

# **Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 1, Introduction**

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session number one, Introduction.

My name is Ayo Adewuya and I'm a professor of Greek and New Testament at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee, where I have taught for several years now. I'm originally from Nigeria and spent a sizable portion of my life there before we moved to the Philippines as missionaries. God brought us here, so I've been teaching here for quite a number of years now. In this series of lectures, we'll be looking at Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians, which we know as 2 Corinthians.

As we look at the book, it's always good to start with an introduction, learn some background details, know what gave rise to the letter, and know what exactly was going on in the book with both the writer and the audience. In looking at 2 Corinthians, one of the first things we want to consider is Paul's overall relationship with the Corinthians, particularly the events that led to writing the letter. In terms of that, we want to say that Paul's relationship with the Corinthians was quite a very complex one, and we see that by the number of letters he wrote.

And it's always unanimously agreed that Paul wrote more than two letters; he probably wrote about four or five, and I need to clarify that because we don't have more than one or two in the canon. But then, when we look at 1 Corinthians 5, verse 9, Paul told the Corinthians that he had written to them a previous letter, and in that previous letter, he warned them that they should not company with people who call themselves brothers or sisters, who walk in a way that betrays their calling. And then, of course, when we look at 2 Corinthians 2, verses 3-4, and 7, verses 8-12, Paul talks about a severe letter.

Some people have argued that maybe 2 Corinthians 1-9 is a separate letter from 10-13; we'll deal with that as we go on because we just have one letter in the canon, and that's the way we're going to approach it. On the side of the Corinthians, there's definitely some communication between Paul and the Corinthians because they wrote to him, and they wanted to have answers to certain questions that bothered them concerning the Christian life. They wanted to know what to do when it comes to futile idols, and they wanted to know what to do when it comes to marriage.

There was a problem about the resurrection, whether it was gone or what was going on, so they wrote. But apart from that, they sent two delegations; they sent a delegation from Corinth to Paul; we see that in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 11-12, and of

course, Stephanos also and company came back to Paul, we see that in 1 Corinthians 16-18. So, you see that Paul had a great relationship, great in the sense that there was communication back and forth, both from Paul to the Corinthians and the Corinthians to Paul, and Paul himself sent two delegations to Corinth, Timothy headed one, we see that in 1 Corinthians 4-17, and chapter 16, verses 10-11, and of course he sent another one which was headed by Titus, we see that one in 2 Corinthians 7, verses 14-16.

So, there was extensive communication between Paul and the Corinthians. Now, the events that led up to the writing of 1 Corinthians are what we just explained: the previous letter, the delegations, the letter from Corinth seeking clarification about marriage and all that, so Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, and then, of course, he paid a visit to them, and because there was a problem when he paid a flying visit to them, he said I don't want to come again, so he wrote a sorrowful letter to them, and, of course, that bothered the Corinthians, and there was a frayed relationship between Paul and the Corinthians at that point, and Paul had to find a way to make it right, send Titus to them. So, we're talking about the relationship in general.

Now, when you talk about 2 Corinthians, it's always been argued that maybe the time between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians is a long time. No, I don't think so because the events that took place, some of the problems that we have in 1 Corinthians, were still there by the time that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. As a matter of fact, if we read the epistle of Clement, we will understand that some of the things that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians were still there.

Talk more about 2 Corinthians. So, there's not a long gap of time. It was very close to each other.

So, Paul wrote that letter. However, as we deal with that, I think it's important for us to have an overall view of the issues that Paul addresses and the things he was looking at. So, I usually like to look at the themes that Paul looks at.

We will look at the theological themes of 2 Corinthians, but before we do that, let's remember that Paul wrote this letter, and it has always been agreed that this is the most occasional of Paul's letters. This is if you want to know who is Paul. You see, usually, when we talk about Paul, we see this man, a hero.

It's as if he has no feelings, no emotions. He's a superman. But if you want to know who Paul is, then come to 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians provides the window into Paul's heart because you are finding a relationship that was strained between Paul and the people that he led to Christ. And therefore, you see, it's like a rollercoaster thing. They love him.

They hate him. Some of them say, well, his presence, we don't like it, but his letters are very strong. And Paul had to defend himself.

Some people came in who were interlopers. They tried to change the minds of the people against Paul. So, you see Paul as a pastor in the real sense of it.

Paul, as a pastor, talks from his heart. I mean, he was unburdening his heart because the Corinthians misunderstood him. It was a frayed relationship.

You imagine yourself being a pastor, and you founded a church, and you lead in that church, and you ministered in that church. And suddenly, the people for whom you spent a lot of your time and life suddenly turned against you because some people came in and called themselves apostles. And you see, so he has a problem right there.

But not only that, Paul said he was going to visit them. We'll look at that later when we're looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul said he was going to visit them, but he did not visit them. And they say, well, look at this man.

He said he's coming, but he's not coming. He didn't show up. You can't trust his word.

You can't just take his word for it. And it's fickle. We'll look at that when we get to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, and we're explaining the verses.

Not only that, but they also wanted to give him money. And he said, no, I don't want your money. I don't want your money.

And then later on, he wanted to collect money for Jerusalem. He said, what's going on here? We're giving you money you say you don't want. And here you are, you are raising funds.

What exactly is it? So, they came to the conclusion that Paul didn't love them because if you loved us, why would you reject the money we're giving you? And here we are now, and you are raising money for other people. You surely don't love us. And Paul had to tell them, look, even if you have a thousand teachers, you have only one father.

In my bond, I have begotten you in the gospel. So, you see this kind of tension and all that is going on. And Paul talks about his own sufferings and pains and all that.

So, 2 Corinthians shows us quite a lot about Paul, what he was going through, the kind of person he is, and how much he loved the Corinthians. So, there's quite a lot to learn as we look at this book. I mean, one other problem scholars have highlighted

when it comes to 2 Corinthians is what we'll call the compositional integrity of that book.

Some have suggested that 2 Corinthians is a patchwork of so many books, and you find maybe about five or six books. But let me say this: there is no manuscript that we have that does not contain the entire 2 Corinthians that we have. So definitely 2 Corinthians, in my opinion, and of course the opinion of others, is just one letter.

One has to study the rhetoric. Well, sometimes it's argued, why did he change his tune in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 10 to 13? Of course, you can change your tune in a letter. It depends on what you are writing.

And then we don't want to assume that Paul just sat down overnight and said, okay, I'm writing a letter to the Corinthians now, and he wrote everything. He started in the evening and finished in the morning and put it in the mail. That's not the way it works.

It took time to write this. So that somebody changes his tone does not mean anything. Apart from that, those who study rhetoric have shown that that is possible.

You see, your tone depends on what you are addressing. It depends on the issue you want to talk about. So, we say that 2 Corinthians is just one letter, the way it is in the canon.

Of course, some others will say, well, chapters 8 and 9 is one letter. And some will say, well, chapter 8 is one separate letter, chapter 9 is one separate letter. And even recently I was listening to a scholar in a meeting saying that 2 Corinthians chapter 9 comes before 8. And you wonder, okay, what's going on here? And then we said, okay, we have 2 Corinthians 1 to 13.

Let's deal with it. And let's just look at the message. It's in the canon.

So, let's look at the message of 2 Corinthians as we have it in the canon. What we have in the canon is one letter, not five letters. And so, we want to deal with it that way.

You see, in other words, for those who argue for what they call interpolation theories, the burden of proof is for them to say, well, it is not one letter; it is several letters. Very, very important. Of course, when you look at the letter written to Corinthians, remember that usually, when you talk about Corinthians, you remember the city of Corinth that was a city that was filled with vice.

I mean, it was the least likely promising place for church planting. When we are talking about church planting, you really don't want to go to Corinth because the

religions there were as diverse as the Corinthian population. I mean, as many as 26 sacred places are devoted to many gods.

So, for God to be able to plant a church here is very great. And then, like today, the Corinthian Christian community was diverse. You have ethnic and social diversity.

You have the poor, you have the rich, and you have different kinds of people. Now, you want to ask the question, why did Paul write Corinthians? That's always a question. Why did Paul write Corinthians? As commonly agreed, 2 Corinthians is an occasional letter that is a real letter written to real people who faced real problems that developed between the time Paul left the city and at the end of 18 months.

This is a real letter. I tell people sometimes that if you want to know a letter that we'll call a pastoral epistle, in the real sense of being pastoral, 2 Corinthians is the letter. I mean, yes, I understand.

In the canon, we have 1 Timothy, we have Titus, we have 2 Timothy, and then we call them the pastorals. But when you want to talk about a book in the New Testament that addresses the issues that pastors and ministers face today, it is 2 Corinthians. Let me give you an example.

There's a problem about integrity, the integrity of Paul, because he says one thing, he does another. And Paul had to defend his integrity. And, of course, we have a lot of problems with the issue of integrity today in ministry.

And then, of course, they question his message. They say, well, his message is very hard. So, they question this person, they question his message, there was a problem with money, there was a problem with the relationship between them, there was a problem with suffering.

Everything we have in the ministry today, you look at 2 Corinthians, you'll find it there. That's why I will say that this book, in my own opinion, should be called a pastoral letter or pastoral epistle, whichever one you want to use. But because it addresses real issues faced by real people in the real world.

So, we want to look at the book. But as I said just a while ago, let's look at the major themes of 2 Corinthians. When you read 2 Corinthians, what do you expect to find? What are the issues that Paul wants to address? You see, when one speaks of Paul's theology in a particular letter, it is important to bear in mind that Paul was first and foremost a pastor missionary.

Now, I understand people say, I'm not a theologian, I'm not a theologian. Well, that is partly right and wrong. When you say you are not a theologian, if you are saying that

you are not a trained dogmatician, you are not a trained theologian in the sense that you go to school and learn theology, yes.

But if you are a pastor and you are a minister, you do theology all the time. When you counsel the member of your church, and he says, you're a pastor, I'm suffering. What do I do? And then you open the Bible, and you explain about suffering; you are doing theology. When a member of your church loses a relative, I say, well, never mind, she's gone to heaven, and we're going to see each other on the last day; what are you doing? You are doing theology, even though you are not a theologian in the technical sense of being a theologian.

So, we want to see Paul not as a technical theologian but as everything he did as part of his theology. He was a pastor missionary. As such, Paul's theology stems from his experience both as a pastor and a missionary.

In other words, Paul was what I would call a marketplace theologian. A marketplace theologian who did his theology in the marketplace. Furthermore, because this letter, as like the other letters, is occasional, the letters were written to address particular situations that confronted the churches.

And that's true of 2 Corinthians as well. But as one reads the letter, the theological themes that are in the book become evident. So, let's look at some of those ones.

Number one, Paul's view about God is very, very clear in 2 Corinthians. You see, Paul, apart from his parting benediction in chapter 1, in chapter 13, verse 14, does not provide an explicit formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is known. Nevertheless, Paul makes very clear statements about the triune nature of God that stems from his own personal encounter with the divine.

You see, that's very important. Paul makes several important and timeless affirmations about God. For example, he refers to God the Father as the one who is a source of grace.

He refers to God the Father as a source of grace. You see that in chapter 1, verse 2, chapter 8, verse 1, and chapter 9, verse 14. And of course, he's a source of purity and sincerity.

And you see that in chapter 1 verse 12, he shows mercy and he gives comfort. You want to know what Paul has to say. He's the one who raises the dead and he's the one who acts as an impeccable witness.

He's the one who strengthens believers in their faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ. Paul has a lot to say about God. In chapter 3 verse 3, he talks about God is the ever-living one.

You see, it's important for us today to know that God is the ever-living one. He does not sleep. He does not slumber.

He's the ever-living one. I'll tell you a story very quickly about that. Somebody was in a boat and there was a storm.

And as the storm was going on, it was raging. And somebody said, well, listen, the Bible says he who watches over Israel does not sleep, he does not slumber. He said, well, it means that we are not sleeping in this storm and God is not sleeping.

So, it's better for one of us to go to bed. Either God goes to bed, or I go to bed. So, he decided, okay, I'm going to let God remain awake, and I'll go sleep.

And at that point, the storm ceased. God is the ever-living one, ever-present one. He's the one who strengthens us.

He no longer debits people's offenses to their accounts. He's a God of all grace. He loves the person who gives generously.

He's able to shower people with every kind of blessing. You see that in chapter 9, verse 8. He produces seeds for people to sow and bread for them to eat. He's God and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is entitled to eternal praise.

His name is to be praised. He knows the details of human experience. You see that in chapter 12, verses 2 and 3. And he's marked by love and peace as both his gifts and attributes.

And Paul credits God with specific acts. Now, when you study the book, you need to be looking at what Paul's saying about God. This is not just a letter you read and throw it aside.

It's a letter for you to read, digest, and think over. What do I learn about God when I read 2 Corinthians? Of course, in concert with the Father, Paul depicts Jesus as a source of grace. Without any hesitation, Paul affirms the deity of Christ.

Without any hesitation, through his pre-incarnate choice, Christ exchanged the richness of heavenly existence for the relative poverty of earthly life. You see that in chapter 8, verse 9. And you see, during his life on earth, he showed meekness and forbearance in chapter 10, verse 1. His death, which inaugurated a new era, the day of salvation, was for the benefit of all people without any distinction. God loves everyone.

He died for everyone. Now, it's up to individuals to appropriate the benefits of his death, but that benefit is available to everyone. He was present and active in Christ.

And you see that shown pre-eminently in the walk of reconciliation that he did through Christ. And he presents Christ to us as the one who has made the same offering on behalf of humans and in our place. He became the object of God's wrath, and so is strength from him so that by being in Christ, believers might now become the righteousness of God or become righteous in God's sight.

Of course, he has something to say about the Holy Spirit. Paul has much to say about the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that 17 times in 2 Corinthians, Paul discusses about the Holy Spirit.

17 times. And that's very, very important. He speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in a Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is responsible for the formation, is responsible for equipping, is responsible for the preservation of our Christian life. And, of course, there's the walk of the Spirit, meaning affirmative walk. It's the Spirit that credentials us.

You know, when I was a young convert, they used to say, well, if God doesn't call you, call yourself. Well, if you call yourself, you run into trouble. And when you run into trouble, nobody will help you.

You better don't call yourself. You see the credentialing walk of the Spirit. You need to be sure that you are credentialed by the Spirit.

I understand that we are credentialed by denominations and by our groups, but the credentialing of the Holy Spirit is the most important credential we need. The Holy Spirit is responsible for that. He also says that the congregation is formed by the Holy Spirit.

The congregation, you see that in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 1 to 3. The Holy Spirit formed the congregation. Missionary labels are also credentialed by the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 6, Paul explores the function of the Spirit in salvation history.

That is in God's plan of redemption. The *pneuma* occurs six times within the space of 13 verses. In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul places the walk of the Spirit at the center of redemptive history in 2 Corinthians.

The Spirit is not tangential to God's walk of redemption. Not at all. You know, people, the way people talk about the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the



third person of the Godhead, you know, sometimes I have a problem with that because the way we do it, it seems a little bit hierarchical.

In our minds, it's like we go to the Olympics: somebody wins gold, somebody wins bronze, and somebody wins silver. So, God the Father gets the gold, Jesus wins the silver, and the Holy Spirit gets the bronze. And so, in a sense, they all get medals, but one medal is less than the other.

No, that's not the way it works in the Godhead. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit walk in tandem: different persons, but one essence.

And the Holy Spirit is intimately involved. Now listen to me, you don't have to be a Pentecostal to believe that, because that's what the Scripture tells us, that the Holy Spirit is involved, is the agent of the new covenant. The Spirit is given to believers as God's down payment on our inheritance and as a pledge of the resurrection; you see that and is called the Spirit of the living God.

It is the means by which Christ wrote the letter of commendation that is the Corinthians. Whereas ink is erasable, the person and the walk of the Holy Spirit are imperishable. Ink can be taken away, and that's what Paul is telling them.

Regarded as external commandments, the written law is lifeless, but the Spirit is life-giving, for it dwells in the believers and revitalizes us. The new covenant era is a period characterized not only by extraordinary divine glory but also especially by the Spirit's presence and activity within and among God's people. Paul talks about turning to the Spirit and gaining freedom through the Spirit, transformed by the Spirit.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Negatively, freedom from half-heartedness and ignorance about Christ, and then positively, freedom to see God's glory uninterruptedly, and freedom of access to God's presence. So, when we talk about where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

There are two sides. Negatively, there is freedom from hard-heartedness and from ignorance about Christ, and of course, positively, there is freedom to see Yahweh's God's glory uninterruptedly and freedom of access to God's presence. Isn't it wonderful that we can now approach God and go to His presence? The next thing you want to see when you look at this book, because this helps us to make sense of the book when we begin to look at it in detail, is reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not incidental to the thoughts of Paul, especially in 2 Corinthians. As early as in chapter 2, verses 5 to 11, in addressing the problem of the offender, Paul was urging for reconciliation and restoration to occur. Isn't it important today for us to talk about reconciliation as well? But the truth is that there can be no genuine

reconciliation unless we have the experience of Christ because that's the only thing that can take hatred away.

Discipline in the local church must be redemptive. So, reconciliation occurs not only between God and humankind but between fellow men and women. Reconciliation is more than an individual experience.

More than that. That is often shaped by the willingness to forgive, but also national and communal, in experience, without healing and personal relationships, and without transition from past to future, any talk of reconciliation will just remain as talk, as such. God is both the initiator and the goal of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians.

Christ was God's agent. The beneficiaries are primarily humans. Although reconciliation is an accomplished fact, it is also an ongoing process, and humans must embrace it by responding to the message of reconciliation and, as a result, becoming reconciled to God.

You see, reconciliation is Paul's motivation and springboard for a discussion of authentic ministry. That's one of the questions 2 Corinthians addresses: what is an authentic ministry? That's a question that is very valid for us today, in 2020, or in this generation, as we look at all the different kinds of ministries that are mushrooming everywhere. What are the marks of an authentic ministry? When we discuss 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we will be dealing with that in a little more detail.

Now, he is motivated by the love of Christ, which he defines in terms of his death for us. Another theme you look at in the book, which most of us don't like to hear about, is suffering. Suffering is also an important theme in 2 Corinthians.

You see, let me tell you this. I'm a Pentecostal, and let me make this confession. We Pentecostals have a bad theology of suffering.

We are very triumphalistic. I mean, God can do all things. Yes.

We don't want to talk about suffering. No. You say, well, Professor Douya, do you like suffering? I don't.

I don't want it. I don't like to suffer. But the truth is that it is part of the scriptures, and it is in 2 Corinthians.

And we need to be able to embrace it and say, look, this is part of the scriptures. If God allows it in my life, he's going to use it. You see, for Paul, suffering was not just an academic subject.

It was an experience he tasted that ended with his death. The letter contains two lengthy lists of Paul's apostolic sufferings, but his theology of Christian suffering is most apparent in chapter 1, verses 3 to 11. We'll talk about that.

Paul understood suffering as an integral part of his missionary calling and practice. It was an integral part of his missionary call and practice. It's not an add-on.

Not at all. He knew that. In fact, you know that.

It's not 2 Corinthians. In Philippians chapter 1, it says he's been graciously given unto us—the word there is eucharist.

He's been graciously given to us on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his namesake. So, in a sense, suffering is a gift of grace. You say, well, I don't want it.

I'm sure you don't want it. I remember several years ago, I was teaching a class in 1 Corinthians, and one of the students said, Dr. Dewey, isn't suffering one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit? I said, well, I'm sorry, I don't think it is, but if it is, I'm not going to pray for it. I said, because I've lived all my life suffering, so I don't want the gift of suffering at this point.

But the truth is that suffering is an integral part of our calling. The frequency with which Paul refers to his apostolic suffering in 2 Corinthians is an indication that these experiences become for him both a subject of most theological reflection on his own identity and mission as an apostle, but not only that, it becomes a rhetorical tool to encourage and build up his converts. You can talk about the kind of sacrificial missiological function of suffering in Paul's letter.

It was sacrificial. It was missiological. It was not suffering for the sake of suffering.

And you know what? That's why Paul was not singing: nobody knows the trouble I see, nobody knows my sorrow, sometimes I'm in the valley, sometimes on the mountain. No, no, no, no. Paul never threw a pity party because he knew this was an integral part of his call.

Rather, Paul suffered not as an end in itself. His suffering was for the sake of others. You know what? Paul shunned a victim mentality.

He did not have a victim mentality. No pity me, that's not in Paul's language at all. So, he talks about suffering.

We'll look at that. I mean, you keep on saying we'll look at that. Yeah, we'll look at everything because this is an introduction.

So, you probably will hear it again and say, okay, he's going to say we'll look at that later now. Yes, we will look at that. But just bear with me.

Then what about the doctrine of the church, ecclesia? For Paul, the local congregations are real and representative of the wild world community. And this is very important. Paul says the members of churches are letters written by the spirit.

May I say that Paul understands the church as the locals of God's eschatological activity? Paul understands the church. You know, we live in days when I don't just, I don't belong to a church.

I can do the church in my house. I can stay in my home. No, that's not for Paul.

He sees the church, the body of believers. This means we are not reading Paul very right because Paul's theology is communal. It's together.

It's about people. God is not just saving individuals and bringing these individuals to heaven. God is saving a people just like he called the nation. Israel is saving people and bringing them to heaven.

We belong to one another. The Holy Spirit gives individuals the credentials to conduct themselves. And Paul designates the church as that which belongs to God.

In fact, in chapter 11, verses 2 to 3, you see Paul describes the church as being betrothed to Christ and, therefore, should remain pure until his return. In addition to Paul's description as the temple of God, Paul employs three foundational metaphors. In Christ, body of Christ, people of God.

As a special description of the Christian experience, therefore, Christ designates the close and specific fellowship of every believer and of the church as a whole with Christ. By baptism, we're incorporated into the sphere of the spiritual Christ and are in Christ as a new creation. We become a new creation.

The church is important. Now, let's talk about holiness a little bit. A key issue in 2 Corinthians.

Paul calls members of the Corinthian church saints of God. He calls them saints of God. And as such, is called to be holy.

On the other hand, the church must demonstrate its ethical holiness in every sphere of its existence. It's very important. There is not to be an aspect of our lives that is not affected by the work of Christ.

His conception of holiness is that which is not limited or delimited or defined solely by personal relation to God through Christ. You know, in the world today, everything is just about I, me, and myself. Others are out.

But may I tell you this? That's exactly the problem we have. You know, I tell people, I say, do you know the problem of sin? Is the letter in the middle? I. That's the problem of sin.

Is the letter in the middle because everything revolves around me? And unfortunately, that's what we see today. What about eschatology? Eschatology runs out of Paul's theological discussions.

In Second Corinthians, we see the tension of the already and not yet in chapter one, verses eight to 11 in chapter 11. And of course, in chapter five, where he tells us about the earthly hours of this tabernacle being dissolved, and we have a house in the heavens, and he compares one, one is temporal, one is eternal, one is a building, one is a tent. So, there's eschatology involved there.

And, of course, Paul talks about giving Paul an understanding of financial stewardship, which is an integral part of Christian life and ministry. It's a Second Corinthians eight and nine, describing in detail Paul's concern and commitment for financial to financial stewardship. Paul understands that giving is more than a mere response to some urgent need or some dole-outs to poor and needy people.

It is something that affects more than finances, as exemplified by the life of Christ, who gave himself sacrificially, although never a substitute for personal involvement in the ministry of reconciliation is fundamental to it. Paul's encouragement to the gentle believers to help alleviate the sufferings of the Jerusalem believers is an act of fraternal love that seeks to demonstrate the nature of the church as a body of Christ that transcends all national and geographical boundaries. Giving, according to Paul, must be liberal, voluntary, and insistent.

And the last one I want to mention here is spiritual warfare. When you look at Second Corinthians, Christian ministry is warfare. Sometimes we don't recognize that.

And because we don't recognize it, we're caught by surprise. But when we know that it's a battle, Christian ministry is warfare. Now, we don't go around saying, oh, the struggle continues.

No, no, no, no, no, no. It's not the struggle that continues, but it's a battle. In several places in Second Corinthians, Paul refers to the walk of the devil.

He seeks to outwit and defraud believers by overwhelming them with excessive sorrow after their wrongdoing or by encouraging an unforgiving spirit. You see, it's either we have an unforgiving spirit or seek to outwit us or defraud us. As a ruler of the present age, he blinds the understanding of unbelievers to prevent their belief in the gospel.

Have you ever witnessed to somebody, and then you are talking to the person about Christ, and you say, I don't get it. I can't understand. Then you ask yourself, this is as plain as plain could be.

You know, when you are a child of God, you are a believer, you see the scripture, this is as plain as plain could be. And then you give it to somebody who is a professor of philosophy, a professor of engineering, and say, I can't see this one there. It takes the power of God.

Because the power, the God of this world, has blinded their eyes, has blinded their understanding to prevent them from believing in the gospel. You say, well, God answers prayers. I can't understand.

Well, I can't understand either, but I know he does. And the sinner says, no, you can't prove it. I can prove it.

Because I've seen answers to prayer, you say, as a believer, the devil is the ruler of this present age, blinds the understanding of believers to prevent them to believe in the gospel, from believing in the gospel. His purposes are diametrically opposed to Christ's purposes.

In keeping with this cunning deceit of Eve, it tries to lead believers astray from wholehearted devotion to Christ. He himself masquerades as an angel of light, and correspondingly, his minions masquerade as agents of righteousness. Paul does not call the believer to enter into spiritual warfare.

Paul is not saying to get into warfare. No, that's not what Paul is saying. He simply informs us as a matter of fact.

He said this is it. When spiritual warfare is a, come to war, let's fight. No, no, no.

He said you are in a war. He's not telling us to come to war. We're in a war.

But you see, the beauty is this. God has provided enough weapons for us beyond, and these weapons imply the nature of the struggle. He has given us weapons to overcome, and these weapons imply the nature of the struggle we're in.

The gospel and other weapons that we have for Christian ministry are all divine. They are capable of pulling down strongholds erected by various false teachers and false teachings. You know, as such, we can say, by the grace of God, we have victory.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session number one, Introduction.