

# Apply The Word

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## Message Info

### Title:

The Paradox of Boasting

### Speaker:

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### Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 11:16–33

**Theme:** Boast in your weakness if you would enjoy Christ's grace.

**Introduction:** Answering the question "In whom should we trust for salvation," Martin Luther gave the following answer: "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." A theology of glory judges God by human standards, but a theology of the cross relies on God's standards, rejoicing in what the world may call foolish. These two categories have stood the test of time, and Paul's boasting in 2 Corinthians 11 demonstrates the paradoxical nature of boasting in the cross of Christ over and against boasting in earthly glory.

We can see Paul "out-boast" the super apostles under three headings:

#### 1. The contrast (16–21a)

- Paul is boasting for the sake of the Corinthians, because they have been so impressed by the boastful super apostles.
- Paul's boasting is going to be contrasted with the boasting of the super apostles, which is "according to the flesh" (v. 18).
- The super apostles mistreated the Corinthians by making them slaves, devouring them, taking advantage of them, putting on airs, and striking them in the face.

#### 2. The content (21b–29)

- Paul gives 28 examples in which he boasts, and it is not even an exhaustive list.
- Although he boasts along with the super apostles, the content is different. Paul boasts not in strength, but in weakness.
- Paul's boasting illustrates that anyone who desires to be a faithful disciple of Christ will suffer for it.

#### 3. The comedown (30–33)

- Paul closes with a story about escaping while being hunted down in Damascus.
- The story Paul tells is likely the first trial he faced after his conversion, and it set the tone for the rest of his life and ministry.

### Questions:

1. How might you be tempted to be impressed by the wrong things? How are you allured by a theology of glory?
2. How do you suffer for your opposition to the world?
3. How can you boast in your suffering and weakness? How can you make much of Christ in it?