

No Bragging Rights

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I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and today our focus is in verse 4. If you're visiting with us today, we are in a verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 Corinthians, which is a very challenging book, to say the least, and we've come to what is the best-loved and best-known chapter in the entire book of 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 13 is known as the love chapter. But this chapter has so much to say to us about practical Christian living. It really gets down to the very place where the rubber meets the road in our own spiritual lives and so I have slowed down a bit. So much of the book has been doctrinal and theological, and this chapter is so practical and pastoral that I've really felt that it is best for us to slow down our pace and to examine, at least to this point, each of these virtues of love.

So I want to begin reading in verse 4. Today our focus is on the fourth virtue that we see of what love is, love does not brag and the title of this message is, "No Bragging Rights." So I want to begin in verse 4. Paul writes love is patient, and as he does this, what he is saying in essence is, this must be the profile of each and every one of our lives spiritually. It's a figure of speech called personification to say that love is these things. In reality, he is saying that the reality of love in our lives will look like this. This is what we will be in our spiritual lives. And it's not a multiple choice that, well, seven out of the eight are here and I'm working on these other ones. Well, there are some that we'll all be more convicted of than others but every one of these 13 aspects of true love must be present in our lives. So verse 4,

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

As a Christian, there is absolutely no room for bragging on anything in our spiritual lives. None whatsoever. I heard the story of a new church that had just opened its doors and had moved into its new office space and the very first Monday morning the church secretary was sitting at the receptionist's desk when the first person to ever walk through their church office doors came proceeding forward. Immediately she picked up the phone and put it to her ear and began talking into it and she began to say, "Tell the office supply

company that we desperately need more chairs for next Sunday. Tell the usher committee that we have to have more ushers because already our congregation is so overflowing. Tell the newspaper that people are busting the doors down to get into this church." She then hung up the phone and looked at the man and said, "And how may I help you, sir?" And he said, "I'm here from the phone company to plug your phone in." Well, we can all have a tendency to brag and to boast in ministry and in our own spiritual lives at times if we are honest, and we tend to be braggart sometimes and to toot our own horns in our conversations with one another, but nothing could be more antithetical to true godliness than bragging about our accomplishments and our successes in the Christian life and ministry. All bragging is, in reality, the exaltation of self and the promotion of self, which is the epitome of pride. What bragging is in reality is the verbalization of pride. Bragging is pride with a megaphone. Bragging is pride with the volume up. Bragging is pride with loudspeakers. It is the vocal expression of pride. But in the Christian life, there are no bragging rights only the humble acknowledgment of what God by his grace has accomplished in our lives.

Bragging was a major problem in the church at Corinth. They were a congregation of spiritual show-offs. They could strut sitting down. They were constantly engaged in a game of one-upmanship with one another as they fellowshiped and interfaced and all they needed really was someone to listen to them because they were constantly talking about themselves. They were endlessly vying for the center place in their conversations. Each member of the church was doing his own thing as prominently as he could and could not wait to tell others about it. As they were, they were exalting themselves in their own congregations and because of that, Paul must now address this in this love chapter. As I said, this was a major issue, so much so that Paul must now state love does not brag, and the reason he says that is because they were an entire congregation of braggarts. Love does not brag and you will note that it's number four on the list. It is towards the top of the list. This is something, and I will draw it to your attention in a little bit, this is something that was tragically a part of their own spiritual lives and Paul is writing this now to put an end to their braggadocious spirit, and he does so head on.

As we begin to look at this, I wonder to what extent this passage and this message is directly suited for our lives. I have no one in particular other than myself and as a church, I think God has been very gracious to cloak even the way that we communicate and express to one another what God is doing in our lives. But nevertheless, we are not a perfect church and we have not arrived and there is still yet much sanctification that must take place in our hearts. So each one of us here today, I think, must really take this in and by the Spirit of God, may he apply to our own spiritual lives the parts that we need to hear. So as we look at this, I have three main categories, and I want to zero in just on this fourth aspect, love does not brag. You say, how can you derive an entire sermon out of love does not brag? Well, I don't want to brag about it, but I can do this. So just kidding. All right, I want you to note the carnality of bragging; and then second, the categories of bragging; and then finally, the correction of bragging. Very simple headings to walk us through this.

Let's begin with the carnality of bragging. When he says love does not brag, it is very clear from this then therefore to brag in the way that the Corinthians were bragging is really an outgrowth of their fleshliness, of their own carnality. What does this mean to brag, love does not brag? Well, there are many things that love does not do, and one of them is brag. This is a rare word. It's the only place in the entire New Testament where this word is found but unfortunately, it was not rare in the church at Corinth. This word literally means to heap praise on oneself. It means to talk conceitedly. And the idea is to draw attention to oneself verbally in order to elevate oneself. A braggart parades his own accomplishments and importance in order to gain recognition. We all have clever ways of turning the conversation back on ourselves so that we can say something that is self-flattering.

Anne had an uncle whom our whole family has just loved to death, and he would always ask us, "So how many hole-in-ones have you made?" Well, there was a purpose in asking us that question. Andrew would say three. I would say, yes, one. And it would no more be out of our mouth when he would then say, "Well, let me tell you about my hole in one," and he would immediately use that as a launching pad to talk about himself. Well, we loved him to death and we would just roll on the floor laughing as he would do this, but this can describe our own Christian lives at times as well.

A braggart is the hero of his own stories. A braggart is the focus of his own conversations. He is consumed with self-flattery, self-importance, self-promotion, self-inflation, self-centeredness. This word for brag communicates the idea, really, of a windbag, of just blowing hot air about oneself, and as we've already said, it is the epitome of pride. In fact, pride is the root, and bragging is the fruit. Pride is the source and the origin, and bragging is the outward manifestation of it. Bragging is ego verbalized. Bragging is the flesh talking. Bragging is a spiritual infomercial. Bragging is sin spoken out loud. Bragging is elevating the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I. But Paul writes here, love does not brag. Love instead looks to build up others, not self. Love instead looks to brag on God and boast in the Lord rather than brag and boast in oneself.

It's interesting to note that in the Old Testament, the use of the word for praise, hallel, the hallelujah, meaning praise to Jehovah. Hallelujah. The word for praise in the Hebrew simply means to brag or to boast and that's what worship is. We are bragging on the greatness and the grandeur of our God. We are boasting in his majesty and in his glory. And we cannot be boasting in the Lord and bragging on ourselves at the same time. James Montgomery Boice used to speak of the teeter-totter effect, that when you would look at a playground and a teeter-totter and two children on both sides of the teeter-totter, both could never be up at the same time. When one is up, the other is down. And vice versa, when the other is up, the first is down. That's the way it is in boasting and bragging. If we brag in the Lord, then there will be a significant decline in boasting in ourselves, but when we boast in ourselves, by that same measure, we are robbing God of his glory and we cannot truly boast in him.

Love is very attuned to this, and bragging is an attempt to really steal the glory from God whether one does so intentionally or not. Bragging also is closely related to the previous

virtue of love when it says love is not jealous, that's number three on the list. And bragging often carries the motive of creating jealousy in someone else because of what you supposedly have or have done. Bragging is geared to draw attention to yourself and to cause others to envy you. But love does not brag. It does not talk about oneself, not in the sense of self elevation. It does not promote oneself or parade one's own accomplishments. Instead, love brags on God and promotes others and leaves it to others to extol whatever it is that is good in your life.

This is the carnality of bragging and we live in a culture of braggarts. Just listen to talk radio. Just listen to the sports communication and the culture in which we live. We live in a culture of bombastic, arrogant, prideful people and how we must be careful not to drink that water, how we must be careful to give all glory to God and not to be self-promoting in our spiritual lives. This was a major problem in the church at Corinth and I trust that you and I will deal ruthlessly with our own hearts and lives, that there will be a restraint that the Holy Spirit of God will place upon our own hearts and our own tongues such that we will not be at the center of attention in our own conversations.

Now second, I want you to note the categories of bragging. As we have been studying the book of 1 Corinthians, this is not the first time that this has arisen, and as I have gone back and walked back through what we have already studied in the book of 1 Corinthians, there are four major categories of bragging that I want to draw to your attention and I want you to see how the Corinthians were bragging, what they were bragging over. I want you to note these categories of bragging.

Number one, they bragged about their salvation. Now if anything sounds like an oxymoron, that should be it, but the sad fact is they were bragging about their salvation. If you'll turn back to chapter 1 and I want you to note verse 29 and following, the Apostle Paul makes a very intentional emphasis here about boasting. Now, boasting is a different word than bragging. Remember, I told you this word, brag, is the only place it's found in the entire New Testament, but boasting is a synonym, and Paul will use this synonym seven times in the book of 1 Corinthians, either as a noun or as a verb. And here in verse 29, Paul really goes out of his way almost to inject this and I believe the implication is the Corinthians needed to have this emphasis made in their own thinking about their own salvation. Notice verse 29 of chapter 1, "so that no man may boast before the Lord." The Corinthians were apparently boasting before the Lord about the part that they played in their own salvation. They assumed that there was some part that they played in coming to faith in Jesus Christ. It was one of the earliest forms of a synergistic understanding of salvation. Now when I say synergistic, by that you hear the word synthesis, it's the combining together, and in a synergistic understanding of the new birth, there are two forces at work, one is God's part and the other is man's part. And sometimes you'll hear it expressed this way, salvation is by grace through faith and grace is God's part and faith is our part, and if we understand that faith originates within ourselves, I want to assure you, taken to its logical conclusion, that cultivates pride, that cultivates arrogance, that I was smarter than my sister or brother or my next door neighbor, there's something in me that is a little bit better as a believer in the Lord than these others who are unbelievers and the Corinthians, I believe by Paul's emphasis here, had that in their own hearts and lives.

Sometimes we hear it today as God votes for you, the devil votes against you, and you have the deciding vote. Well, nothing could be further from the truth, and Paul will underscore this, and I want you to see this, and it must be true about your own understanding of your own salvation that it was all of grace. When he says, "so that no man may boast before the Lord," he is saying that in our understanding of our own salvation, we must understand that it is all of grace so that all glory will go to God.

Now look at the beginning of verse 30, "for by His doing, you are in Christ Jesus." Please note what it does not say. It does not say by your doing you are in Christ Jesus. Neither does it say by his and your doing you are in Christ Jesus, which is a synergistic view. No, he has a monergistic view that there was only one active force, one agent, capital A, that brought you to faith in Jesus Christ and that was God himself. In fact, we all like sheep had gone astray. Each one of us had turned to his own way. We weren't seeking God. The Bible says there is none who seeks for God. No, not one. No, the only seeker is God and the only pursuer is God in our salvation.

Let me show you. In verse 26, he says, "For consider your calling, brethren," that it was God who called you out of the world. It was God who summoned you, and apprehended you, and drew you powerfully to Christ. And standing behind that calling, verse 27, he says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are not," verse 28, "the base things of the world and the despised. God has chosen." It doesn't originate in the will of man. It originates in the will of God. We know this has to be right for two reasons. Number one, the text says so. Number two, it gives more glory to God. And this becomes the great pride crusher in our lives, that our conversion was a divine miracle that God performed in our hearts. Just as the leper could do nothing to heal himself, neither could you and I do anything.

So in verse 30, "for by His doing you are in Christ Jesus. It became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Note the next verse, verse 31. Paul circles back intentionally to underscore what he just said in verse 29 and virtually repeats it word for word. This is the obvious emphatic focus that Paul is making to the Corinthians, that the Corinthians had failed to grasp this. So note verse 31, "so that, just as it is written," and he quotes from the Old Testament to underscore that it's always been this way. It's not that there was one way to be saved in the Old Testament and a different way to be saved in the New Testament. No, he quotes the Old Testament to underscore that whenever in redemptive history someone is saved, it is always in this way, "so that just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" This is the strongest way by which there is no boasting in the church, that none of us played any initial role in our own salvation, that we were lost sheep straying away from the Lord in a dark ravine. We could not find our way to the Lord. We were panicked. We were separated from him. We were perishing. And it was the Good Shepherd who left the 99 and who went out into the night and he came searching for us and he came looking for us individually for we had been given to him by the Father in eternity past and he intentionally found us out. Therefore all glory goes to him. The Corinthians had obviously forgotten this and they were dividing the glory between God and them and they were patting themselves on the back because

of their contribution to their own conversion, and the fact of the matter is, the only contribution that we have made to our salvation is the sin that we have committed that was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross, and even the repentance that we exercise and the faith by which we have laid hold of Christ is a sovereign gift that has been given to us as the elect of God. This is the great pride crusher and mouths in Corinth needed to be silenced as they were taking credit for their own conversion.

When we understand the doctrines of sovereign grace, I know of no greater humbling truth. I know of no greater pride crusher. I know of no other truth that so puts me in my proper place under the throne of grace than to be reminded that it is by his doing that we are in Christ Jesus. That's the first category of their boasting that needed to be stopped. They had a faulty understanding of their own conversion and they needed to stop and be reminded that salvation is of the Lord and that no flesh, no man may boast before God. There could be no more practical truth to be taught in this church than the truth of sovereign grace in a monergistic regeneration.

Second, not only do they brag about their salvation, but they brag about their shepherds. If you come to chapter 3 and verse 21, the next time the word boast is found in the book of 1 Corinthians, we discover that they were boasting in their spiritual leaders. 1 Corinthians 3 in verse 21, we see the next time that Paul must reprove them, for their bragging and their boasting. There it is. You see it in your own Bible, I trust. Chapter 3 verse 21, "so then let no one boast in men." Why would he say that? Because they were boasting in men. And who are these men? Well, the next verse makes it abundantly clear. Verse 22 says, "Paul and Apollos and Cephas." Paul was their founding pastor. Apollos was the second pastor. And Cephas was an itinerant, that's Peter, was an itinerant evangelist/teacher who had come through their church and they were boasting in these men in this sense, they were aligning themselves with one of the three, and as they were, they were wanting to elevate themselves, in a sense, by riding the spiritual coattails of these men. And as Paul had strengths that were greater than Apollos, those who were identified with Paul had a sense of self-importance because, "Our pastor is better than your pastor." And then those who aligned themselves with Apollos, he had certain strengths that Paul did not have and that Cephas did not have, and in that sense, there was an inflated ego in those who identified themselves with Apollos and they were pulling themselves up because of their identification there. And then others identified with with Cephas. And what Paul is saying here, he says, "let no one boast in men." Paul was a better teacher. Apollos was a better preacher. Cephas was a better evangelist. But no one has all the gifts and no one has all the strengths and what they should have said is, "I am of all three men," in a sense. "I identify with all God's spiritual leaders that have been put over me." And so they were boasting in their shepherds in an improper way.

Now let me be very quick to say here that in the full counsel of God, the Bible does say that we are to give double honor to those who rule well over the church, and in 1 Thessalonians 5 he says, appreciate those who diligently labor among you. And in 1 Thessalonians 5 he says, esteem them very highly in love. And in Hebrews 13 he says, remember those who led you, spoke the word of God to you. So there is honor and respect that is to be given to spiritual leaders that is to be commensurate with their labor

in the Lord and their faithful shepherding and feeding of the flock, but what is improper is for there to be a party spirit within the congregation whereby members align themselves with different pastors and play off of those strengths and say, "Well, he's better than your shepherd over here in this area," and by that, elevate themselves. That's what was going on in Corinth and that's why Paul has to say, love does not brag. You're like little children in a playground saying, "My daddy is stronger than your daddy. My daddy is faster than your daddy. My father is stronger or can beat up your father," whatever. That's the spirit of competitive envy that was brewing in their hearts and these men are gifts of God to the church, these spiritual leaders, but they are not to fracture the fellowship.

That's what was happening in Corinth. They were boasting in their salvation. They were boasting in their shepherd's. Third, they were bragging about their spirituality. Come to chapter 4, verse 7 and we see the dark hole of carnality that was present in this congregation and may I and you and all of us say, God forbid that it should ever establish a beachhead in my heart or in my soul. In 1 Corinthians 4 verse 7 is the next time that the word boasting is found in the book of 1 Corinthians, and in chapter 4 verse 7, just to give you the overview of this verse, Paul will ask three questions. He will not answer any of the three questions because these are three rhetorical questions, and the answers are so obvious he need not answer them. All three are to receive a negative answer. And you will note at the third question, the word boast, "and if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" So the Corinthians were boasting about what they had spiritually and Paul must remind them that they have nothing of grace except it be given to them by the Lord. How can you brag about a free gift? And how can you brag about ongoing grace in your life?

So first question, verse 7, "For who regards you as superior?" There is binding sarcasm with that question. Paul is putting the Corinthians rightly in their place. He is humbling them with this question. They need to be humble and there is a place for sarcasm in the Christian vocabulary. "For who regards you as superior?" Now first the implication clearly is they regarded themselves as superior to other pockets in the body of Christ, to other believers. They thought more highly of themselves than they ought to think. And when he says, "For who regards you as superior," he is speaking of spiritual superiority and it anticipates a negative answer, no one. So in other words, your high opinion of yourself is shared by not another single living being on planet Earth. Whoever thinks that you are superior could meet in a phone booth. It is only you who thinks you are superior. This estimate is shared by no one else. You need a dose of reality. You need to look in the mirror and see yourself for who you are and what you are and you are not superior. In fact, in chapter 3 earlier, Paul had to say, "I could not even speak to you as adults. I had to talk to you as little children. I wanted to give you meat, but I had to give you milk because you didn't even have the capacity to internalize and digest more profound truth in the Lord."

"For who regards you as superior?" You obviously do. The second question digs a little deeper and gets behind the first question. "What do you have that you did not receive?" Good question. Now, this could be taken of all of life providentially, both material and

spiritual blessings, but Paul's intent here is in the spiritual realm. What do you have in your spiritual life of salvation, of sanctification, of spiritual gifting, of grace, of opportunities, of empowerment, of the fruit of the Spirit, what do you have of any spirituality in your life but that it has not been given as a free, unconditional unmerited gift by the hand of God? And the answer is again the negative, you have nothing in your spiritual life but that God is the one who has bestowed it lavishly upon you. So why would you be bragging about your own spirituality and your pursuit of the Lord and your supposed conformity to Christ's likeness when in reality what little you have has all been given by God's grace? Do you understand what Paul's appeal here is?

Then he asked this third question to follow up the second, "and if you did receive it," the fact is, since you did receive it, "why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Your whole spiritual life, the way, just listen to you talk. Just listen to how you represent yourselves to others in fellowship and in spiritual conversation. You give no impression whatsoever that what spiritual maturity and development and Christ-likeness has come into your life, you give no testimony whatsoever that it has come exclusively and entirely from the throne of grace. Instead, you do the very opposite and you pitch and present yourself as better than other Christians and superior to other Christians when in reality, you don't have anything going on in your spiritual life, except God gave it freely in Christ by his grace as a gift. Not only is your conversion entirely of the Lord, but all of the grace and divine enablement to live the Christian life. That too is entirely from the Lord. You have no basis whatsoever to brag. All you can do is offer thanks to God for what he has provided in your own heart and life, for it is God who is at work within you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Look at verse 8. Paul's biting sarcasm becomes even stronger. This false praise that he heaps on them, "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you." He now speaks in a superlative sarcasm and heaps false praise upon them to try to shame them into humility and shame them into repentance. "You're kings and we're but serfs who serve in your little court. You have ascended so high in spirituality."

They bragged about their salvation. They bragged about their spirituality. They bragged about their strength. Come to chapter 5 verse 6 very quickly. Chapter 5 verse 6, he says, just point blank, "Your boasting is not good." Do you see that in your Bible? Your boasting is not good. They were a congregation of braggers and not just a few of them, in an across the board type of way. It was the DNA of this church. They had a personality of bragging that arose from their hearts and the reason that they are bragging here is they think they are so strong in the Lord that they are bulletproof in resisting sin. They think that they can rub shoulders with people who are living in open sin and it will have no effect on them, that they can rub shoulders with people who are outright carnal living in sin and it will have no effect upon their spiritual lives, and they are bragging on themselves to think that they can stand with sinners and take a fire into their bosom and be not burned. When he says your boasting is not good, what their boasting is, is that they are bragging about their tolerance and their open-mindedness and their acceptance of

other so-called brothers in the body of Christ in this congregation who were living in open sin, and there is no need for us to excommunicate these people out of our church. It will not affect me.

In verses 1 and 2, we've already looked at it in the past, but just to remind you, there was someone in the church at Corinth who had his father's wife, which is to say he was having sexual relations with his stepmother and the church at Corinth knew about it and no one would confront him with their sin, and the spiritual leaders would not bring the matter to the entire church, and they would not excommunicate him and put him out, and so the reason behind it was again, just their own arrogance, their own pride. They boasted that they are so strong that it will not affect me. I wonder if that attitude could ever be present in your life, even in a slightly different scenario as you spend time with people who are not red hot for the Lord, who are not pursuing Christ, and they become close friends with you. Do you actually think they will have no effect upon your spiritual life and upon your walk with the Lord? They will. Bad company corrupts good morals, 1 Corinthians 15 says. We are to reach these people for Christ and we are to approach them with the gospel, but we are not to sit down with them and develop close intimate relationships with them. You think far too highly of yourself than you ought to think because they will be influencing you.

And then finally, number four. You know what? I got moving so fast, I think I skipped over. I've done all four. How about that? I've never been this fast. No brag, just fact. All right. Those are the categories of what was present in the church at Corinth and God forbid that these categories would be present in our own individual lives, and God forbid that they be present in our church family. May we always be marked by humility and by building up others and by bragging in the Lord.

Well, this leads finally now to the correction of bragging. Paul says love does not brag. They were bragging. How would they change this in their lives? And just very quickly, I want to give you some practical action steps on how to correct bragging and boasting in your life. Number one, remember grace. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, Paul says, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am." How can you ever brag about anything in your own spiritual life or ministry or service of the Lord if the bottom line is, I am what I am by the grace of God? Clearly, no one should think that they are the originator of what is good in their own lives. It has come from God. And that even as the Lord uses us and we mature in his grace, by the grace of God, I am what I am. So we must remember grace.

Number two, mortify self. As believers, we must be daily dying to self. We must die to a craving for self-exaltation, self-promotion, self-reputation. Jesus said, "If any man shall come after Me, he must deny himself and take up a cross." Now a cross is an instrument of death and in Luke's gospel he adds the word daily. Every day you and I must die to self. Colossians 3 verse 5 says we must mortify the deeds of the flesh. We must be every day coming to the end of ourselves and setting a watch over our own hearts.

Third, edify others. We must be consciously aware of inquiring about others and what needs they have in their life and what God is doing in their life and seeking to edify them and build them up and brag on what God is doing in their life.

Fourth, exalt God. We've already discussed this but we should be giving praise to God, not praise to ourselves. We should be directing attention to God and giving glory to God for what he has done in our lives rather than to ourselves.

Fifth, emulate Christ. As we read the four gospel accounts, there is never a word of bragging to come from his lips. In fact, he needed John the Baptist to be a forerunner to prepare the way for his coming. Someone else needed to say, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This way, he would not be drawing attention to himself. Do you know the one title that Jesus most referred to himself by? It was not King of kings and Lord of lords. It was the Son of Man, not the Son of God, but the Son of Man. That is the number one self-identification by which Jesus made himself known. It was a term of lowly humility. It was a term of condescension, if you will. It was the term by which Jesus identified himself with us in the lowest and most base way. And after Jesus healed the leper, he said, "See that you tell no one." After Jesus healed the blind man, he said, "Let no one know about this." After Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, he then healed many and said to the crowd, "Warn them not to tell who I am." And when Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, which was the greatest display of his divine glory while upon the earth he said, "Tell the vision to no one." Even Jesus put a restraint on his self-expressions as he communicated himself to others. Yes, there were times when he said, "I am the Son of God." Yes, there are times when he said, "I am the light of the world." But predominantly, there was this humble way by which he represented himself to be our example.

And finally, I would say embrace servanthood. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1, Paul said, "Let a man regard us in this manner as servants of Christ." This word servants is a Greek word that means a third level galley slave pulling the oars in the bottom of the ship. All of us must recognize that Jesus is the captain of the ship. He is the Master of our lives and we are but third level galley slaves. Can you imagine a third level galley slave boasting and bragging to the other galley slaves about his contribution to the pulling of the oars? No, there is the recognition that there is but one Captain of this ship, there is but one who is setting the course of the direction that we're going, and I have but a small part to play of keeping my oar in the water and pulling it with all of my might that the ship may move forward.

This is the correction of bragging. This is the crushing of bragging. And each one of us should take heart here today, each one of us should examine our own conversations. We should examine our own expressions in fellowship, one with another, and do all that is within us to not be self-promoting and self-elevating, but to build up others and to give all glory to God. Ultimately, we must all brag in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and I leave you with this verse, Galatians 6 and verse 14 is such a glorious text in which Paul comes to the end of his letter to the Galatians and he says, "May it never be that I would boast," may it never be that I would boast, "except," here is the one exception by which

we may boast upon this earth, "May it never be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." May every one of us glory in the cross. Let us boast in our Savior. Let us brag of our crucified Lamb of God who died upon the cross for our sins. Let all praise go to him. Let all honor and dominion and glory be his as it would flow from our own mouths.

If you have never believed upon Jesus Christ, I point you to the Lamb of God who came into this world, was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless and perfect life. He went to the cross. He was lifted up to die upon that cross in the place of sinners. Our sins were transferred to him and him who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us. Upon that cross, he became cursed in our place. He suffered under the judgment of God for us. There is salvation in no other name. We must turn to this crucified Christ and believe upon him for salvation. He was taken down from the cross. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. And on the third day he was raised from the dead. He has ascended to the right hand of God the Father. There he is enthroned in power and glory and all authority in heaven and earth belongs to him. He is the judge of every one of us here today, and our eternal destiny is determined by our relationship toward him, or our lack of relationship toward him. I would urge you this day to commit your life to Christ, to believe upon Christ, to become one who boasts in the Lord, to become one who brags in the truest sense upon Jesus Christ. If you will commit your life to Christ, he will immediately save you. He will pardon you of all your sins. And when you die, he will take you to heaven to be with him forever and ever for he is preparing a place for all those for whom he died upon the cross. Turn away from yourself. You have nothing to brag about, really. You have nothing in which to boast. The only thing that is good about you is that which God has done in your life. If you have never believed upon Christ, I urge you to commit your life to him this moment. May it be a decisive turning to Christ and you will find that your life will never be the same again.

Let us pray.

Father, we ask that You would remove from us any and all expressions of bragging about ourselves, about what we have done, about who we are. We confess to You we have nothing for which to brag. Absolutely nothing. Remind us from this simple message that our salvation, our shepherds, our spirituality, our strength, it is all from You and there is no room for bragging in our hearts or from our lips. Make us truly humble people and may that which proceeds from our mouth give honor and glory to You alone. And may we build up others in the use of our words. Father, bless Your people here.