

2 Corinthians Ch11v16-33 - Who's Boasting?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 March 2026

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0:00] So we're going to be reading this morning from 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 16 to the end of the chapter. Thank you.

Read God's word and then we'll pray. Starting in at verse 16. I repeat, let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. In this self-confident boasting, I'm not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool.

Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise.

In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face.

[1:34] To my shame, I admit that we were far too weak for that. Whatever anyone else dares to boast about.

Am I speaking as a fool? I also dare to boast about. Are they Hebrews? Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I'm out of my mind to talk like this.

I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

And then down to verse 30. If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

[2:37] The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. Well, let's just pause and pray for God's help as we hear his word.

Let's pray. Father, we come this morning with many things on our minds and on our hearts.

Things that weigh us down. Things that make us feel weak and inadequate and helpless. And we thank you that we come to an awesome God who meets us in our need to give us the help that we need.

And so we come to you and ask that you would pour out your spirit afresh on us today. So that we may know your work in our life.

That we may be built up with eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, our strength. Help us now, we pray.

[3:54] Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to begin by playing a game. We're going to play boasting.

It's very simple. You have to try and outdo your opponent by boasting of what you have or what you've done. So are you ready?

Here's a few ideas to get you started. You can boast about your salary and your successes, your achievements and your qualifications. So turn to your neighbor and let's play boasting.

Well, no, we would never dream of playing a game like that.

We would never ever boast. Or would we? You see, the Apostle Paul is caught up in a serious and real case of boasting.

[4:57] And it's destroying the church. You remember back in chapter 11, verse 5, the super apostles, he says, I do not think I'm in the least inferior to those so-called super apostles.

They were boasting about how great they were. That they could charge top fees and draw big crowds. Whereas Paul, he was nothing.

He had to preach the gospel for free. And these super apostles boasted of having letters of commendation and great qualifications.

Whereas Paul, he was useless. He had nobody to commend him. By boasting of themselves and elevating themselves, they pushed Paul and the gospel down.

They claimed he was unsuccessful, unimpressive, and untrained. Who would want to listen to a person like that?

[6:05] Well, the problem is the church in Corinth had got sucked in. They had fallen for their boasts. They had been attracted by these big name speakers and their dynamic presentations.

They liked what they saw, but really gave no thought to who they were. Rather than listen to Paul and the true gospel, they were listening to these so-called super apostles and their false gospel. But Paul won't do that. He has no time in boasting in himself. Look back at chapter 10, verse 17. He's crystal clear, verse 17. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it's not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

You see, Paul's aim wasn't to please people. His desire was to preach Christ. He didn't need to boast. The Lord had called him and commended him, and that was enough.

[7:26] But it seems things have gotten very serious in the church, and he feels he has to boast. So look at chapter 11, verse 1.

He says to them, I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me, because he's going to go into a time of boasting.

Verse 16. I repeat, let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, if you think I'm a fool, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting.

It sounds like he's contradicting himself, doesn't it? First he's saying, no, only boast in the Lord. And now he says, I'm actually going to do a little bit of boasting.

So what's going on? Well, I think there's two big things that this text teaches us. First, the folly of those who boast in greatness.

[8:41] The folly of those who boast in greatness. Let's pick it up in verse 17. In this self-confident boasting, I am talking.

I am not talking as the Lord would. The Lord wouldn't want me to do this, but as a fool. Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast.

You want to boast? Well, let's play boasting. You think these super apostles are impressive? Well, I'll show you what's impressive.

You think these are great speakers with wonderful qualifications? Well, I'll show you my qualifications. The gloves are off. Let the boasting begin.

Isn't that just how the world operates? The greater you are, the more influential you are and the more popular you become.

[9:44] Whoever can boast the most hits online, aren't we drawn in to listen to what they have to say? And whoever boasts the most sales, we pay attention to and we want what they have.

We get hooked on their successes and experiences and we follow up wanting their clothes, their brand clothes. We follow their diets and we believe what they say.

It's the same within our Christian world. Preachers can boast of the size of their churches and all the books that they publish. And churches can boast of their wonderful music and their slick presentation.

We get hooked on their dynamism and their passion. We like what they begin to say but we stop listening to what God has to say.

We love all the things that they offer but we forget all that Jesus has to give. You see, Paul enters into this little game of boasting.

[10:55] Not to encourage boasting but to expose the folly of listening to the world's boasts. Look what he says to those who boast in their greatness or those who listen to those who are boasting.

It's quite hard hitting. You're a fool. Verse 18. Since many are boasting in the way the world does I too will boast.

You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise. He's being sarcastic. Those successful super apostles those impressive speakers oh they're so wise aren't they?

They're such clever people. And you're so wise for following them and listening to them. You're so wise that you even want to become like them.

Wise. Don't give me wise. Give me a break. You're the foolish ones for being drawn in and being taken in by them.

[12:06] Remember what these super apostles are like? Look back at chapter 11 verse 13. For such people are false apostles deceitful workers masquerading as apostles of Christ and no wonder for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

It is not surprising then if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Wise? not a bit of it.

You're fools by being taken in by their boasting of their greatness and you have swallowed their false gospel. But not only are they fools he says you've become slaves verse 20.

In fact you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face.

You think all their boasting of success and greatness is going to get you somewhere. It's going to make you something. No, they're exploiting you and they're taking advantage of you.

[13:24] They promise you a better life but it's an empty life. They offer you a Jesus who will give to you anything that you ask.

And they'll offer you a gospel that will let you live however you want to live. But the reality is it will enslave you.

You keep coming back for more and more of what they have to say but it will never ever satisfy you. Like the prosperity teachers who offer you health and wealth but by the way first send on your donations at the number below.

They become your master and you will be forever in their debt. Following those who boast in their greatness will not make you great you will become a foolish slave.

Be careful of those who boast in their own credentials. And can I say to you as a church in looking for a pastor be careful of those who have many followers and those who boast of their own greatness.

[14:49] Now not all who have great followers are false teachers but not all speak the truth. Instead we should all be wise like the Bereans who were of great noble character for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

I hope you are doing that right now that you aren't taken in by false teaching but you bring everything under the word of God to see if what is being said is true.

That is all of our responsibility. So let us beware of the folly of boasting in greatness. On the flip side then we have the wisdom of those who boast in weakness.

Verse 30 If I must boast I will boast of the things that show my weakness. Paul is showing us the wisdom of boasting not in greatness but in weakness.

In other words if you want to be great you need to be weak. Let's go to verse 20 21 the end of verse 21 Whatever anyone else dares to boast about I am speaking as a fool I can't believe it.

[16:39] I also dare to boast about Are they Hebrews? Well so am I. Are they Israelites? So am I.

Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. You want qualifications? Well I have it. Culturally socially religiously I've got it all.

verse 23 Are they servants of Christ? I'm out of my mind to beginning to talk like this. I am more.

You think these super apostles are up there? Well I'm above that. Look at what he says at the end of verse 23 I've preached in more countries I've planted more churches I've done better healings I've written more letters I've met the risen Jesus I've made more converts I've baptised more people Is that what it says?

No he could well have said all of those things and those things would have been true but that's not what he says. Instead he boasts of suffering not success.

[18:08] Let's pick it up at the end of verse 23 what it does say. I have worked much harder been in prison more frequently been flogged more severely and been exposed to death again and again.

five times I received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one so that's 195 lashes with three strips of leather and knots on the end.

Three times I was beaten with rods Acts tells us he was stripped naked before they beat him once I was pelted with stones where he was left for dead.

Three times I was shipwrecked I spent night and a day in the open sea I've been constantly on the move I've been in danger from rivers in danger from bandits in danger from my fellow Jews in danger from Gentiles in danger in the city in danger in the country in danger at sea and in danger from false believers I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep I have known hunger and thirst and often gone without food I have been cold and naked besides everything else I face the daily pressures of my concern for all the churches who is weak and I do not feel weak who is led into sin and I do not inwardly burn why did he go through all this suffering why put himself in places where he is vulnerable and weak why put himself into situations where he knew it was going to be hard well at one level his suffering show that he is the real deal he is the authentic one and his message that he brings is authentic we can trust the message that he says if someone is willing to go through so much suffering if you are willing to become weak it proves that the gospel he preaches can be trusted if you are willing like

Paul to put your life on the line time and time and time again it counts for something you see Paul is saying to the church and he is saying to us today you can believe the gospel that I bring to you it is wonderfully true I will die for you to get the message to you but there is something more and it comes in the last few verses Paul boasts in his failures not his achievements his failures not achievements look at verse 31 the God and Father of our Lord Jesus who is to be praised forever knows that I am not lying in Damascus the governor under King Artax had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me but I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and I slipped through his hands

[21:58] I didn't know this but commentators tell us that in the Roman military there was a special award for the first soldier who could get over the wall so whenever they were attacking a city they had to climb the walls in their wooden ladders to get in it was both dangerous but very courageous if you were the first one to get in over the wall and into the city and to make a way through well that person was worthy of great honour well look at Paul what can he claim when he's telling us he bottled it that when the going got tough when they sent out a warrant for his arrest he ran for his life rather than be the brave man verse 33 rather than the one being up over the wall I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and I slipped through his hands oh I was a coward

I was a coward I ran away I failed would you put your failures like this in your CV Paul boasts not in his excess or achievements he boasts in his weaknesses why because he knows that when you strip everything back when you chip away at the external facade when you expose his heart when you get to the bottom of who Paul really is he has nothing to boast about only a cowardly failure and as we reflect on our own lives well we have nothing to boast about either do we all our credentials all our successes and achievements all our best moments all our proud memories all our victories our strengths and our qualities strip them all away knock away the facade and if you could look into my life you'd see a mess but you know what it's right here in our suffering and in our failure and in the depths of our weakness that we find the greatest hope possible verse 30 if I must boast I will boast of the things that show my weakness you see it's only when we embrace our weakness that we are throwing ourselves into the loving arms of Christ who became weak for us for us for us for to be sure he was crucified in weakness yet he lives by God's power Christ went into weakness he not only suffered he suffered death and he not only suffered death he suffered our judgment and he not only suffered our judgment he suffered hell for you and for me you see we boast in a suffering servant a weak savior one who was crushed and beaten and reviled and mocked and flogged crucified to death so that you and I might have life you see it is in the weakness of Christ that we find the power and the excellence of God through

Christ's sufferings comes our life if you were applying for a job what would you write in your CV where we could write down all the things that show us our abilities and our qualities all our qualifications and our experiences in other words we get out the yellow highlighter and we mark our strengths and we disguise our weaknesses we boast of our successes but we hide our failures but that's the self confident boasting of the world it looks great but deep down we know the reality we look deep inside our hearts and we see not greatness but don't we all know our weakness you see the good news of the gospel is it allows us to become real and true and honest about ourselves we don't need to pretend we don't need to put on a facade or a mask we don't longer have to hide our

struggles or to disguise our sin isn't that wonderful we come to a loving saviour and we boast of our weaknesses we come in all our suffering and we find a saviour who is weak for us and gives us strength we come with all our failure and we experience not judgement but we find a saviour a loving embrace one who will treasure us and welcome us adopting us into his family who says I am your God and you are mine and I will never ever let you go the world prizes greatness and we listen to those with big names and big followers no not greatness but weakness a crucified Christ who died for you and for me you see it's seeing that when I am weak then I am truly strong but that's next week's sermon let's pray oh lord you know you know each one of us and we so feel our weaknesses at times whether it be physical or mental and in the midst of it all and running through it all our hearts you know that we don't measure up and yet!

[30:20] and yet we thank you for the wonderful gospel that allows us no longer to hide or to shy away but to come and boast in our weakness and come to a saviour who truly understands who has who has been where we are and deeper still and who will hold us by the hand and will walk us through and never ever let us go help us that we would not boast in greatness but boast in weakness boast in our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ Amen