

I. Bragging Rights

A. News: Churches aren't perfect

1. Living mixture of saints and sinners, there is always room for improvement, for growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord and love
2. The Corinthian letters acknowledge the potential we all have for growing in grace and becoming more and more like Jesus, which is the earthly goal of faith

B. Report of Rivalry in Corinth

1. Choosing sides based on preferred teachers
2. Corinthian market culture of advancing economic status through strategic alliances
3. Paul:
 - a. Jettison worldliness
 - b. **If you must boast in the world, then boast in the Lord.**

C. Bragging Rights

1. Definition
 - a. A temporary position of ascendancy in a closely contested rivalry
 - b. Entitlement to boast about something
2. Criteria
 - a. The challenge must be real
 - (1) No fake accomplishments
 - (2) 30" Salmon on Lake Superior
 - b. The contest must be vital
 - (1) There has to be some valid reason the winner might have more easily lost
 - (2) Fishing Illustration
 - (a) An adult pulling in a huge northern on a wire leader and a lure with treble hooks is possible
 - (b) An eight year old pulling in huge northern with a plastic child's pole and lightweight nylon line, that earns you bragging rights.
 - (c) The contest involves a valid reason why the child should not have won.
 - c. The expiration date must not have passed.
 - (1) 40 year old man bragging to his coworkers about the time in the 6th grade he kicked the kickball into the outfield
 - (2) "Dude! It's time to move on!"
3. Why do human beings seek "bragging rights?"
 - a. Positive - Sharing the sheer joy of an unexpected accomplishment
 - (1) **Luke 15:8-10 (ESV) ⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

- (2) Share my joy in my accomplishment
- b. Negative - Overcome feelings of inferiority by self-exaltation
 - (1) **Luke 18:9-14 (ESV)** ⁹ *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:* ¹⁰ *“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*
 - (2) God condemns self-exaltation in favor of genuine humility
- 4. **Paul offers the remedy for self-exaltation among believers and in the church: Exalt Christ!**
 - a. Christians have no bragging rights in themselves
 - (1) No real challenge
 - (2) No vital contest
 - (3) Expiration date is passed
 - b. “God eliminates all human boasting in favor of boasting in Christ’s redemptive work, the only means available to any of us to gain favor with God.”

II. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord

A. God saves human beings from sin and guilt and wrath through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

- 1. **1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
- 2. Sounds ridiculous, but it’s true: God became man in order to die for all.

B. The message of the cross has the power not only to change minds but to change lives

- 1. **1 Corinthians 1:21 (ESV)** ²¹ *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*
- 2. Paul: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes . . .”

C. What God does accomplishes what no work of man can: salvation, life change, eternal joy

- 1. **1 Corinthians 1:25 (ESV)** ²⁵ *For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*
- 2. No grounds for bragging

D. We see in Christ what God offers and acknowledge God’s true wisdom

- 1. **1 Corinthians 1:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,*
- 2. Only God could rescue and deliver us from the real and coming consequences of sin and only Christ could be our deliverance.

3. This is God's wisdom on our behalf.

III. Conclusion

A. What do you want this morning?

1. Want to be wise? Trust Jesus!
2. Want to be righteous in the eyes of God, no longer a slave to sin, so longer an enemy of God? Trust Jesus!
3. Want to be delivered from sin and guilt and shame and be free to live a life fully worth living? Trust Jesus!
4. Want to be set apart from the world and enjoy God's favor and glory? Trust Jesus!

B. Many people today are looking to be part of something

1. Looking for bragging rights: "On the right side of history"
2. Looking to embrace some cause, idea, group, philosophy that will win in the end and give their lives meaning
3. Looking to do something worthwhile with their lives
4. Jesus Christ
 - a. Is the answer to your question.
 - b. Is the target of your aim
 - c. Is the destination of your journey

C. What must we do?

1. Two sets of people asked that question in the early days of the church
 - a. Philippian jailer: Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved
 - (1) No merely intellectual assent
 - (2) Entrust one's life and eternal destiny
 - b. Jerusalem crowd
 - (1) Peter preached; "What must we do?"
 - (2) "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
2. **Today: Entrust your life to the One who is the wisdom of God and the power of God.**