

# Christian Bragging

*By David Scudder*

Did you know that Christians are supposed to brag? If they are supposed to brag, you may ask, then what should they brag about? I'll get to that in a minute, but first I want you to see a passage from the Bible where the Apostle Paul listed all the things he could brag about.

There were some teachers in the church of Philippi who were bragging about what wonderful Christians they were because they followed some Jewish rituals. Paul responded by listing his Jewish credentials. Some of the things that he could brag about, those teachers couldn't even claim to have. In a way, Paul was saying, "If those teachers think they are so superior because they have kept some Jewish ceremonies then I can play that game. In fact, I can beat them at that game."

For example, (see Philippians 3:4-6) Paul said that he was born a pure blooded Jew. He never had to submit to any ceremonies in order to be considered a Jew, like some of them. He was not only born a Jew, but he came from the family of Benjamin, which was one of the most devout of all the Jewish tribes. The first king of Israel, Saul, came from Benjamin. Jerusalem and the Temple were in the land of Benjamin, and when the Jews returned to Israel from captivity in Babylon, Judah and Benjamin were the only two tribes that returned.

Paul also pointed to the fact that he was fluent in the Hebrew language (*"a Hebrew of the Hebrews"*) because many Jews in his day could no longer read Hebrew. Most of them could only read the Scriptures in Greek. Not Paul. He could read and write in Hebrew.

Not only was Paul a full blooded Jew who came from an important tribe of Israel and who could read and write Hebrew, but he was also a Pharisee—the strictest of all the religious leaders. In Paul's day there were only about 6,000 of these Pharisees, and they were very careful, at least outwardly, to obey all the rules in the Bible. No one was able to point to anything in Paul's life that contradicted what he taught.

Then Paul bragged that he carried out all of his beliefs with great enthusiasm. He didn't just say what he believed, he worked hard to spread what he believed (see Acts 8:1-3 and 1 Timothy 1:12-15).

Those are some amazing credentials! So, how did Paul feel about them? His next statement shocks us. *“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ”* (Philippians 3:7–8).

There was a time when Paul's apparently flawless life was very important to him. Then suddenly it meant nothing to him. What made the difference? Here is the key. Paul met Jesus Christ.

How good we appear depends on what we are comparing ourselves to. Before Paul met Christ, he compared his goodness to other people. He explains why this is dangerous: "*For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding*" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

When Paul met Jesus, everything changed. Paul may have looked good compared to the average person, but all his goodness looked like trash compared to Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus Christ NEVER sinned. He lived here on earth as the perfect, spotless, sinless Messiah. Jesus could look around at his enemies (who tried very hard to find something to criticize) and ask "*Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?*" (John 8:46) Jesus was absolutely holy. The disciples who lived with him knew that and proclaimed it. "*We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God*" (John 6:69).

Jesus is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and the ruler of all. He is the eternal God, the hope of glory, perfectly holy, the I Am, the judge, the Lord of Glory, the Mighty God, the only wise God, the Prince of Peace, and the great Shepherd. Jesus is the truth, the way to eternal life, the unspeakable gift, and the only One who raised Himself from the dead. Jesus is all these things and much more!

Paul learned that without Christ he had no hope, but that with Christ he had his sins forgiven and an eternal friend. If Paul only had Christ, then he knew that he had all he needed. All those things he used to brag about now meant nothing to him.

Have you surrendered yourself to the only One who died to pay for your sins? When you do then you will be able to say with Paul, "*the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:18). "*For from [Christ] and through [Christ] and to [Christ] are all things. To [Christ] be the glory forever. Amen*" (Romans 11:36).