

2 Corinthians 10:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Analysis

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves (οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρῖναι ἢ συγκρῖναι ἑαυτούς τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων)—Tolmōmen (τολμῶμεν, "we dare") is ironic: Paul "dares not" engage in the self-commendation his opponents practice. Synistanontōn (συνιστανόντων, "commending themselves") appears throughout 2 Corinthians (3:1, 4:2, 5:12, 6:4)—Paul's opponents brought letters of recommendation and boasted of their credentials. Paul refuses this game.

But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise (ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς οὐ συνιᾶσιν)—Metrountes (μετροῦντες, "measuring") and synkrinontes (συγκρίνοντες, "comparing") expose the folly: self-referential comparison produces inflated self-assessment. Ou syniasin (οὐ συνιᾶσιν, "they do not understand") is devastating—those who boast their wisdom lack basic understanding. True measurement compares ministry to Christ's standard and God's calling, not peer performance.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman honor culture thrived on competition and comparison. Sophists competed for students and fees. Social status was relative—one's honor depended on surpassing rivals. Paul rejects this entirely: ministry isn't a competition but stewardship of divine calling. Success isn't measured by comparison to others but faithfulness to God's assigned sphere (v. 13).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does comparing yourself to other Christians—your gifts, success, influence, or maturity—lead to either pride or despair?
2. What self-referential 'measuring sticks' do you use to evaluate your spiritual life instead of comparing yourself to Christ?
3. Why is self-commendation inherently foolish, and what does genuine commendation from God look like (v. 18)?

Interlinear Text

οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοῖς
not For we dare make or among ourselves
G3756 G1063 G5111 G1469 G2228 G4793 G1438

τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοῖς συνιστανόντων ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν
some G3588 ourselves that commend but they by
G5100 G1438 G4921 G235 G846 G1722

ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοῖς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοῖς
ourselves ourselves measuring and among ourselves
G1438 G1438 G3354 G2532 G4793 G1438

ἑαυτοῖς οὐ συνιοῦσιν
ourselves not are
G1438 G3756 G4920

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 27:2 (Parallel theme): Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Proverbs 26:12 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

2 Corinthians 10:18 (Parallel theme): For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Luke 18:11 (Parallel theme): The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Romans 15:18 (Parallel theme): For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

Proverbs 25:27 (Parallel theme): It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

2 Corinthians 3:1 (Parallel theme): Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

2 Corinthians 5:12 (Parallel theme): For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Job 12:2 (Parallel theme): No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.

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