



Bragging Rights — Or Wrongs? by [John T Polk II](#)

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD [taken from **Jeremiah 9:23-24**]." (**1 Corinthians 1:27-31**)

It seems that it is a normal, worldly attitude to "boast, or brag" about one's achievements. This problem was rife in the church of Christ at Corinth. Nearly every Christian found something about which to brag/ boast/ glory, while trying to elevate themselves above others. In other words, to them "glorying" seemed to be a shortcut to spiritual recognition. Throughout the entire Epistle, the inspired Apostle Paul dealt with this most prevalent problem. It was of major concern then, and it is probably even more so today! Our present society gives ample opportunities for competition that gives one "bragging rights" over others. Churches give in to this mania and compete by promotions within the local congregation ("Easter," "Christmas," "Mothers," "Fathers," "Grandparents," every special day, except "The Lord's Day!") and without ("featured worship entertainment;" "famous speakers;" "awesome recreational activities").

Before any Christian can boast because s/he is a Christian, and therefore to be elevated above all others, Paul reminds us that the "chosen" of God are not those who would impress the worldly: "foolish," "weak," "base," "despised," "are not." A Christian should never expect worldly recognition, acclaim, or elevation just by becoming a Christian. It is only by realizing how low our lives have become ("repenting") and entering the lowest point of Jesus' life on earth ("baptized into His death"), that we fully appreciate what it means for God to "raise us to newness of life" (**Romans 6:3,4**). We must not boast that we are a Christian, but that Jesus Christ made it possible. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (**John 8:36**). No one is "free" from sins without Jesus Christ.

Remember the principle "that no flesh should glory in His presence" (**1 Corinthians 1:29**), for no one should brag/glory before God that they have grown spiritually because of:

- 1) who preached to them (**1:10-12; 3:1-11**);
- 2) who baptized them (**1:13-17**);
- 3) their prominence before baptism (**1:18-29**);
- 4) following after men (**1:30-31; 3:18-21**);

- 5) not following Scripture (**4:6-16**);
- 6) not needing the Apostle Paul to visit them (**4:17-21**; **2 Corinthians 10:7-11**; **2 Corinthians 11:16-31**);
- 7) sympathizing with the immoral (**5:1-7**).

Every problem in the Corinthian church that caused division among them centered on this grasping for recognition.

The appeal to them (and us!) was to remind them that their salvation depended entirely upon accepting God's:

- 1) calling (**1:2-10**);
- 2) preaching the message of the cross of Christ (**1:17-18, 21**; **2:1-5**);
- 3) gift (**4:4-7**);
- 4) forgiveness (**5:9-13**; **6:1-11, 15-20**);
- 5) overcoming temptations (**10:1-14**);
- 6) created individual sexual identity (**11:2-16**);
- 7) miraculous spiritual gifts (**12:1-11**);
- 8) resurrection of Jesus (**15:1-20**).

All the way through the whole Epistle, Paul reminds us that we would be nothing, have nothing, hope for nothing, if it were not for God! Therefore even "if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (**1 Corinthians 9:16**). Paul even emphasized: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (**1 Corinthians 15:10**). Christians must realize that, as Jesus has said, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (**Luke 17:10**).

As a matter of fact, we cannot boast of our future without God. Solomon said: "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth" (**Proverbs 27:1**). James confirmed this for us today:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit;" whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (**James 4:13-17**)

People boast/ brag/ glory about themselves when they refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon all that God is, has, and does for them. "Arrogance" is the inflated opinion we get when we look only at our achievements, and not at the help God gives us so that we may accomplish our achievements! Arrogance consumes the minds of: children who do not appreciate what their parents have provided them; politicians who think they, and not God, have sole control over wealth, lands and citizens; and religious leaders who think that religions which appeal to carnal minds and worldly interests, can spiritually elevate anyone!

Even our giving comes from what God has given us:

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that

you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." [from **Psalm 112:9**] Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. (**2 Corinthians 9:6-11**)

Our jobs simply provide us a means to do more than just support ourselves.

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. (**Ephesians 4:28**)

Truly, we must "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (**Acts 20:35**).

Knowing that we must turn ourselves over to Jesus Christ, maybe we can now understand what Paul wrote:

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jess neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. (**Galatians 6:12-15**)

Anyone who imposes unauthorized "laws" on a Christian may have "bragging rights" as if they have control over that Christian, but what they have done is really "wrong." A Christian must "boast" that only "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" has made the difference in his, or her, life. "God forbid" (may it never be so!) that we would "brag" about what we have done, but, rather, what God has done for, and with, us. We must conclude with Paul, that:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (**Galatians 2:20**)

The "message of the cross" includes the resurrected Jesus' instruction to "every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (**Mark 16:16**). Anyone who imposes doctrines and practices that God never authorized in His New Testament is "boasting in your flesh," and that is very wrong! God promises no salvation without faith and before baptism. "But 'he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.' For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends" (**2 Corinthians 10:17-18**). Humanly- devised doctrines and practices, such as teaching that sinners are saved by a prayer, or twisting Scriptures to emphasize the thief on the cross instead of "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**) cannot, and have never, saved anyone, for they boast in the flesh.

-----John T. Polk II, www.johntpolkll.com