Not in the least. As Keener points out<sup>3</sup>, Paul concludes this section of the Fool's Speech by deliberately overturning the goals and principles of "worldly" boasting that Corinthians were used to. It was considered acceptable among Graeco-Roman authors and rhetors of Paul's times to claim honour for qualities and achievements that, as they professed, existed in them, but were not yet evident to others (see e.g. Cicero, *Ag. Caec.*, 11.36). Paul, however, declares that he refuses – and would even be ashamed (*φείδομαι*) – to be given credit for anything that other people cannot see in him

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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln (1979), p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln (1979), p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Keener (2005), p. 239.

with their own eyes: *μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με* (12:6b). The phrase *ἣ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ* that follows, is a further polemical remark concerning another related principle of rhetoric: that of allusions. As Keener points out, “to claim that one will not say something, while incidentally saying it, also was a frequent rhetorical move”<sup>1</sup>. Rhetoricians would pretend to avoid mentioning certain things out of unpretentiousness, but at the same time would make as many allusions to these subjects as necessary to make their audience aware of them nevertheless – it was a kind of “boasting in disguise”. Paul, however, rejects devices of this kind, urging the Corinthians not to assume anything about him, except for what he says to them openly.

The allusion device is being mocked at in v. 12:4. Here, Paul mentions certain “unutterable words” (*ἄρρητα ῥήματα*) that he heard in his vision, and that humans are not allowed to say. This looks very similar to the rhetorical allusions discussed above, and any “worldly”-minded audience (as Corinthians probably were) would then expect the apostle to proceed to indirectly revealing these sacred words, or at least a part of them, in order to be honoured as a person entrusted with sacred revelations. Paul, however, does not do anything of the kind: he teases his audience, exposing the absurdity of the social conventions and “worldly” boasting they estimate so high. The apostle, for his part, does not want to focus on himself, but on the works of God, which are too sacred to be used as a means of getting personal honour<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, Paul’s boasting in this passage subverts “worldly” views on boasting and honour. The main principle of the apostle remains the same: it is only in the Lord that he may (legitimately) boast.

### **2.2.11 2 Cor. 12:7-10**

12:7 Καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατᾶν, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ ἵνα

7 And in order to prevent me from putting on airs because of the abundance of revelations, I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, so that it slaps me in the face and prevents me from

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2005), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Keener (2005), p. 239.

μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι.

8 ὑπὲρ τούτου τρις τὸν Κύριον παρεκάλεσα  
ἵνα ἀποστῆ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ·

9 καὶ εἰρηκὲ μοι ἄρκει σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἡ  
γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται.  
ἤδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς  
ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ  
δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

10 διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν  
ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς, ἐν στενοχωρίαις,  
ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε  
δυνατός εἰμι.

putting on airs.

8 Thrice I asked the Lord to remove this from me;  
9 but He said to me: “My grace is enough for you;  
for My power acts in weakness”. Thus, I shall  
rather most gladly boast in my weaknesses, so  
that the power of Christ descends upon me.

10 This is why I am pleased with weaknesses,  
humiliation, hardships, persecutions, and  
sufferings for the sake of Christ; for when I am  
weak, then I am strong.

The unit of 12:7-10 constitutes an elaboration on the topic of boasting in one’s weaknesses, only briefly mentioned in the preceding verses. *Καὶ* serves as a discourse mark here, and at the same time, along with *ἀποκαλύψεων*, links the unit to the broader context of the discussion of revelations. In the verses 12:7-9 the meaning and purpose of “boasting in weaknesses” are discussed; the conclusion of the argument is summarized in 12:10b, which forms a parallel with 12:9b (*δύναμις / δυνατός, ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου / ἀσθενῶ*) – true power can only be attained through suffering, and this is why it is possible to boast about one’s weakness.

In this passage, Paul continues reversing the values of “worldly” boasting. He has just boasted of a vision and a certain “unutterable” revelation he received from the Lord; according to his opponents’ frame of mind, based on the Graeco-Roman principles of honour and shame, a necessary outcome of this outstanding event should be personal honour for Paul as someone who has been “chosen” by God. But what really happens, is quite the reverse: instead of honour, Paul receives suffering (*σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί*) and humiliation (implied by *κολαφίζη* and *ἀσθενεῖαι*). Thus, from the beginning Paul demonstrates that the principles of his boasting differ vastly from those of his opponents – and therefore his authority as a spiritual leader is also of a totally different kind.

Thrall, Keener, and Betz<sup>1</sup> observe in this passage a parody of Graeco-Roman healing stories, especially those referring to Asklepios. In these stories, the healing deity usually gives a reassuring answer, after which the supplicant comes out of the shrine in perfect health, feeling obliged to announce the beneficial action of the deity to others. Paul also begins verse 12:8 by mentioning his supplicatory prayers, in which he asked God to deliver him from the “thorn”. Hellenistic audience would now expect another miracle to happen – but the answer received from God, is negative: in spite of having been chosen as a receiver of revelation, Paul is not honoured even with a miraculous healing. This would probably seem odd to the Corinthians; but the story becomes even more strange when Paul proceeds to the last part of healing story genre, that is, giving thanks to the deity. As Betz observes<sup>2</sup>, a parallel can be traced between the verb *καυχῆσομαι* in 12:9b and the healed person’s proclamation of the healing *δύναμις* of the deity<sup>3</sup> in Hellenistic stories. The form of the narrative seems similar: Paul boasts of what he has received in response to his prayer, and declares that the power of the Lord rests upon him as a result (*ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, 12:9b). The content, however, is vastly different: as we have already seen, the divine action that Paul proclaims and boasts of, is not a miraculous healing, but a suffering that God has refused to deliver him from. *Καυχῆσομαι* is still associated with *δύναμις*; but the divine power mentioned by Paul is not like that of Asklepios and other healing deities, which Hellenistic supplicants would boast of. These deities grant physical strength to their supplicants in response to their prayers; but the Lord in Paul’s account clearly states that works of His power are closely associated with the weakness of the humans (*ἡ γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται*, 12:9a). It is not physical

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 821; Keener (2005), p. 240; Betz (1972), pp. 92f.

<sup>2</sup> Betz (1969), p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> Betz (1969) argues that the word *δύναμις* belongs to the technical vocabulary of aretology. In Hellenistic narratives, his power of the deity is usually beneficiary to the supplicant in practical sense: see e.g. “εἰς πάντα γὰρ τόπον διαπεφοίτηκεν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμις σωτήριος” (referring to Asklepios), P. Oxy. XI 1381, ll. 215-18 (quoted by Thrall, 1994, p. 824).

healing, but *χάρις* (12:9a) that can be received from the power of the Lord, and that Paul is now boasting of. This completely undercuts the basis of arguments of Paul's opponents, who probably boasted in their power and outstanding abilities, using these as the basis for their claims of authority and superiority: Paul demonstrates now that it is not strength, but weakness that makes one really powerful from a spiritual point of view (*ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι*, 12:10b), and therefore it is the suffering and humiliated Paul, not his proud opponents, who is truly entitled to authority in the Church.

Another aspect of legitimate boasting is also implied in Paul's emphasis on his "weakness". By describing himself as a person full of weaknesses, Paul excludes every possibility of attributing any of the miracles that happened in his life, to his own powers<sup>1</sup>: it becomes evident that such a weak man cannot perform anything by himself. As Witherington points out, "weakness makes Paul more translucent so that one can see the source of the real power and light"<sup>2</sup> – that is, God. Thus, boasting in weaknesses, free from any kind of personal human pride, becomes a means of glorifying the Lord. Paul boasts in Christ, not in himself – and this, as we have seen in previous passages, is regarded as acceptable behaviour.

The relation between *καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις* and *ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ* in 12:9b, connected by *ἵνα*, is not completely clear. Heckel<sup>3</sup> argues that the *ἵνα*-clause implies necessity to "boast" in the Christian sense, i.e. to recognize and confess one's human weakness, in order to receive divine grace and allow it to operate in one's life. Thus, "godly" boasting acquires a strongly positive character: it becomes an instrument for getting or renewing the divine power<sup>4</sup>. However, the first part of verse 9, where the direct words of Christ are given, does not make any reference to such requirement. The above-mentioned

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<sup>1</sup>Thrall (1994), p. 825; Witherington (1995), pp. 463-4.

<sup>2</sup>Witherington (1995), p.463.

<sup>3</sup>E.g. Heckel (1993), p. 103. See also Zmijewski (1978), p. 392 n. 503.

<sup>4</sup>See Zmijewski (1978), p. 392 n. 503

suggestion, therefore, presents a difficulty<sup>1</sup>.

Thrall<sup>2</sup> supposes that the logical point of reference for the *ἵνα*-clause is *ἀσθενεῖαι* rather than *καυχῆσθαι*. Consequently, the clause indicates “the divine purpose behind the weaknesses”<sup>3</sup>, which consists of bestowing grace upon the weak human being. In this case, boasting is not as evidently positive as in the previous hypothesis. However, it cannot be negative either, for it nevertheless has the grace of God as its object. Both hypotheses have an important point in common: whatever the relation between *καυχῆσθαι* and *δύναμις* may be in this sentence, it is clear that the apostle’s boasting does not focus on himself, but on God and His works.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In 2 Corinthians, just like in 1 Corinthians, Paul discerns between two types of boasting: “worldly” and “godly”. The term *καύχησις* in both of these meanings is used in the letter for polemical purposes: Paul opposes the arrogant behaviour (“worldly” boasting) of his adversaries, who dispute his apostolic status and authority, by countering their arguments through his own “godly” kind of boasting. In order to undercut the grounds for his opponents’ strategy against him, the apostle refers to boasting in a subversive way, overturning the related values of the contemporary Graeco-Roman society.

“Worldly” boasting is described as *καύχησις κατὰ τὴν σάρκα* (11:18) or *ἐν προσώπῳ* (5:12): it is based on human qualities and achievements, such as origin, social status, pious deeds (including missionary works), rhetorical eloquence and other attributes of “worldly” wisdom (*σοφία σαρκική*, 1:12). The main goals of this boasting are “worldly” honour and personal profit, and it often lacks sufficient grounds (actually proves to be beyond one’s real qualities and achievements). The apostle emphasizes the human-centered

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 826.

<sup>2</sup> Thrall (1994), p. 827.

<sup>3</sup> Cranfield, C. E. B., cited by Thrall (1994), p. 827.

nature of such *καύχησις* by using several times the expression *ἐαυτοὺς συνιστάνοντες* in respect of those who practice it (5:12; 10:12,18); this expression is opposed to *ὁ Κύριος συνίστησιν* (10:18) of the same letter and *ἔπαινος τοῦ Θεοῦ* of 1 Corinthians, which he uses to describe “godly” boasting. Paul does not use *φύσημα* here to characterize “worldly” *καύχησις*; however, other words are used, which can be regarded as synonyms of *φύσημα*, namely *ἐπαίρομαι* (11:20) and *τολμῶ* (11:21). Just as in 1 Corinthians, “worldly” boasting has detrimental consequences for the well-being of the community: apparently the opponents of Paul use this type of self-commendation to prove their superiority, and in this way divided the Christian community. This, and also the fact that such attitude is based on wrong evaluations (those made in accordance with Graeco-Roman social standards), make Paul characterize such boasting as *ἀφροσύνη* (11:1, 11:16-17) – a synonym of *μωρία* that we have already seen in 1 Corinthians.

“Godly” boasting is the direct opposite of this attitude. Just like in 1 Corinthians, it is described as *καύχησις ἐν Κυρίῳ* (10:17) or *ἐν καρδίᾳ* (5:12) and focuses mostly on God, on gifts and works of divine grace (*χάρις Θεοῦ*, 1:12, 12:9), and not on human qualities and achievements. Paul regards any deeds, such as successful missionary work, to be God’s actions performed *through* humans, not *by* them, and therefore constantly emphasizes the Lord’s role in his apostolic success, downplaying at the same time his own contribution by putting forward his sufferings, weakness, humiliation, and so forth. This refusal of personal honour and boasting about humiliating facts of one’s life overturn the traditional standards of the contemporary society and introduce a new system of values: according to Paul, his human weakness is a valid object of boast, because it gives him the possibility to discard self-reliance and allow God’s grace and power (*δύναμις*, 12:9) to spring into action. The very term *καύχησις* in this case is synonymous with “joyful confidence”, as indicated by



the words *χαρά* (7:4), *παρρησία* (7:4) and *ὑπόστασις* (9:4), associated with it. This type of *καύχησις*, unlike the “worldly” kind, is well grounded: it is not based on wrong assumptions and does not overstep the limits of reality (*κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος*, 10:13, *ἀλήθεια*, 7:14, 12:6) and therefore cannot cover one with shame (*οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι*, 10:6).

### **3. Romans**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the Epistle to Romans, Paul deals with very complex spiritual matters, since the Epistle is addressed to a no less complex audience. As many scholars suggest, the Christianity of Rome began in synagogues – that is, the first Christian community consisted mostly of converted Jews and (possibly) proselytes who had been first converted to Judaism<sup>1</sup>. The Gentile Christians (that is, those converted to Christianity directly from paganism) were but a minority. This situation changed at about 49 A.D., when all Jews were expelled from Rome by order of the Emperor Claudius<sup>2</sup>: the Gentile element became more prominent, and the church started moving away from its Jewish origins. However, after Claudius's death in 54 A.D. some of the previously expelled Jewish Christians returned to Rome, bringing back their own traditions and conventions, which entered into conflict with that of the Gentile Christians<sup>3</sup>. This clash of cultures resulted in many serious and persistent problems, one of which, as is evident from the present Epistle, was mutual boasting of the two ethnic groups within the Church: each of them regarded itself to be superior to the other. This *καύχησις* was closely connected with eschatology and soteriology, as both the Jews and the Gentiles believed that they were closer to salvation and had more right to be vindicated on the Day of the Last Judgement than the other group. In his letter to the Christians of Rome, Paul makes an attempt to combat these inner discords that fit ill with his own views on Christian community<sup>4</sup>. He addresses each group individually and analyses their shortcomings, dealing at the same time with a closely related type of religious boasting, namely that of the Judaists.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Moo (1996), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 18:2; Suetonius, "Life of Claudius", 25.2.

<sup>3</sup> Kümmel (1975), p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> Kümmel (1975), p. 313.

## 3.2 Analysis of occurrences

### 3.2.1 Rom. 2:17-29

2:17 Ἴδε σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ, καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ τῷ νόμῳ, καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν Θεῷ,

18 καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα, καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα, κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου,

19 πέποιθᾶς τε σεαυτὸν ὁδηγὸν εἶναι τυφλῶν, φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει,

20 παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων, ἔχοντα τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ.

21 ὁ οὖν διδάσκων ἕτερον σεαυτὸν οὐ διδάσκεις; ὁ κηρύσσων μὴ κλέπτειν κλέπτεις;

22 ὁ λέγων μὴ μοιχεύειν μοιχεύεις; ὁ βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἰδῶλα ἱεροσυλεῖς;

23 ὃς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν Θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις;

24 τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι, καθὼς γέγραπται.

(...)

28 οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν, οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή,

29 ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι, οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

17 You call yourself a Jew, take confidence in the Law, boast in God,

18 know His will, discern between good and bad things in accordance with the teachings of the Law,

19 and have convinced yourself that you are able to show the way to the blind, to be the light for those who are in the dark,

20 to instruct the fools, to teach the immature, for you have been instructed in the knowledge and truth of the Law.

21 But, if you teach others, why do not you teach yourself? If you preach against theft, why do you steal?

22 If you preach against adultery, why do you commit adultery? If you detest idols, why do you rob temples?

23 If you boast in the Law, why do you dishonour God by transgressing the Law?

24 For “the name of God is being blasphemed among the Gentiles for your sake”, as it is written. (...)

28 For not the one who is outwardly a Jew, is a Jew, and not the outward circumcision of the flesh is a circumcision,

28 but the one who is a Jew in secret, is really a Jew, and the circumcision of heart in spirit – not in letter – is really a circumcision; such Jew does not receive honour from men, but from God.

In the first passage where boasting is mentioned (2:17-29), the addressee is “the Jew” (*Ἰουδαῖος*). The word itself is a kind of “umbrella term”, which in the writings of Paul can signify both Judaists and Jewish Christians<sup>1</sup>. In the present letter, however, it is more likely to signify a Jew who has not yet accepted the Gospel<sup>2</sup> and represents his nation as a whole. It was important to deal with this type of boasting first, since that was where the self-conceit of Jewish Christians had its roots.

The verse 12:17 serves as an introduction, defining the main topic of the unit: the addressee’s claims of being a Jew, taking confidence in the Torah, and boasting in God. It is

<sup>1</sup> See Gal. 2:13, 14, 15; Col. 4:11

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole (2002), pp. 197-200.

followed by an explanation of what is meant by the three objects mentioned in this introduction (2:18-20) and an extensive refutation of the addressee's claims, which are characterized as baseless (2:21-27). The verses 2:28-29 conclude the unit, summarizing the argument and defining the type of person that has the real right to make the above-mentioned claim; this conclusion is marked by the repetition of *Ἰουδαῖος*.

As Gathercole points out<sup>1</sup>, in the first verse of the passage Paul summarizes the two main aspects of Jewish boasting: national (*Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ*) and theological (*τῷ νόμῳ, ἐν Θεῷ*). The national aspect, however, is closely linked to the theological, which in its turn can be divided into three sub-aspects: monotheism, election, and eschatology.

The national pride of the Jews, as well as their self-conceited comparison to the non-Jews, are largely based on the assumption that the children of Israel, unlike the Gentiles, will be vindicated on the Day of the Last Judgement. The fact that in the immediately preceding passage of 2:1-16 Paul discusses at length the criteria of this Judgement, indirectly points to this important element of Jewish boasting. The same passage, however, reflects the apostle's own disapproval of this kind of boasting: he argues that a repentant and obedient Gentile will be justified by God (2:14-16), unlike an unrepentant ethnic Jew (2:4-5,12). The summary of this argument can be found in verse 11 of the same chapter: *οὐ γὰρ ἔστι προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ*.

However, the above-mentioned argument was not enough to combat Jewish boasting, which had a much more complex structure. The Jewish audience would, most probably, agree with Paul that disobedience and impenitence towards the Law of God lead to divine condemnation; but there was another important aspect to consider. As Gathercole points out<sup>2</sup>, many Jews were convinced that their blamelessness in respect of obedience to the Law is predefined by their election as the chosen people of God. Traces of this thought

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 203.

can be found in Jewish apocrypha. For example, in the Wisdom of Solomon it is asserted that God will always be with His people, and the author of the book expresses the opinion that an inevitable consequence of God's everlasting presence is the complete absence of sin from the life of Israel. Not only is the author confident of the future elimination of sinfulness (*οὐχ ἁμαρτησόμεθα δέ, εἰδότες ὅτι σοὶ λελογίσμεθα*), but he also considers this blamelessness to be an integral feature of both the past and the present of Jewish history: *οὔτε γὰρ ἐπλάνησεν ἡμᾶς ἀνθρώπων κακότεχνος ἐπίνοια, οὐδὲ σκιαγράφων πόνος ἄκαρπος*<sup>1</sup>.

It is not, however, in their blamelessness that these Jews boasted, but in their special relationship with God this blamelessness entailed. As Paul remarks, his Jewish interlocutor “boasts in God” (*καυχᾶσθαι ἐν Θεῷ*, 2:17), and not in his own qualities or achievements. At first glance, this appears to be a completely legitimate, “godly” kind of boasting, for it can be directly linked to the recommendations of the Old Testament: e.g. the passage from the Book of Jeremiah, 9:22-23, which Paul himself quotes in II Cor. 10:17 to describe acceptable boasting. But, in spite of this outward similarity, the object and goals of Jewish boasting differ vastly from Paul's own views on this notion, and the Apostle now begins a dispute with his (imaginary) Jewish interlocutor.

First of all, Paul discusses at length the sinfulness of the present-day Jewish community, exposing the sins that thrive in it in spite of its apparent obedience to and reliance upon the Law (vss. 21-24)<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the assumed blamelessness of the Jewish nation in fact does not exist, and therefore the relationship between God and the Jews, entailed by it, also becomes distorted. The apparent Jewish “obedience” turns out to be transgression of

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<sup>1</sup> *Wisdom of Solomon*, 15:2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion of sins constitutes evidence against the simplified view on Jewish boasting, held by the adepts of the so-called New Perspective, who argue that this boasting is based on the mere fact of possessing the Law rather than on one's obedience to it (see already Wilckens, 1974, p. 148: “nicht auf die eigene Gesetzerfüllung zielt denn ja auch das Rühmen des Juden, sondern auf den Besitz der Tora als Offenbarung Gottes”), since every Jew should be aware of the actual sinfulness of Israel. It is evident, however, that Paul is now trying to convince his imaginary opponent of his nation's sinfulness, and this must mean that such ideas were absent from the views of some Jews ; cf. Gathercole (2002), p. 211.

the Law (*παράβασις τοῦ νόμου*, 2:23a), and it is absurd to boast in something you do not have. Moreover, their boasting in God, which appeared to be so similar to that approved by Jeremiah, turns out to be a hidden blasphemy (*τὸν Θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις, τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται*, 2:23-24). Thus, Jewish boasting can on no account be “godly” and acceptable, as there is in fact no ground for it.

Having refuted the ideas of moral blamelessness, Paul proceeds to discussing the notion of election on a larger scale. As Gathercole points out<sup>1</sup>, Paul in fact has nothing against the assurance of salvation for all Israel, as it is mentioned, for example, in *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10. According to him, Israel *is* going to be saved – but now he raises the question of *whom* does Israel really include. For, as the Apostle himself points out later in the Epistle, “οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ” (Rom. 9:6b).

The traditional mark that the Jews used to indicate the boundaries of Israel, was circumcision. It was linked directly not only to the ethnic identity *per se*, but also to the religious one, marking the members of the group which was destined for salvation (as we have seen earlier in this discussion, ethnic and theological aspects of Jewish boasting were closely related). There are straightforward statements of this in rabbinic literature: “No person who is circumcised will go down to Gehenna”<sup>2</sup>. Paul seems to accept this boundary definition; in his interpretation, however, circumcision acquires a metaphysical rather than a physical significance<sup>3</sup>. He argues that physical circumcision alone, unaccompanied by the obedience to the Law, is going to bring judgement (*κρινεῖ*, 2:27) instead of benefit (*ὠφελεῖ*, 2:25) to an unrepentant and disobedient person, like his Jewish interlocutor. This physical circumcision is opposed to the spiritual one (*περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι*, 2:29), which evidently consists of genuine obedience to God. It is therefore not the first, but

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> *Exod. Rab.* 19 (81c); cf. Moo (1996), p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Seifrid (1992), pp. 64-65.

the second type of circumcision that marks a genuine Jew and defines the boundaries of Israel (οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν... ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, 2:28-29).

This argument almost excludes the ethnic component from the notion of salvation. Paul has just argued that many of the self-called “children of Israel” are in fact unrepentant sinners, and cannot therefore be regarded as Jews and members of the elected people<sup>1</sup>. There are, however, people among Gentiles who fulfil the Law and bear the mark of spiritual circumcision (ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, 2:15). These, in Paul’s opinion, definitely belong to Israel and will partake of justification and salvation. Thus, Jewish boasting turns out to be devoid of any substance, both theological and national, and therefore cannot be legitimate.

It is also interesting to note the distinction between “worldly” and “godly” honour (ἔπαινος) Paul makes in 2:28-29. He lists three main characteristics of each type, opposing them to each other:

ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ	vs	ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ
ἐν σαρκὶ	vs	ἐν πνεύματι
ἐξ ἀνθρώπων	vs	ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ

The first category refers to the present boasting of the Jews; it is “flesh-based” and opposed both to the spiritual aspect of one’s life and to God Himself. The second category is spiritual: this type of honour is associated with such an obvious term as πνεύμα and comes directly from God. We have already seen a similar expression (ἔπαινος ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ) in I

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<sup>1</sup> Therefore the verb ἐπινομάζειν in 2:17 may be regarded as a Middle Voice form rather than Passive: the interlocutor of Paul *calls himself* a Jew, but it turns out to be dubious whether he actually *is* one.

Cor. 4:5 linked to the notion of boasting; the apostle will return to this subject again further in the letter.

### 3.2.2 Rom. 3:27-30

3:27 Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη. διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως.

28 λογιζόμεθα οὖν πίστει δικαιῶσθαι ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.

29 ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ Θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ ἔθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν,

30 ἐπέιπερ εἷς ὁ Θεὸς ὃς δικαιώσκει περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

27 So, where is boasting? It has been excluded. By which law? That of works? No, by that of faith.

28 Therefore we believe that a person is justified by faith without works of the Law.

29 Or does God belong exclusively to the Jews? Is He not also God of the gentiles? Yes, He is also God of the Gentiles,

30 since there is one God, Who will justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith.

In this passage, Paul speaks about boasting in a rather harsh manner: he plainly declares that it has been “excluded” (*ἐξεκλείσθη*) from the life of humans. Does this mean that the apostle rejects *καύχησις* altogether? Not necessarily: if we examine the context of this passage in detail, we will see that the attitude Paul excludes, represents a specific kind of boasting.

Verses 3:27-30 serve as a conclusion to the line of argument, which we have examined before in 2:17-29 and on which Paul elaborates further in 2:30-3:26: that on the boasting of the Jews over against the Gentiles. The apostle has refuted Jewish claims; now, he summarizes his views on this type of boasting, introducing the unit by pointing back to Jewish *καύχησις* (3:27a, pointing back to 2:17) and then referring to all the main objects of the preceding discussion: justification through Torah (3:27b-28), ethnic aspect (3:29), and circumcision (3:30). The unit is knit together by the repetition of *πίστεως/πίστει*, as well as by chiasmic patterns of 3:27-28 and 3:29-30.

As Gathercole points out<sup>1</sup>, one can see here the pattern of Jewish ideas on justification: works → justification → boasting. That is to say, Jews consider themselves to be superior to the Gentiles on the grounds of possessing the Torah and, due to this fact,

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), pp. 226, 229-230.



being able to fulfil the commandments of Mosaic Law, which, as they believe, secures their future justification at the Final Judgement “both before and over against the gentiles”<sup>1</sup>. The Jewish interlocutor of Paul could argue that this type of boast is legitimate, for its pattern is similar to that of the boasting of Abraham, referred to further in the letter: *εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα* (4:2). This will be discussed later; now, let us have a closer look at the general arguments of Paul against this type of *καύχησις*.

In 3:27b Paul declares that boasting has been excluded by “the law of faith” (*νόμος πίστεως*), which stands in opposition to “the law of works” (*νόμος ἔργων*). In this way, the apostle makes an attack on the legalistic soteriology accepted by some of the Jews: mere obedience to the commandments of the Torah (“works”) is not the sole and fully assured way to justification, and boasting in it is completely unacceptable, for such boasting excludes faith in God’s promise of salvation<sup>2</sup>. Even if one professes to be boasting not in one’s own qualities and achievements, but in one’s special relationship with God, expressed and caused by possessing and fulfilling the Torah, in the end it is still reduced to self-assured pride in human deeds – for, after all, it is human achievements (fulfilling the commandments) that form its root<sup>3</sup>. Barrett puts it even stronger: according to him, boasting in this passage is “the attitude of the natural man, who seeks to establish his position independently of God”<sup>4</sup>. That is, boasting in this case is not just a legalistic view on salvation that turns into confidence in one’s own achievements, but rather this very self-assured confidence in human achievements that is trying to disguise itself as “trust in the Law”. If seen from this point, *καύχησις* is excluded not just because it has nothing to do

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 226. At this point, Gathercole agrees with the New Perspective that emphasizes the importance of the ethnic election aspect (the very fact of possessing the Torah) in Jewish boasting. The traditional approach failed to take this important aspect into consideration: e.g. C. H. Dodd (1959) and A. Nygren (1949) consider *καύχησις* of 3:27 to be a universal type of “pharisaic” boasting, while E. Käsemann (1980) does not even associate this excluded boasting with the Jews (according to him, it refers to a generalized “religious person”, p. 102), in spite of the fact that Paul directly points to the idea of justification on the basis of the Law.

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole (2002), pp. 228-229; Moo (1996), p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Moo (1996), p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Barrett (1969), p. 82.

with salvation, but rather because it stands in the way of the ultimate justification: a person who is over-confident in his own achievements, becomes unable to trust God’s promise of salvation, and therefore cannot be justified. In this way, *καύχησις* and faith/justification in this passage can be regarded as mutually exclusive terms.

Paul also names another reason why Jewish boasting should not be accepted. In verses 3:29-30, he argues that God is one and the same both for the Jews and the Gentiles. However, the Jewish boastful attitude towards justification seems to enter into conflict with this fact. For, if obedience to the Torah would be the only way to salvation, then God could only be the God of the Jews, and not of the Gentiles – for Gentiles have never been given the Torah, and therefore have had no possibility to fulfill its commandments<sup>1</sup>. Therefore “works of the Law” cannot be regarded as the reason for justification, and cannot by themselves establish a special relationship between people and their God. Thus, the boasting of the Jews is rejected as lacking proper grounds.

### 3.2.3 Rom. 4:1-3

4:1 Τι οὖν ἐροῦμεν Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν εὐρηκέναι κατὰ σάρκα;  
 2 εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραάμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα, ἀλλ’ οὐ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.  
 3 τί γὰρ ἡ γραφή λέγει; ἐπίστευσε δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.

1 So, what shall we say about the position of Abraham, our father according to the flesh?  
 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a reason to boast, but not before God.  
 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed in God, and this was reckoned to him as righteousness”.

The unit 4:1-3 refers to one of the most important characters of the Old Testament, Abraham, in the light of previously discussed Pauline views on boasting and justification. The particle *οὖν* helps to connect these verses to the preceding discussion of justification on the basis of obedience to Torah; yet 4:1-3 must be seen as a separate unit, for it deals with a specific problem that might arise before the above-mentioned views, namely the question of justification of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. In 4:1, Paul poses this question, gives his own answer to it in 4:2, and in 4:3 cites the Scripture to support his views on this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gathercole (2002), pp. 231-232; Moo (1996), p. 246.

topic. I prefer to separate this unit from 4:4-5, although both passages are related; the verses 4:4-5, dealing with reward vs. grace and supported by a quote from David in 4:6-8, have more to do with the Torah period, when it was already possible to be either *ἐργαζόμενος* or *μὴ ἐργαζόμενος*, while Abraham, as we will presently see, belongs to another era, and his situation is quite different.

In 4:1-3, Paul answers the possible counter-argument of a Jewish audience in respect of the above-mentioned pattern works → justification → boasting: as is known from Scripture and many ancient texts<sup>1</sup>, Abraham was considered the most righteous person that ever existed in Jewish history. Could not he be justified on the basis of such obedience? Could not he then (rightly) boast in this justification? And if he could, why could not his descendants, the Jews, do the same? This argument was especially important, for Abraham was regarded as the acknowledged ancestor of the whole Jewish nation. As Gathercole rightly observes, Abraham in this case is not just *an* example from the Scripture: he is *the* example, and “if Paul’s theology cannot accommodate him, it *must* be false”<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, Paul argues that the justification of Abraham was not on the basis of his works, but rather of his faith. To support this argument, he quotes the Book of Genesis 15:6, according to which it was Abraham’s faith (or “trust”) in God that led to his justification – works are not even mentioned there. In fact, Abraham stems from the era before the Law, and therefore it was not even possible for him to fulfil it: in a certain way, his position is similar to that of the Gentile Christians, who have never been given the Torah. Thus, the scriptural image of the patriarch appears to coincide perfectly with Paul’s own words in Rom. 3:28: *λογιζόμεθα οὖν πίστει δικαιοῦσθαι ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου*. Even Abraham has no grounds for boasting in his works, in spite of the fact that he was more righteous than anybody else. His *καύχημα* in this respect – if ever he let himself indulge in

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Gen. 26:5, Sir. 44:19-20, 1 Macc. 2:52.

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 233.

such – would be valid only in the eyes of humans, but not in the eyes of God (*οὐ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*). Thus, it has no positive value<sup>1</sup>, and must be dismissed (Rom. 3:27a).

### 3.2.4 Rom. 5:1-11

5:1 Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

2 δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν τῇ πίστει εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ἣ ἑστήκαμεν, καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ.

3 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται,

4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα,

5 ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχύνει, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν. (...)

10 εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολλῶ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ·

11 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν.

1 So, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through Whom we have been granted access by faith to this grace, in which we now stand; and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only in this, but we also boast in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

4 endurance produces a proven character, proven character produces hope,

5 and hope never puts one to shame, for the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given to us.

(...)

10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled with God through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved through His life;

11 and not only this, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received reconciliation.

In this passage, we come across an unexpected turn of Paul's argument. Throughout the previous four chapters, he has been rebuking boasting, and his forceful declaration in 3:27a about boasting being excluded, seems not to leave much space for argument. Here, however, the apostle suddenly passes to describing boasting as something legitimate and acceptable. At the first glance, this rapid change may appear strange. If, however, we examine this passage closer and compare it with the passages discussed earlier, we will see that what Paul introduces here, represents a totally different kind of boasting from the one discussed earlier in the Epistle. The unit begins with a reference to the previous discussion of justification by faith (5:1), which serves as a mark indicating that Paul is now going to discuss the new situation, in which Christians find themselves due to the above-mentioned

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke 16:15 : *οἱ δικαιοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁ δὲ Θεὸς γινώσκει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν· ὅτι τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὑψηλὸν βδέλυγμα ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ*. See also Moo (1996), pp. 260-261.

justification: the situation of restored relationship with God, which has been attained through Jesus Christ and implies free access to the grace of God (5:2a). Paul then proceeds to name specific results of being put right with God, namely boasting and hope, closely linked with each other (5:2b); both of these are strengthened through sufferings (5:3-4) and based on the love of God (5:5). The apostle supports his argument by providing the proof of this love, namely Christ's death for sinners (5:6-9), and concludes by referring once again to the reconciliation with God, attained through Jesus Christ (5:9-11), as well as to the related Christian boasting (5:11). References to this reconciliation (*εἰρήνη, καταλλαγή*), Jesus Christ (*διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*), and *καύχησις*, which mark the beginning and the end of the unit (5:1-2, 9-11), form an *inclusio* pattern, strengthening the unity of the passage.

It is true that, outwardly, Paul's "boastful" behaviour in this passage resembles that of the Jews. In 5:2, the apostle states the main object of Christian boasting: it is "hope of the glory of God". As Gathercole (2002) points out<sup>1</sup>, this "glory" most probably represents the divine glory of humanity, the special bond that existed between God and humans and that was lost after the fall of Adam and Eve. Now, this *δόξα* is going to be restored, and this is what Christians are hoping for – and boasting in. The same is suggested by other words and phrases that surround *καυχώμεθα* in this sentence: *δικαιωθέντες, εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*. This, of course, implies that it is not in their own qualities and achievements that Christians boast here, but in the hope of future salvation; their boasting is not human-centered, but God-centered, and therefore legitimate. However, at this point an important question may be asked: did not the Jews do the same? As we have seen in the preceding chapters of the Epistle, they also boasted in future vindication and in their special bond with God. In fact, even the vocabulary used in this passage is directly connected with that of the

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 256.

descriptions of a boasting Jew in 2:17 : Christians are described as *καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ Θεῷ*, just like the Jew, whose attitude Paul defines as “*καυχᾶσθαι ἐν Θεῷ*”. In fact, the similarity between the two types of boasting – combined with the striking difference in Paul’s attitude towards them – appears rather inconsistent. One can suggest that this somewhat odd similarity, reinforced by the use of vocabulary parallels, constitutes a rhetorical device that Paul uses for a better and more vivid exposition of the *differences* that exist between the two – it serves as a kind of invitation for the audience to compare both sides and discover the inner difference behind their apparent resemblance.

As we have just seen, both the Jews and the Christians can be described as *καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ Θεῷ*. However, Christian “boasting in God” also has an important definition attached to it, which the Jews lack: Christians do not just boast in God – they boast in Him “through Christ” (*διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, 5:11). This phrase is repeated twice in the passage: the special relationship with God, which has now been restored (*εἰρήνη, καταλλαγή*) and which also forms the grounds for the confidence of future salvation/vindication (*καταλλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα*, 5:10), said to be got through Christ – and because of Christ (*διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* and *ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ* also point to this). Thus, everything that Christians now have, everything that their present boast is based on, cannot in fact be regarded as their own accomplishment: it belongs exclusively to God and is received through God. The passive position of humans in this respect is emphasized by the use of the verb *λαμβάνω* (*ἐλάβομεν*) in 5:11, as well as by the word *χάρις* in 5:2: the blessed state of reconciliation and hope is not an achievement, but a work of divine grace. Thus, *καύχησις* described here is in fact devoid not only of self-confidence, but even of any attempt from the part of humans to refer to their possible role in

acquiring this hope of future vindication. As many scholars suggest<sup>1</sup>, it would be more correct in this case to translate *καύχησις* as “praising” or “exulting” rather than “boasting”, for the God-focused attitude described here is actually a manner of glorification and thanksgiving; it represents a “triumphant, rejoicing confidence – in God”<sup>2</sup>.

This is fundamentally different from the Jewish boasting. As we have seen in the previously discussed passages, the Jewish interlocutor of Paul bases his confidence in future vindication on the assumption that he fulfils the commandments of the Torah – that is, the basis of this confidence (and, consequently, of his boasting) in fact consists of his own good deed, his own accomplishments. Thus, if the Jew is saved, he owes this salvation mostly to himself, not to the divine grace. This attitude, of course, can easily lead one to a sense of proud self-assurance – for God seems to be almost removed from the scene. His only task, according to such an attitude, was to give people the Torah to fulfil. Thus, the claimed “boasting in God” of the Jewish interlocutor is in fact a veiled “boasting in oneself”.

Another difference between Jewish and Christian *καύχησις* lies in the principle of validity and proper grounds, which, as we have seen, plays an important role in Paul’s evaluation of boasting. The Jew bases his confidence on his assumed obedience to the Law – but, as Paul has argued in 2:17-25, this obedience is in fact non-existent, leaving boasting in it without grounds.

In Paul’s view, the situation with Christian *καύχησις* is completely different. As he argues in 5:1-11, such boasting is based on Christ’s death and resurrection – that is, on “God’s action in Christ”<sup>3</sup>. Divine action cannot be denied – and, therefore, the grounds for boasting in this case are more than solid, which renders this *καύχησις* legitimate.

Acceptable boasting has yet another important feature that distinguishes it from the boasting of the Jew: as Paul insists in 5:3, Christians boast even in their sufferings

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Barrett (1969), p. 103; Dodd (1959), p. 99; Gathercole (2002), p. 260; Moo (1996), p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Barrett (1969), p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 262.

(καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν). This may sound odd, but there is a deep theological meaning behind this statement, which is vital for the proper understanding of the nature of positive *καύχησις* in Paul's theology.

As Gathercole (2002) and Moo (1996) argue<sup>1</sup>, the reason why Christians choose to boast in their sufferings, is because these sufferings contribute to the development of human character, to the elevation of a human to a higher spiritual level, which is necessary for him to attain in order to gain access to the above-discussed "hope of divine glory". Verses 5:3-5 constitute evidence for this: in these verses, Paul brings forward the sequence of sufferings → endurance → experience → hope/confidence (ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ καταισχύνει, 5:5). This hope, as we have already seen, forms the basis of legitimate Christian boasting. But if one traces the hope to its own origins, one will find out that it is firmly rooted in suffering. Thus, suffering is represented here as the basic grounds for acceptable *καύχησις*.

If, however, one compares this description of boasting with those of previously discussed Epistles, the meaning of these verses will appear to be somewhat deeper. In 2 Cor. 11:30 and 12:5 Paul also speaks about boasting in one's weaknesses: *καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου*. As we have already seen in the course of discussion of 2 Corinthians, sufferings make one realize his own human weakness and cease relying solely on oneself; this, in turn, allows the grace (*χάρις*) and power (*δύναμις*) of God to be activated in one's life. In this case, suffering becomes a direct way to the blessed state of grace, instead of just playing an indirect role as one of the factors in the development of human character.

It is unlikely that this aspect of Christian boasting in one's sufferings is absent from Romans. The word *χάρις* used in the text to describe the present blessed state of Christians, implies similarity<sup>2</sup>, while the phrase *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις*

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), p. 257; Moo (1996), p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9.



ἡμῶν takes it even further. This “pouring of divine love” is not just a state, but an action of God’s grace and power that has been allowed to act in the life of Christians as a result of their sufferings. The development of character, of course, still plays an important role here – but the whole meaning of boasting in one’s sufferings is broader.

Boasting in sufferings is devoid of human egocentrism: the very essence of this boasting, as we have seen, consists in realizing one’s weakness and putting all one’s hope and trust in God. Thus, this type of *καύχησις* centres on God, and therefore is “godly” and legitimate. Again, one can say that in this case *καύχησις* can be translated as “rejoicing in” rather than “boasting in”, for it describes human joy and gratitude for the circumstances that allow them to establish a closer relationship with God.

The passage we have just examined, closes the main discussion of *καύχησις* in Romans. The term, however, is brought back into the argument once again in chapters 11 and 15.

### 3.2.5 Rom. 11:16-18

11:16 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα  
καὶ εἰ ἡ ρίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι.

17 Εἰ δὲ τινες τῶν κλάδων ἐξεκλάσθησαν,  
σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν ἐνεκεντρίσθης ἐν  
αὐτοῖς καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ρίζης καὶ τῆς  
ποιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου,

18 μὴ κατακαυχῶ τῶν κλάδων· εἰ δὲ  
κατακαυχᾶσαι, οὐ σὺ τὴν ρίζαν βαστάζεις,  
ἀλλ’ ἡ ρίζα σέ.

16 If the first-fruit is holy, so also is the dough; and if the root is holy, so also are the branches.

17 And if some of the branches were cut off, while you, a branch of a wild olive, were grafted in among them and now partake of the root and the goodness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast over the branches; and if you do boast, [it is still true that] it is not you that support the root, but the root supports you.

In chapters 2-5, Paul rebuked the arrogant boasting of the Jews (most probably including Jewish Christians) over those members of the Church who came from a Gentile background, and opposed it to a kind of boasting acceptable for all Christians, both Jewish and Gentile. However, in the present chapter of the letter we learn that it is not only Jews who indulge in negative *καύχησις*: there are problems of a similar kind among Gentile Christians, too, and Paul now proceeds to deal with this matter. In the unit of 11:16-18, his

main arguments against the negative *καύχησις* of the Gentiles can be found. Paul begins by stating that the branches (Jews) cannot be less holy than the tree (faith in the true God), on which they grew. He then provides a logical outcome of this statement: if Jews are holy through the religious background they stem from, than Gentile Christians are originally unholy (*ἀγριέλαιος*) because of their pagan past, and can only partake of the holiness by being attached to the Jewish root. If this is so, concludes the apostle, the Gentiles have no right to boast over the Jews, indeed (11:18). The unity of the passage is emphasized by the chiasmic pattern of *ρίζα / κλάδοι* in 11:16-17a and by the parallelism of the same words in 11:17b-18.

As suggested by 11:18, certain Christians of Gentile origin tended to regard themselves as superior to Jewish Christians. The term Paul chooses to describe this behaviour, is *κατακαυχάομαι* – a word found nowhere else in his writings. The prefix *κατα-* indicates the feature of comparison and superiority that characterizes this kind of boasting<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it appears to be a negative kind of *καύχησις*, best translated into English as “arrogance”, which involves regarding oneself superior to one’s fellow humans.

Most probably, this arrogant boasting of Gentile Christians has nothing (or very little) to do with anti-Semitism as such. The object of their boasting was not ethnic, but theological<sup>2</sup>. The line of argument in verses 5:19-24 demonstrates this clearly: it was not in their origin that Gentile Christians boasted, but rather in their special relationship with God, similar to their Jewish opponents. They probably believed that the salvation promised by the coming of Christ, did not just equate all believers to each other before the Lord, regardless of their ethnic and spiritual background, but actually caused a switch in this relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the New Testament, *κατακαυχάομαι* is used only in James, 2:13 and 3:14. In both cases, the meaning of the term includes both comparison and state of superiority. See also Louw & Nida (1988), p. 431.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Moo (1996), pp. 703-704.

between God and humans, taking the position of “chosen people” away from the Jews and giving it to Gentiles<sup>1</sup>.

Paul rebukes this arrogant attitude, reminding the Gentile Christians that they in fact owe their position of believers and their hope of salvation to the “root” (*ρίζα*) of Jewish religious tradition (11:16). It was Jewish prophets, patriarchs and righteous men who patiently awaited and prepared the way for the coming Messiah, and it was among the Jews that Christ finally came. Therefore, any sense of superiority and pride of Gentiles over the Jews is unwarranted: it was Gentiles who, through the grace of God, were adopted into Israel, and not vice versa (11:17). The Gentiles simply have no grounds to boast in this respect.

Thus, Paul exposes the essence of *καύχησις* among the Gentile Christians, namely its baselessness, by reminding them of the root of their faith. Lacking justification of claims, as we have already seen in previously discussed passages, is a distinctive mark of a negative kind of boasting.

### 3.2.6 Rom. 15:15-19a

15:15 *τολμηρότερον δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἀπὸ μέρους, ὡς ἐπαναμνησκῶν ὑμᾶς, διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεισάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ*

16 *εἰς τὸ εἶναί με λειτουργὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἔθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ.*

17 *ἔχω οὖν καύχησιν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν·*

18 *οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω λαλεῖν τι ὧν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἔθνῶν λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ,*

19 *ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Θεοῦ, ὥστε με ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,*

15 Brothers, I wrote to you somewhat more boldly at certain points, in order to remind you, through the grace I received from God,

16 that I am a servant of Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, acting as a priest of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles is accepted, sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

17 Thus, I have boasting in Christ Jesus about things related to God;

18 for I shall not dare speak of anything that was not done by Christ through me for the obedience of the Gentiles in word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and portents, in the power of the Spirit of God, in such a way that I spread the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem and its surroundings to the Illyrian land.

20 I also saw to it that I preached not in those parts, where Christ had already been proclaimed, so as not to build upon other people's basement,

21 but, as it is written, “those who have not been informed about him, shall see, and those who have not heard about him, shall learn”.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 11:19 : *ἐξεκλάσθησαν οἱ κλάδοι, ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρισθῶ.*

20 οὕτω δὲ φιλοτιμούμενον  
εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὠνομάσθη  
Χριστός, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἀλλότριον θεμέλιον  
οἰκοδομῶ,  
21 ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται, οἷς οὐκ  
ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ οὐκ  
ἀκηκόασι συνήσουσι.

In the last passage from Romans that deals with boasting, Paul adds another dimension to legitimate *καύχησις*.

The discussion begins by reminding the audience about Paul's apostolic mission: proclaiming the Gospel among the Gentiles and leading them to God (15:15-16). The apostle admits that he "has a boast" (*καύχησις*, 15:17, 18b) in Christ Jesus on the basis of his works. He then proceeds to explain why he adds *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* as qualification of *καύχησις* (15:18-21): this boasting is not of the "worldly", arrogant kind, because he does not boast in anything but what God Himself has done through him (15:18-19) and, moreover, does not try to usurp anybody else's achievements (15:20-21). Double reference to the Holy Spirit (*ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ / ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Θεοῦ*) contribute to the unity of the argument.

One can notice at once that Paul does not attribute to himself any of the good deeds he mentions. Just before referring to his apostolic activity, Paul states that he regards these deeds not as his own achievements, but rather as works of divine grace that have been granted to him (*τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ*)<sup>1</sup>. He declares that it was not himself, but the power of God that performed everything (*ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Θεοῦ*); the good things were not done *by* him, but *through* him by Christ – Paul himself is nothing but an instrument (*κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ*). He refuses to choose as an object of his *καύχησις* anything that was not performed by God himself – that is, his own human

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Τρεμπέλας (1989), p. 655.

qualities and accomplishments. Boasting in these things, according to Paul, would be *τόλμημα* (*οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω*), which has a negative connotation here and can be translated as “arrogance” or “boldness”<sup>1</sup>.

It is interesting to note the mention of “building upon other people’s basement” (15:20), which evidently parallels *ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις* and *ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι* in 2 Cor. 10:15-16, discussed earlier in this paper. This is, most probably, another brief reference to Paul’s Corinthian opponents; as Kümmel<sup>2</sup> argues, the Letter to the Romans was written in Corinth, during Paul’s last visit there that had been preceded by composition of 2 Corinthians. Thus, the issue of the opponents might still be unsolved at that time or at least might still be fresh in Paul’s mind; and, although there is no indication that similar problems existed in Rome, the apostle might want to prevent them from arising there as well. He composed the letter while preparing for his first visit to the Roman Christian community<sup>3</sup>, and did not want this visit to appear as an attempt to do the very thing he had just fought against in Corinth: usurping the place of a spiritual leader in a community he had not found. Just as in 2 Corinthians, the ministry work is closely linked here with *καύχησις*; thus, Pauline ideas on the issue appear to be similar to those expressed in 2 Cor. 10:12-18 – in order to be legitimate, one’s boasting must be based on true facts and kept within the set limits.

The essence of “godly” *καύχησις* is summarized in verse 15:17: it is boasting “in Christ” (*ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* – this, as we have seen, consists in acknowledging the works and gifts of the Lord and praising Him for these), the object of which is formed exclusively of things that are directly connected with God (*τὰ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*). Thus, *καύχησις* of this

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<sup>1</sup> Τρεμπέλας (1989), p. 655; Moo (1996), p. 891.

<sup>2</sup> Kümmel (1975), p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> Kümmel (1975), p. 312.

kind centres mostly on God and His works, and is devoid of human arrogance – this is what makes it legitimate.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Thus, we have seen that in the Letter to the Romans the notion of *καύχησις* is closely connected with that of election and ultimate justification/salvation of the faithful. Just like in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul also makes a distinction here between two types of *καύχησις*: “worldly” and “godly”. The type of boasting largely depends on the validity of the views one has on salvation and one’s relationship with God, as well as on the main direction and object of boasting (i.e. whether it is mostly directed towards and based on God and His works or human accomplishments).

“Worldly” *καύχησις* is described as *καύχησις ἐν σαρκὶ* (2:28) - a typical Pauline expression for boasting of this kind, which we have already seen in the previously discussed letters. It is based on one’s ethnic attributes and “outwardly pious” human achievements – *ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ* (2:28), which is paralleled by *ἐν προσώπῳ* of 2 Cor. 5:12 – and results in “worldly” honour (*ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*, 2:29), as opposed to the honour received from God (*ἔπαινος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, 2:29, also mentioned in 1 Cor. 4:5).

“Godly” boasting, on the contrary, cannot be connected with human qualities and achievements in any way, even if these achievements are pious deeds performed in accordance with the commandments of the Torah (*ἐν νόμῳ*, 2:23). Acceptable *καύχησις*, according to Paul, consists in recognizing all good deeds and events, including the assured hope of salvation, to be works of divine grace, and praising the Lord for them. In these instances, the Greek term *καύχησις* could be understood as “giving praise” or “rejoicing”. Positive boasting cannot involve comparison with, and a sense of superiority over, one’s fellow humans: the term *κατακαυχάομαι* (11:18, with the superiority-indicating prefix of

κατα-), bears a distinctly negative connotation in the text. Just like in the other discussed letters, boasting in Romans have to be properly grounded in order to be considered acceptable – any boasting based on false assumptions or involving human achievements, is strictly denounced. Unlike “worldly” boasting, the “godly” equivalent is based on one’s inner qualities, hidden from human society, but valuable in the eyes of God (ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, ἐν πνεύματι, and καρδίας, 2:29, as also mentioned in II Cor. 5:12) and consists of “boasting in the Lord” (ἐν τῷ Θεῷ, 5:11 / ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 15:17), just as we have seen it in the previously discussed letters.

## **4. Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the remaining three genuine letters of Paul, namely Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians, the notion of *καύχησις* does not occupy a position as prominent as it does in Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Nevertheless, boasting does occasionally appear in discussions, and it is important to examine these occurrences in order to complete the picture of Paul's views on this notion.

### **4.2 Galatians**

The Letter to Galatians was addressed to Christians of either the ethnic Galatian territory in central Asia Minor or the Roman province of Galatia, which also included Phrygia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Paphlagonia, Isauria, and parts of Pontus. We will not discuss the so-called “North Galatian” and “South Galatian” theories now, for it does not have direct relevance to the object of this study. Whatever the exact territory of Paul's “Galatia” may be, it is clear that the addressees of the letter were a mixed Christian community of Jews and Gentiles, where Gentiles prevailed in number, but were nevertheless rather liable to the influence of Jewish religious tradition. The main purpose of Paul's letter to them was to combat the attempts of “Judaization”, which evidently constituted a serious problem in the Galatian churches. As becomes clear from the text of the letter, certain missionaries of Jewish origin<sup>1</sup> insisted that, in addition to baptism, Christians of Gentile origin should also be circumcised and follow other requirements of the Law – that is, they preached a similar legalistic attitude towards faith and salvation that Paul addresses in Romans. That is why both occurrences of *καύχησις* in Galatians are closely connected with Jewish legalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Probably the same opponents Paul responds to in 1 Corinthians. See e.g. Tarazi (1994), pp. 10-11.



#### 4.2.1 Gal. 6:4-5

6:4 τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος,  
καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἔξει καὶ  
οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον·  
5 ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.

4 Let everyone check on one's own deeds, and then  
find a reason to boast in oneself only, not in others;  
5 for everyone will bear one's own load.

This unit is a part of a wider argument against judging one another (6:1-5); in verses 6:4-5, Paul deals with a particular aspect of this problem, namely with boasting based on comparison. In 6:4, the apostle recommends his flock to judge themselves rather than others, and in 6:5 provides a reason for this recommendation: everyone will be judged according to his own deeds, and therefore there is no point to get involved with the others' behaviour. The main idea, as well as unity of the passage is emphasized by the chiasmic pattern of *ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ... ἕκαστος* and *ἕκαστος... τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον*.

The apostle insists that one should only boast in what concerns oneself, and not in things that concern any other person. In the context of the preceding verses (6:1-2), where Paul describes the proper Christian attitude towards brothers and sisters who have sinned, the main object of this *καύχημα εἰς τὸν ἕτερον* becomes clear: it is, most probably, the sins of another person that one takes as grounds for boasting in one's own "righteousness"<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the essence of this *καύχημα* turns out to be arrogance and a sense of superiority over one's fellow humans; it is closely related to Jewish *καύχημα ἐν νόμῳ* (Rom. 2:23) and Gentile *κατακαυχάομαι* (Rom. 11:18) that Paul opposes in Romans.

Along with rebuking *καύχημα εἰς τὸν ἕτερον*, Paul seems to accept *καύχημα εἰς ἑαυτὸν*. It is unlikely, however, that this "boasting in oneself" implies self-praise, for in the immediately preceding verse 6:3 Paul straightforwardly rejects any possibility of having a high opinion on oneself<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the main issue here appears to be not one's qualities *per se*, but rather the discouragement of judging one another: Paul recommends the Galatians to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Τρεμπέλας (1989), p. 764.

<sup>2</sup> εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ᾧ, ἑαυτὸν φρεναπατᾶ.

check on themselves both for good and bad things (*τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος; ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει*) rather than on others. Considering the context of the preceding verse, *καύχημα* here is rather neutral: it does not involve either comparison with others or extolling oneself, and therefore is neither rejected nor really endorsed.

#### 4.2.2 Gal. 6:12-14

6:12 ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα μὴ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται.

13 οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτετημημένοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρα σαρκὶ καυχῶνται.

14 ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται καὶ γὼ τῷ κόσμῳ.

6:12 Those who force you to get circumcised, just want to make a fair show in the flesh; they only do it in order not to be persecuted for the sake of the cross of Christ.

13 For these circumcised ones do not even keep the Law themselves, and yet they want you to be circumcised, in order to boast in your flesh.

14 I, for my part, shall not boast in anything but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world was crucified for me, and I was crucified for the world.

In this passage, Paul deals directly with the problem of Judaization in the Galatian church – in this case, with the Jewish missionaries' demand for circumcision. According to Paul, the real reason of these demands is pride or “boasting” – that of a distinctly negative kind (6:12). The apostle then substantiates his views by stating that his opponents do not themselves do what they demand of their converts (6:13), and concludes by contrasting their position with his own (6:14). Mentioning twice *σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ* (6:12, 14) and *καυχᾶσθαι* (6:13, 14), which form a chiasmic pattern, helps to emphasize the main idea of the passage: Paul demonstrates that both his boasting and his attitude towards the concept of the cross (in this case directly related to *καύχησις*) are the exact opposite of those of his opponents.

Jewish missionaries demanded circumcision from their Gentile converts on the pretext of fulfilling the requirements of the Law – but, as Paul now argues, they do not in fact fulfill the Law themselves (6:13a – this strongly reminds us of Paul's rebuking of the

Torah-boasting Jew in Rom. 2:17-23). Thus, the real goal of their demands, according to Paul, is “boasting in the flesh” (6:12<sup>1</sup>, 13). The term *σάρξ*, that qualifies this type of boasting, exposes its “worldly” nature: it is personal honour, taking pride in their role of converters (of which circumcision would be an evident mark), as well as retaining their status in the contemporary non-Christian society<sup>2</sup>, that these missionaries really seek<sup>3</sup>. Both the object and the goal of their *καύχησις* are external and closely linked to “worldly” notions of pride.

To this negative “worldly” boasting of Jewish missionaries Paul opposes his own “godly” *καύχησις* – that in the cross of Christ Jesus. He claims that not only is he not afraid to suffer for the sake of the cross, as his opponents (6:12), but, moreover, the ultimate sacrifice of the cross that Christ performed, as well as salvation attained through this sacrifice, is the only thing *he* would let himself boast in – that is, Paul does not take pride in his own achievements (in spite of the fact that he has converted so many people to Christianity), but focuses solely on the works of the Lord and praises Him for them. Paul’s *καύχησις* in this case is actually a form of thanksgiving.

Another important aspect of boasting in the cross is the fact that such boasting overturns the traditional system of values of the contemporary society, similar to that of 1 Cor. 1:27-28. The cross, an instrument of execution, would be perceived by people of the Graeco-Roman world as a symbol of utmost humiliation; Paul, however, makes it the object of his boasting, as it is through this humiliation of the Lord Himself that salvation came to mankind. This reminds one of the boasting in weakness Paul introduces in 2 Corinthians, especially of 12:9 (*ἡ γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται*) and 12:10 (*ὅταν γὰρ*

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<sup>1</sup> *ἐνπροσωπιῆσαι* (lit. “make a fair show”) can be seen as a synonym for *καυχῆσωνται* in 6:13 : both verbs refer to self-display, attempts to create a nice picture of oneself in the eyes of others.

<sup>2</sup> *ἵνα μὴ τῷ στανρῶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται* – this probably refers to accusations of “breaking the Law” from the part of Judaists, which the missionaries tried to avoid.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Τρεμπέλας (1989), p. 764.

ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι), where weakness and humiliation appear as necessary conditions for the power of God to spring into power.

### 4.3 Philippians

#### 4.3.1 Phil. 1:25-26

1:25 καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθώς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ  
συμπαραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν  
προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως,  
26 ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ  
Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν  
πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

25 I am convinced that I shall stay with all of you for  
your progress and joy of faith,  
26 so that your boasting about me becomes abundant  
in Christ Jesus through my presence among you.

The unit 1:25-26 begins with a statement of Paul's confidence of his future contacts with the Christian community of Philippi (1:25a), followed by the mention of the outcomes of this contacts, namely progress, joy, and boasting of the Philippians (1:25b-26a). Another mention of Paul's future visit (*παρουσία*, 6:26b) concludes this small unit, forming a chiasmic pattern with 6:25a.

In this passage, Paul not only approves of the Philippians' boasting, but even wishes that the reasons for this boasting (*καύχημα*) may increase even more. This may seem quite natural, for Paul clearly states that the boasting he wishes to "overflow" is of a "godly" kind: it is *καύχημα ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. However, a closer examination will show that there is also an additional definition attached to *καύχημα*: it is not only *ἐν Χριστῷ*, but also *ἐν ἐμοὶ* (that is, in Paul himself). So, is Paul transgressing his own principles and recommending his flock to give him honour for what he has done for them? To understand this, we must now closely examine the object of this assumed boasting of Philippian Christians.

Immediately after mentioning *καύχημα ἐν ἐμοὶ*, Paul specifies what this boasting is concerned with: the Philippians' *καύχημα* will increase due to the apostle's presence at the Christian community of Philippi (*διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας*). The purpose of this presence

is clear: in his apostolic status, Paul visits the Churches in order to proclaim the Gospel, to deal with spiritual problems that may appear within a specific community and to strengthen his flock's faith – in other words, to preach. In the present passage, Paul mentions the probable outcomes of his visit to Philippi: it will be the spiritual progress of the Philippian Christians, as well as joy that naturally results from such progress (*προκοπήν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως*). Thus, Philippians here are supposed to boast not in Paul's own qualities and achievements, but rather in the outcomes of his visit to their community<sup>1</sup>, which are spiritual: Paul appears here as a mere instrument, a transmitter of divine grace and gifts. It is these gifts, as well as the increased knowledge of and relationship with the Lord that form the Philippian *καύχημα*. Thus, it agrees with the principle of “boasting in the Lord”, the determinant for acceptable boasting to Paul, as expressed by Jeremiah. The apostle is not seeking any personal honour here, nor are the Philippians to get anything of this kind from their boasting. The very term *καύχημα* in this case can be regarded as a synonym for the preceding expression *χαρὰ τῆς πίστεως* and can be rendered as “joy” or “giving praise”.

#### 4.3.2 Phil. 2:14-16

2:14 πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν καὶ  
 διαλογισμῶν,  
 15 ἵνα γένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι, τέκνα  
 Θεοῦ ἀμόμητα ἐν μέσῳ γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ  
 διεστραμμένης, ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες  
 ἐν κόσμῳ,  
 16 λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες, εἰς καύχημα ἔμοι εἰς  
 ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον  
 οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα.

14 Do everything without complaints and arguments,  
 15 in order to become blameless and perfect,  
 blameless children of God in the midst of the wicked  
 and perverse generation, in which you shine like  
 luminaries in the world,  
 16 holding out the word of life – so that I can have a  
 boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour  
 in vain.

The unit of 2:14-16 deals with the process of salvation: Paul begins it by recommending his flock a certain way of behaviour (2:14), describes the desired outcomes of it (2:15) and concludes by naming the final result: the Philippians will be saved and boasted of before the Lord by Paul, their spiritual leader (2:16). The notion of *καύχημα* is

<sup>1</sup> This relation between *καύχημα* and *προκοπήν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως* is emphasized by means of contextual chiasm between 1:25a-26b and 1:25b-26a.

used here once again, yet the roles have been switched: in this case, unlike in 1:25-26, it is Paul himself who expects to boast in his flock on the Day of the Last Judgement (*εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ*). But, in spite of the role change, the nature of this *καύχημα* is basically the same as in the previously discussed passage.

The grounds of Paul's future boasting consist of spiritual qualities of his Philippian flock: their moral blamelessness, firm resistance to the temptations of the world, and faithfulness to God (2:14-15). These qualities developed largely as a result of Paul's ministry work, which he now admits by mentioning his toils (2:16b). This does not mean, however, that Paul is going to boast in his own achievements: as we have just seen in Phil. 1:25-26, the apostle does not regard the spiritual progress of the Philippians as something he performed or will perform himself, but rather as works of divine grace performed by Christ *through* him<sup>1</sup>. Paul himself is nothing but an instrument. Thus, his "boasting" in fact consists of praising the Lord for the work He performed, as well as rejoicing for the sake of the Philippian flock that has attained salvation<sup>2</sup>. Blamelessness of the Philippians can also serve as a proof for his own obedience to the Lord, who sent him out to preach – in this aspect, Paul's *καύχημα* is similar to that in 2 Cor. 1:14, discussed earlier in this paper.

#### 4.3.3 Phil. 3:2-4

3:2 Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν·

3 ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ Πνεύματι Θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες,

4 καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχω πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί.

2 Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for the mutilation;

3 for it is us who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus rather than basing our confidence on the flesh,

4 although I have reasons for being confident of the flesh, too.

The unit of 3:2-4 is introduced by triple repetition of *βλέπετε*, each followed by a negative characteristic in respect of Paul's opponents (3:2), whose attitude towards the ministry work is then contrasted with that of Paul himself and his flock (3:3), while at the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. 15:18, discussed earlier. 1 Cor. 15:10b is also relevant, especially because of similarities in vocabulary: Paul clearly states that it was not himself who *ἐκοπίασε*, but the grace of God acting through him (*περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα, οὐκ ἐγὼ δέ, ἀλλ' ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σὺν ἐμοί*).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fee (1995), pp. 249-250.

same time it is asserted that Paul is in no way inferior to the opponents (3:4). This contrast is emphasized by assonance of the opposed *κατατομή / περιτομή* (3:2-3), as well as by the chiasmic pattern of *ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες / πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί* (3:3-4).

In this passage, Paul opposes the same problem that he dealt with in Galatians: attempts at Judaization. Apparently the opponents of Paul or their followers (whom he now refers to as *κακοὶ ἔργαται* and *κύνες* – both extremely humiliating terms) have reached Philippi, too, and the issues of relevance/irrelevance of circumcision and strict Torah observance for Gentile Christians have come to light.

Just as he does in Gal. 6:13-14, Paul introduces here two mutually opposed types of boasting: that “in the flesh” (*ἐν σαρκί*) and that “in Christ Jesus” (*ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*). Boasting “in the flesh” bears a distinctly negative connotation. The word *πεποιθότες*, associated with it, not only serves as a parallel for the preceding *καυχώμενοι*, but also exposes the nature and content of this boasting: it is not just taking pride in one’s qualities and achievements before other humans, but an arrogant reliance on one’s “good works” and “observance of the Law”, the conviction that these works alone constitute sufficient grounds for one’s vindication on the Day of the Last Judgement. We have previously come across the same legalistic approach to salvation, as well as the arrogant boasting associated with it, in Romans (especially in verses 2:17-23 and 3:27). Now, Paul once again “excludes” such an attitude, which eliminates the significance of divine grace and brings human works into prominence.

To emphasize the absolute lack of value in boasting about one’s outward deeds and appearance – however dignified and pious these may seem – Paul demonstratively refuses such behaviour on a personal level. He states that if anybody has sufficient grounds for “boasting in the flesh”, it is him, and verses 3:5-6 that follow, prove the proof for this: Paul is a genuine Jew, he was circumcised just a few days after his birth, and for many years has

been a strict observer of the Torah-based way of life, as well as of other Jewish customs of his times. All these could bring him much honour in the eyes of those who esteem such outward characteristics; nevertheless, he refuses to attach any value to this kind of honour. Personal characteristics for Paul are not something he could boast about – it is boasting “in Christ” (that is, in the Lord, as recommended by Jeremiah) that he prefers.

This "godly" boasting is a direct opposite of *πεποιθήσεις ἐν σαρκί*. Its main focus is not on human appearances and not even on the Torah, but directly on Christ Himself. Boasting of this kind means putting all one's trust and hope of salvation in the Lord and His grace, and not in human deeds, even the most commendable ones – this is why Paul regards it to be acceptable.

#### **4.4. 1 Thessalonians**

##### **4.4.1 1 Thes. 2:19-20**

2:19 τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος  
καυχήσεως ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ  
Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ  
παρουσίᾳ;  
20 ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ.

19 For who will be our hope or joy or crown of boasting, if not you, before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?  
20 For you are our glory and our joy.

The unit of 2:19-20 consists of two parts: a question (2:19) and an answer (2:20). The verses are knit together by the repetition of *γὰρ* in the beginning of each verse, which serves here as a discourse mark, as well as by the chiasmic pattern of *χαρά / χαρά* and *στέφανος καυχήσεως / δόξα*.

In this passage, Paul once again speaks about *καύχησις* in an eschatological context: he says that the Thessalonian Christians are going to be “the crown of his boasting” before the Lord on the Day of the Last Judgment. The object and goal of this boasting are similar to those we have seen in previously discussed eschatology-related passages: it is confidence (hope) of salvation and joy for the salvation of others.



*Καύχησις* here is closely associated with the terms *ἐλπίς* and *χαρά*, as well as *δόξα* (glory/honour). This last term could make one suppose that Paul seeks to attain personal honour by boasting of the fact that he converted the Thessalonians and contributed to their spiritual progress; the other two terms, however, contradict this possible supposition and reveal the true nature of Paul's present *καύχησις* and future *δόξα*.

*Ἐλπίς*, as we have already mentioned, refers to the confident hope of future vindication/salvation – it is the same Christian hope that we have already seen in Rom. 5:2-5. In Romans, hope of salvation formed grounds for “godly” boasting; in the present passage, it shares the same grounds with *καύχησις*. These grounds are Thessalonians themselves, their faith and spiritual progress, which on the Day of the Last Judgment will serve as a proof that Paul has been faithful to his duty of preaching Gospel. In this way, the virtuousness of the Thessalonian flock provides the apostle with hope to be vindicated – and for exactly the same reason makes it possible for them to boast (or rather “to be confident / to rejoice”) in this future vindication<sup>1</sup>.

*Καύχησις* also shares grounds with *χαρά*, mentioned twice in the passage. The object of this joy is the future salvation of Thessalonians themselves, due to their faithfulness to Christ. Therefore, *καύχησις* in this case represents a kind of joyous fatherly pride in one's children rather than arrogance; it does not aim at any personal glory or benefit, and this is why it becomes a source of true *δόξα* – that which comes from God<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Paul's views on *καύχησις* in Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians are parallel to those expressed in Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. The apostle draws a clear distinction

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<sup>1</sup> The same type of *καύχησις/καύχημα* has been discussed earlier in Phil. 2:14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ἔπαινος* in Rom. 2:29.

between two types of boasting: "godly"/positive (*ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*) and "worldly"/negative (*ἐν σαρκί*). "Godly" boasting derives from God and His gifts, as well as hope of future salvation that result from these, and not on human qualities and achievements; for this reason, it cannot involve any kind of comparison between humans (Rom. 6:5) and does not aim at personal benefit or glory. Through the notion of *καύχησις ἐν σταυρῷ* (Gal. 6:14) Paul introduces a new system of values, which overturns that of the contemporary Graeco-Roman society: an instrument of humiliation becomes an object of boasting and the means to activate God's power.

“Worldly” *καύχησις*, on the other hand, is based on outward good appearance of humans, as well as on one's individual achievements, including converting others to Christianity. It involves divisive comparison of individuals to each other, and its main goal is personal honour; this is the reason why Paul considers such boasting unacceptable.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

As follows from the above analysis, one can note a remarkable consistency in use of boasting-related terms in Pauline literature. This is probably due to the influence of Jeremiah 9:22-23 – the text that Paul cites twice<sup>1</sup> and paraphrases several times<sup>2</sup>. The most often used terms are *καύχησις*, *καυχάομαι* and *καύχημα*; the former two terms describe the activity of boasting, with the verbal aspect dominating, while the latter refers to the object of or reason for boasting, where the nominal aspect dominates. However, the difference between these terms in Paul is very subtle and does not have any significant influence on their connotations<sup>3</sup>.

The notion of boasting has two main aspects in Paul. The first one is the basis/grounds for boasting, which includes one's past and present actions, origin, qualities, current status (both in the society and in one's relationship with God), et cetera. The second one is the reason (reasons) for boasting, its aim and function, which include such diverse goals as enhancing one's status, expresses a sense of pride, giving one one's due praise, and keeping up one's confidence in future salvation. On this Paul imposes two main categories, by which he deals with various polemical situations; we may call these categories "worldly" and "godly". The first one is associated with terms such as *σάρξ*, *κόσμος*, *αἰσχύνη*, *μωρία*, *ἀφροσύνη*, *φύσημα*, *ἄνθρωπος*, and *ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ*; the second one is associated with *Κύριος*, *Χριστός*, *ἔπαινος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *καρδία*, *χαρά*, *ἀλήθεια*, *ἐλπίς*, *δόξα*, and *ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ*. Paul disapproves of the first category and claims that it should be excluded from the life of Christians (Rom. 3:27); the second, on the contrary, is regarded to be acceptable and sometimes even useful.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 5:11; Rom. 15:17; 1 Cor. 15:31; Phil. 1:25, 3:3.

<sup>3</sup> Thus Louw & Nida (1988), p. 431.

As Gathercole rightly observes<sup>1</sup>, there is a strong link between boasting and eschatology in Pauline letters, and the distinction between “worldly” and “godly” boasting is largely based on the difference of views on one’s final vindication at the *eschaton*, which exists between Paul and his opponents. However, as the present analysis has shown, the eschatological aspect forms but a part of the general Pauline notion of *καύχησις*, which also has an important social function and plays a significant role in the discussion of social matters such as the issue of the apostolic status, distinction on the basis of one’s qualities, and the unity of Christians. Paul uses the notions of “worldly” and “godly” *καύχησις* for various rhetorical purposes, in order to support his own position, both spiritual and social, and counter the arguments of his opponents, accusing them of “wordly” behaviour and contrasting it with his own “godly” attitude.

“Worldly” boasting in Pauline letters focuses on human qualities and achievements – therefore it is often described as *καύχησις κατὰ σάρκα*<sup>2</sup> / *ἐν προσώπῳ*<sup>3</sup> or *ἐν ἀνθρώποις*<sup>4</sup>. These human reasons for boasting may differ in content. Some people can boast of their origin (especially their descent from Abraham and the fact of belonging to the Jewish people in general) or the social status and honour they receive from their community, as well as their “worldly wisdom” (*σοφία σαρκική*)<sup>5</sup>, which includes rhetorical skills and other abilities of the same kind, corresponding to social standards of the Graeco-Roman culture. Others can boast of their own good deeds, such as converting people to their faith, or obedience to the commandments, claiming that this obedience ensures their future vindication at the final judgment. But despite these outward differences, the nature and goals of “worldly” *καύχησις* remain the same: it aims at personal glory and/or the profit of those who practice it.

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2002), pp. 261-262.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 11:16; Gal. 6:13; Phil. 3:3.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 5:12.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 3:21.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 1:12.

In many cases, “worldly” *καύχησις* lacks sufficient grounds. It can be based on false assumptions, such as evaluating Christians according to social standards instead of the spiritual or moral ones, or the idea that final vindication and salvation are the direct result of one’s outward behaviour or that one can enjoy a closer relationship with God on the basis of one’s origin: this type of boasting is dealt with in the Letter to the Romans. In fact, the very idea of evaluating humans by humans is unacceptable to Paul: according to him, such evaluation is beyond human abilities, and therefore will always be premature and invalid<sup>1</sup>.

Sometimes “worldly” boasting can involve a derivative honour, such as claiming for oneself the achievements (especially the honour resulting from these) of other people<sup>2</sup>. This falseness is one of the factors that render this type of boasting negative and unacceptable to Paul. It will be exposed sooner or later, covering the boaster with shame (*αἰσχύνη*)<sup>3</sup>; this, together with the above-mentioned inadequateness of human evaluation, are the reasons why “worldly” boasting is characterized as *ἀφροσύνη*<sup>4</sup>. This type of *καύχησις* plays an important part in Paul’s argument against his rivals, who attempt to take away from him his position of the spiritual leader of the Corinthian community.

Synonyms for “worldly” *καύχησις* are *φύσημα* (*φυσιοῦσθαι*)<sup>5</sup>, *ἐπαίρομαι*<sup>6</sup> and *τολμῶ*<sup>7</sup>. All these bear distinctly negative connotations in Greek, especially *φύσημα*, which is often used by Greek authors to describe dangerous arrogance, leading to inner conflicts and disruption of the community. The link between “worldly” *καύχησις* and anti-social terms serves Paul’s rhetorical goals: he uses this parallel in his polemic against faction-forming in the Christian community of Corinth, accusing his opponents of this dangerous attitude and thus undermining their claims to the status of spiritual leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 4:3-7.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 10:15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 1:27; 2 Cor. 10:8;

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 11:16-17.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 4:6, 5:2.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. 11:20.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. 11:21.

“Godly” *καύχησις* is the direct opposite of this. Its main feature lies in the fact that boasting of this kind derives from God, His gifts and promises, as well as works of divine grace, omitting one’s ego and any possible involvement of the human element. Paul describes this boasting as *καύχησις ἐν Κυρίῳ*<sup>1</sup> (also *ἐν Θεῷ*<sup>2</sup> and *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*<sup>3</sup>), thus linking it to moral recommendations of the Old Testament, especially to those of the Book of Jeremiah 9:22-23, where boasting in one’s knowledge of the Lord is recommended. Strictly speaking, such *καύχησις* is not really “boasting” (that is, taking pride), but a manner of giving thanks to the Lord and rejoicing in one’s knowledge of and relationship with Him – in this way, “godly” *καύχησις* unites and consolidates the Church (as opposed to the harmful and divisive *καύχησις/ φύσημα*), grouping it around one and the same centre: Christ.

“Godly” boasting is often linked to eschatology – this relationship, however, is different from the “eschatological pride” of “worldly” *καύχησις*. In the Letter to the Romans, Paul rejects the idea of boasting in justification on the basis of one’s deeds<sup>4</sup>, because the logical outcome of these ideas is that one can achieve salvation by one’s own efforts, eventually leading to human pride. Paul himself prefers to boast in his future salvation as something that has been promised to him by God, and which was rendered possible and attainable through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross – that is, completely without his own assistance of any kind. This boasting is closely connected with the terms *ἐλπίς*<sup>5</sup> and *πίστις*<sup>6</sup>, and should be directed exclusively to God: any attempt to draw comparisons between humans renders one’s boasting “worldly”, and the verb

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 5:11.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 15:17; 1 Cor. 15:31; Phil. 1:25, 3:3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 3:23.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 5:4-5, 2 Cor. 10:14; Thes. 2:19.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 3:27, 5:1-2; Phil. 1:25.

*κατακαυχάομαι*<sup>1</sup>, indicating comparison and proud superiority, bears a distinctly negative connotation in the text. Thus, *καύχησις* in this case actually becomes a form of doxology: the words *χαρά*<sup>2</sup> and *δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ*<sup>3</sup>, associated with it, also point at this fact. Such *καύχησις* is synonymous with “joyous confidence” (*ὑπόστασις*<sup>4</sup>) rather than “arrogance”.

The only acceptable kind of boasting involving humans is the one focused on present spiritual progress and future salvation of others<sup>5</sup>. It does not, however, take the form of boasting in human achievements, for all this spiritual progress and its consequences are regarded as results of divine grace acting in one’s life, and therefore in this case *καύχησις* once again becomes a form of praising God. Seeing also that this boasting consists in rejoicing in the salvation of others, it can be regarded as an instance of Christian *ἀγάπη*. Boasting in others usually has the form of fatherly pride for one’s spiritual children; in this capacity, it can also serve as proof that Paul fulfilled his apostolic duty before the Lord, and ensure his apostolic status, as well as his own salvation – thus, in this case *καύχησις* once again becomes a synonym of confidence and strengthens Paul’s position as a spiritual leader.

Through the notion of boasting, Paul introduces a new system of values, overturning the standards of the contemporary Graeco-Roman society; an example of this is boasting in one’s weaknesses, mentioned quite often in Pauline letters<sup>6</sup>. Such *καύχησις* turns upside down all usual views on boasting, for instead of good things that could bring one honour, it focuses on and rejoices in the most humiliating events of one’s life, which expose one’s powerlessness. According to Paul, real power comes through humiliation<sup>7</sup>: awareness of one’s weakness helps one to cast away all possible self-confidence and self-praise and put

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 11:18.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 7:4; Phil. 1:25; 1 Thes. 2:19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 5:2.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 9:4.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:14, 2 Cor. 7:4, 7:14, 8:24; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thes. 2:19.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. 7:4, 10:30, 12:5-10; Rom. 5:3.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. 1:27-28.

all one's trust in the Lord, which allows the divine grace to spring into action in one's life. Another example of this attitude is Paul's boasting in the cross<sup>1</sup>, an extremely humiliating object from a Graeco-Roman perspective: here, the utmost power and utmost good (salvation of humans) comes through the utmost humiliation of the Lord Himself, and thereby the traditional system of values is reversed completely.

Any boasting has to be properly grounded in order to be acceptable to Paul; it cannot be based on wrong assumptions and should be put within the limits of reality (*κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος, ἀλήθεια*<sup>2</sup>). If this principle is not observed and the grounds for boasting turn out to be insufficient, "godly" *καύχησις* loses its positiveness and brings disgrace (*καταισχύνει*) to the boaster<sup>3</sup>. Only the complete truth can be acceptable.

Thus, we have examined various types of use and rhetorical functions of the term *καύχησις* in genuine Pauline letters. As we have seen, Paul's extended and complicated views on boasting can be best expressed in a phrase of Jeremiah that unites both Testaments:

*ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω.*

ΤΕΛΟΣ  
ΚΑΙ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΔΟΞΑ

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 6:14.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 7:14, 12:6.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 9:3-4.



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