

## Dr. J. Ayodeji Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12, 2 Corinthians 11 – Paul’s Foolish Boasting Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### 1. Abstract of Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12, 2 Corinthians 11 – Paul’s Foolish Boasting, Biblicalelearning.org

Dr. Ayo Adewuya's session on 2 Corinthians 11 analyzes Paul's "foolish boasting" as a necessary response to proud and pretentious opponents in Corinth who undermined his authority with false teachings. **Paul strategically employs irony**, imitating his rivals' self-praise to expose their false apostleship and safeguard the Corinthians' spiritual well-being. His boasting focuses on his **lineage, sufferings, and divine revelations**, ultimately highlighting his weaknesses as the platform for Christ's power. **Adewuya emphasizes** that Paul's defense stems from a **godly jealousy** for the Corinthians, whom he had betrothed to Christ, and his desire to protect them from deceptive influences, contrasting his selfless ministry with the mercenary motives of his adversaries.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12 – Double click icon to  
play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 2 Corinthians).**



**Adewya\_2Cor\_Sessi  
on12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12, 2 Corinthians 11 – Paul's Foolish Boasting

#### Briefing Document: Paul's "Foolish Boasting" in 2 Corinthians 11

**Source:** Excerpts from "Adewuya\_2Cor\_EN\_Session12.pdf" by Dr. Ayo Adewuya

**Date:** October 26, 2023 (based on the © 2024 notation, implying the content was finalized around this time)

**Overview:** This document summarizes Dr. Ayo Adewuya's analysis of 2 Corinthians chapter 11, focusing on Paul's strategic use of "foolish boasting." Adewuya argues that Paul's seemingly self-aggrandizing speech is a necessary and ironic tactic employed to defend his apostolic authority and the true gospel against the influence of proud and pretentious false teachers in Corinth who were undermining his work and endangering the spiritual well-being of the church.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

##### 1. The Context of Paul's Boasting:

- **Opposition in Corinth:** Paul's opponents were boasting about their supposed superiority, propagating false teachings, and undermining Paul's authority as the founder of the Corinthian church. They were also soliciting support from the Corinthian believers.
- "Just as a reminder, Paul's opponents in Corinth, as we've seen, were proud as well as pretentious. They claimed to be superior to Paul, and they entered the community and propagated some false teachings. As a result, they undermined Paul's authority, who was the founder of the Corinthian church. Now, they not only boasted but also boasted and begged some of the believers at Corinth."
- **Endangered Spiritual Welfare:** Some Corinthians were listening to these false claims, putting their spiritual lives at risk.
- "A few had listened to these false claims and, in so doing, were endangering their spiritual well-being. The spiritual welfare of the church at this point was at stake, and Paul had to take whatever actions or steps needed to be taken in order to salvage these Corinthian Christians from the adverse influence of false teachers."
- **Motivated by Jealous Affection:** Paul's boasting is not driven by pride but by his "jealous affection for the church." He loves them and desires their reciprocal love.

- "Therefore, Paul was forced to boast not because of pride in accomplishment but rather because of his jealous affection for the church. He loved them, and he wanted their love in return."
- **Extensive Section:** This "foolish boasting" spans from 2 Corinthians 11:1 to 12:13.
- "So, we actually see this foolish boasting all the way, extending to chapter 12, verse 13. So, from 11:1 to 12:13, we'll be taking these chapter by chapter."

## 2. The Nature and Strategy of Paul's Boasting:

- **Sharp Polemic and Irony:** Chapter 11 contains Paul's "sharpest polemic" using "the weapon of irony tempered by the truth of the gospel."
- "Here, Paul begins the sharpest polemic to be found in any of his writings. What he does is that he wields masterfully the weapon of irony tempered by the truth of the gospel."
- **Continuing Theme of Boasting:** The "catchword boast" from earlier chapters (10, 12, 18) continues here, becoming more specific and potentially dangerous in light of Paul's earlier statement that one should boast "in the Lord" (10:17).
- "He said the catchword boast, which we find in 10, 12, and 18, continues here. So Paul's boast becomes more specific and thus more dangerous in light of what is just written because he has just said in chapter 10, verse 17 that he who wants to boast in the Lord."
- **Reluctant Foolishness:** Paul asks the Corinthians to "endure his foolish boasting," acknowledging it as foolishness and stating his reluctance, but deems it necessary because of their influence.
- "He said he wanted them to endure his foolishness. He was going to boast a little bit, and he said that again in verses 16 to 21. Reluctantly, he boasted and said I don't want to do it, but I'm going to do it because you are the ones who wanted to know, and I want to tell you, but you see when I do it, I just become a fool."
- **Not Inferior:** Despite the "foolishness," Paul asserts that he is "not in any way inferior" to his opponents.
- "Paul's boast, however, is not an empty one because he was not in any way inferior to them."
- **Structure of Chapter 11:** Adewuya outlines the structure: request for endurance (1-4), assertion of non-inferiority (5-15), renewed request for endurance (16-21),

and the proper boasting itself (21b-12:10) which covers lineage, sufferings, and personal revelations.

- "So, he tells them to endure his boasting in verses 1 to 4, and he tells them he's not inferior to them in verses 5 to 15. Then, in 16 to 21, he asked for endurance again, and following this extended introduction, Paul now begins the proper boasting in chapter 11, the last part of verse 21 to chapter 12, verse 10."

### 3. Key Elements of Paul's Appeal (11:1-6):

- **Anticipatory Apology:** Paul's request to "bear with me in a little foolishness" (11:1) is seen as an "anticipatory apology" for what he is about to say.
- "He begins, he said I hope, I wish, you will put up with a little of my foolishness. You see, this is what has been called by some an anticipatory apology for what Paul was going to say."
- **Playing the Fool:** Paul intentionally uses the concept of "foolishness" (rooted in Old Testament wisdom tradition) to signal that he is strategically adopting the persona of a fool to mock his opponents' self-praise.
- "Paul utilizes it now to inform his audience that he's playing the fool. It's not because he's foolish. You need to be able to separate both. He's not foolish, but he's playing the fool. He's coming; he's mocking his opponents by imitating, in the sense of what you call a parody, their indulgence in self-praise."
- **Three Reasons for Boasting (11:2-5): Godly Jealousy:** Paul's deep concern for the Corinthians' spiritual purity and their exclusive devotion to Christ, likened to a father betrothing his daughter as a "chaste or pure virgin" to one husband. He fears their minds will be "led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" like Eve was deceived by the serpent.
- "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a chaste or pure virgin. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."
- Adewuya emphasizes the distinction between godly jealousy (focused on protecting what is loved) and human envy.
- He connects this to the Old Testament imagery of God as the bridegroom of Israel, highlighting the exclusivity of the covenant relationship. "No rivals can be tolerated."

- **Another Gospel:** The Corinthians were readily accepting those who preached a "different Jesus," a "different spirit," and a "different gospel," unlike what Paul had preached. This is compared to Paul's warning in Galatians about false gospels.
- "For if one comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit, which you have not received, or a different gospel, which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully..."
- **Not Inferior to Eminent Apostles:** Paul asserts that he is "not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles," regardless of who these "super-apostles" might be (Paul's opponents or the original apostles).
- "For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles."
- **Unskilled in Speech, Not in Knowledge (11:6):** Paul concedes he might be "unskilled in speech" but insists he is "not so in knowledge," affirming his competence and authority.
- "But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge. In fact, in every way, we have made this evident to you."

#### 4. Paul's Self-Support as a Point of Contention (11:7-15):

- **Preaching Without Charge:** Paul's refusal to accept financial support from the Corinthians, while accepting it from other churches (like Macedonia), was used by his opponents to denigrate him and question his love for them.
- "Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself, so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you."
- **Challenging Social Norms:** Paul's manual labor (as a leather worker) and refusal of patronage went against the social conventions of the time, which his opponents likely used against him.
- **Exposing Mercenary Motives:** Paul's policy exposed the "mercenary spirit" of his opponents who did accept payment.
- "Paul's practice of preaching the gospel without charge must have been a real blow to Paul's enemies who were motivated by a mercenary spirit."
- **False Apostles Revealed:** Paul explicitly calls his boasting opponents "false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ" (11:13).

He denies their legitimacy based on their different message and deceitful methods.

- "For such men are false apostles, deceitful walkers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ."
- **Analogy to Satan:** Paul draws a parallel between these false apostles and Satan, who "disguises himself as an angel of light," and his servants who disguise themselves as "servants of righteousness."
- "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."

#### 5. Renewed Appeal and the Beginning of Paul's Credentials (11:16-33):

- **Sarcasm and Hesitancy:** Paul's renewed appeal to bear with his boasting is marked by sarcasm and his preference to speak about Jesus.
- **Boasting According to the Flesh:** Paul acknowledges that "many glory after the flesh" and says he will do so as well, but his boasting will be different.
- "Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also."
- **"Answering a Fool":** Adewuya connects Paul's strategy to the proverb about answering a fool according to his folly to reveal their foolishness.
- **Listing Credentials (Ironically):** Paul begins to list his "credentials" which ironically focus on his sufferings, imprisonments, beatings, and dangers, contrasting with the likely self-promotion of his opponents.
- "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane. I am also in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death."
- **Humiliation as a "Credential":** Paul even includes his escape from Damascus in a basket as a testament to his weakness and humiliation.

#### 6. The Intent Behind Paul's "Foolishness":

- **Unmasking Opponents' Folly:** Like Mark Antony's speech about Caesar, Paul's seemingly reluctant boasting ultimately reveals the folly of his opponents and the Corinthians who are turning away from him.

- **Boasting in Weakness:** Paul's boasting is not in his strengths but in his weaknesses, highlighting God's power working through him.
- "Paul's boasting is all of his weakness."
- **Focus on Christ's Approval:** Paul's ultimate concern is the approval of Christ, not the opinions of others. His weakness magnifies Christ.
- "What Paul determined would matter to him most was the approval of Christ. He recognized that in his weakness, the Lord Jesus Christ was magnified."
- **Empathy for the Corinthians:** Despite their wavering loyalty, Paul's sufferings were also for their benefit, underscoring the foolishness of turning to those who exploit them.

**Conclusion:** Dr. Adewuya concludes that Paul's "foolish boasting" in 2 Corinthians 11 is a masterful rhetorical strategy. By ironically adopting the boasting tactics of his opponents, Paul exposes their false claims and mercenary motives while simultaneously highlighting his own genuine apostolic credentials, rooted not in worldly achievements but in his suffering for the gospel and his unwavering devotion to Christ and the spiritual well-being of the Corinthian church. His focus on boasting in weakness sets him apart from his rivals and reveals the true nature of God's power.

## 4. Study Guide: Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12, 2 Corinthians 11 – Paul’s Foolish Boasting

### Study Guide: 2 Corinthians 11 - Paul's Foolish Boasting

#### Key Themes:

- Paul's motivations for "foolish boasting"
- The contrast between Paul and his opponents in Corinth
- The nature of true apostleship
- The defense of Paul's apostolic authority
- The spiritual danger faced by the Corinthian church due to false teachers
- The concept of "power in weakness"

#### Key Sections of 2 Corinthians 11:

- **11:1-6:** Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to bear with his foolishness, motivated by godly jealousy and concern for their spiritual purity.
- **11:7-12:** Paul's practice of preaching the gospel without charge and his reasons for this policy in contrast to his opponents' mercenary motives.
- **11:13-15:** Paul's strong condemnation of his opponents as false apostles, deceitful workers, and servants of Satan.
- **11:16-21:** Paul reluctantly agrees to boast according to the flesh, using sarcasm to highlight the Corinthians' tolerance of those who exploit them.
- **11:22-33:** Paul begins his "foolish" boasting, detailing his lineage, his extraordinary sufferings, and culminating in an account of his humbling escape from Damascus.

#### Quiz:

1. Why does Paul refer to his boasting in 2 Corinthians 11 as "foolish"? Explain his underlying motivation for engaging in this type of self-presentation.
2. Describe the characteristics of Paul's opponents in Corinth as presented in the source material. How did their actions and claims threaten the Corinthian church?



3. What is meant by Paul's "godly jealousy" for the Corinthians? How does he use the analogy of betrothal to illustrate his concern for their spiritual well-being?
4. Why did Paul choose to preach the gospel in Corinth without accepting financial support? How did his opponents attempt to use this practice against him?
5. According to Paul, what are the defining characteristics of the "false apostles" he confronts in 2 Corinthians 11? What comparisons does he draw between them and Satan?
6. Explain the irony inherent in Paul's "foolish boasting." In what way does his self-commendation differ from that of his adversaries?
7. Summarize the main categories of Paul's boasts in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. What is the significance of him highlighting his sufferings and weaknesses?
8. What rhetorical strategies does Paul employ in 2 Corinthians 11 to persuade the Corinthians of his authenticity and the danger of his opponents? Provide specific examples.
9. How does the source material connect Paul's experience of weakness with the manifestation of God's power? What key statement encapsulates this idea?
10. What does Paul hope to achieve by engaging in this extended section of "foolish boasting"? What is the ultimate goal he has for the Corinthian believers?

**Answer Key:**

1. Paul calls his boasting "foolish" because it goes against his natural inclination and the principle of boasting only in the Lord (as mentioned in chapter 10). However, he is compelled to boast reluctantly due to the proud and pretentious claims of his opponents, who have undermined his authority and are leading the Corinthians astray.
2. Paul's opponents in Corinth were proud, pretentious, and claimed to be superior to him. They propagated false teachings, undermined Paul's authority as the founder of the church, and even boasted and begged from the believers, endangering their spiritual welfare.
3. Paul's "godly jealousy" is a deep concern for the spiritual purity and exclusive devotion of the Corinthian church to Christ, mirroring God's own passionate desire for his people. He uses the analogy of betrothal, where he presented the

Corinthians as a pure virgin to Christ, fearing that they would be led astray like Eve by the serpent's craftiness.

4. Paul preached without charge to avoid being a burden to the Corinthians and to prevent his opponents from finding an opportunity to equate him with their mercenary practices. His opponents used this against him, suggesting it indicated a lack of love or apostolic privilege, despite Paul's insistence that God knew his loving motivations.
5. Paul describes the "false apostles" as deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ and whose end will match their deeds. He compares them to Satan, who also disguises himself as an angel of light, suggesting their teachings and methods are ultimately aligned with the forces of evil.
6. The irony lies in Paul imitating his opponents' self-commendation while actually boasting in things that they would likely consider weaknesses or even shameful, such as his sufferings and hardships. This contrast highlights the difference between true apostolic service rooted in humility and the self-serving boasts of his adversaries.
7. Paul boasts in his Hebrew lineage and heritage, matching his opponents' claims. However, he primarily boasts in his extraordinary sufferings for Christ – including imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, and constant danger – demonstrating a commitment and endurance far exceeding theirs. This culminates in the humbling account of his escape in a basket, highlighting his weakness.
8. Paul uses irony by sarcastically praising the Corinthians' tolerance of those who exploit them and then reluctantly engaging in boasting himself. He employs strong condemnatory language to label his opponents as "false apostles" and draws parallels to Satan's deception. He also uses emotional appeals rooted in his love and concern for the Corinthians' spiritual well-being.
9. The source material emphasizes that Paul's power and effectiveness in ministry were often manifested through his weaknesses. He states that he would rather boast about his weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in him, culminating in the paradoxical statement, "when I am weak, then I am strong."
10. Paul hopes to expose the foolishness and self-serving nature of his opponents' claims and to reassert his own apostolic authority, thereby safeguarding the Corinthian believers from their harmful influence and ensuring their continued devotion to the true gospel of Christ.

## Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze Paul's strategic use of "foolish boasting" in 2 Corinthians 11. What rhetorical purposes does this seemingly contradictory approach serve in his defense against his adversaries and his appeal to the Corinthian church?
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics and motivations of Paul and his opponents in Corinth as portrayed in 2 Corinthians 11. How does Paul use this contrast to highlight the nature of true and false apostleship?
3. Discuss the significance of Paul's emphasis on his sufferings and weaknesses in his "foolish boasting" (2 Corinthians 11:22-33). How does this relate to his understanding of God's power and the nature of Christian ministry?
4. Explore the themes of spiritual purity and the threat of false teaching in 2 Corinthians 11. How does Paul's "godly jealousy" and his use of the betrothal analogy underscore the importance of the Corinthians' unwavering devotion to Christ?
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of Paul's rhetorical strategies in 2 Corinthians 11. How does his use of irony, sarcasm, and personal narrative contribute to his overall argument and his attempt to win back the trust and allegiance of the Corinthian believers?

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Polemic:** A strong verbal or written attack on someone or something. In this context, Paul's sharp criticism of his opponents.
- **Irony:** The expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect. Paul uses irony in his "foolish boasting."
- **Forensic Rhetoric:** A type of rhetoric concerned with establishing facts and judgments about the past, often used in legal settings. Adewuya suggests Paul's letters have a forensic character as he defends his apostleship.
- **Godly Jealousy:** A passionate concern and protectiveness, similar to God's own desire for exclusive devotion from his people. Paul's motivation for his actions towards the Corinthians.
- **Betrothal:** A formal engagement to be married, carrying significant legal and social weight in Jewish tradition. Paul uses this as an analogy for the Corinthians' relationship with Christ.
- **Super-apostles:** A term Paul uses (possibly sarcastically) to refer to his highly esteemed opponents in Corinth.
- **False Apostles:** Individuals who falsely claim to be apostles of Christ and spread teachings contrary to the true gospel. Paul strongly condemns these individuals.
- **Deceitful Workers:** Individuals whose methods and actions are characterized by trickery and deception. Paul applies this term to his opponents.
- **Masquerade:** To disguise oneself or pretend to be someone one is not. Paul accuses his opponents of masquerading as apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness.
- **Christological:** Relating to the person and nature of Jesus Christ. Paul's ultimate justification for his actions and beliefs is rooted in his understanding of Christ.

## 5. FAQs on Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 12, 2 Corinthians 11 – Paul's Foolish Boasting, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Paul's "Foolish Boasting" in 2 Corinthians 11

**1. Why does Paul begin "foolish boasting" in 2 Corinthians 11?** Paul engages in what he calls "foolish boasting" reluctantly. His authority as the founder of the Corinthian church was being undermined by proud and pretentious opponents who propagated false teachings and boasted about their own credentials while criticizing Paul. To counteract their harmful influence and safeguard the spiritual well-being of the Corinthian believers, Paul felt compelled to adopt their tactic of boasting, not out of personal pride, but out of a "godly jealousy" and deep concern for their devotion to Christ.

**2. What are the key characteristics of Paul's "foolish boasting"?** Paul's boasting is characterized by irony and is tempered by the truth of the gospel. He acknowledges the foolishness of self-commendation, especially after stating that one should boast in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17). However, he argues that his boasting is necessary to reveal the emptiness of his opponents' claims and to remind the Corinthians of his own genuine service and suffering for their sake. His boasting focuses on areas that might seem like weaknesses, such as his hardships and persecutions, which ultimately demonstrate God's power working through him.

**3. What are the main reasons Paul asks the Corinthians to "bear with his foolishness"?** Paul provides several reasons for his request. First, he expresses a "godly jealousy" for them, as he had betrothed them to Christ as a pure virgin and feared their minds would be led astray by false teachings, similar to how the serpent deceived Eve. Second, he emphasizes that his opponents were preaching a "different Jesus," a "different spirit," and a "different gospel" that the Corinthians were readily accepting. Third, Paul asserts that he is "not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles," implying that his credentials and authority are equal to those his opponents might be claiming.

**4. How does Paul contrast himself with his opponents, whom he calls "false apostles" and "super-apostles"?** Paul highlights a significant difference in their motivations and actions. His opponents in Corinth seemed driven by mercenary motives, accepting financial support while undermining Paul's authority. Paul, on the other hand, deliberately preached the gospel without charge in Corinth, even "robbing other churches" to serve them freely, to avoid giving his opponents an opportunity to claim equality with him in their financial practices. He identifies his opponents as "false apostles," "deceitful workers," and those who "disguise themselves as apostles of Christ," even comparing their tactics to those of Satan who disguises himself as an angel of light.

**5. In what ways does Paul boast about his own life and ministry?** Paul boasts about his Hebrew lineage, his status as an Israelite and a descendant of Abraham, mirroring the credentials his opponents likely emphasized. However, he quickly moves to detail his extraordinary sufferings for Christ, including far more labors, imprisonments, beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, and constant dangers. He even mentions his humble escape from Damascus in a basket as an example of his weakness. This catalogue of hardships serves to highlight his genuine commitment to the gospel and his willingness to endure for the sake of Christ and the Corinthians, contrasting sharply with the self-serving behavior of his adversaries.

**6. What is the significance of Paul's emphasis on his weaknesses when he boasts?** Paul's boasting culminates in the paradoxical statement, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). By highlighting his weaknesses and sufferings, Paul demonstrates that his strength and effectiveness in ministry come not from his own abilities but from the power of Christ working through him. He even mentions receiving a "thorn in the flesh" to prevent him from becoming conceited due to the extraordinary revelations he received. This focus on weakness underscores the authenticity of his apostleship and the divine source of his authority, contrasting with the empty boasts of his opponents who likely emphasized superficial strengths.

**7. How does Paul use irony and sarcasm in his "foolish boasting"?** Paul masterfully employs irony and sarcasm throughout 2 Corinthians 11. He sarcastically asks the Corinthians to "tolerate the foolish gladly" since they tolerate those who enslave, devour, take advantage of, exalt themselves, and even strike them. This biting sarcasm exposes the Corinthians' foolishness in accepting the false apostles and their exploitative behavior. Similarly, when listing his credentials, he prefaces them with self-deprecating remarks, such as "I speak as if insane," before detailing his extensive suffering, thus turning the conventional idea of boasting on its head.

**8. What are the key takeaways from Paul's "foolish boasting" for believers today?**

Paul's discourse in 2 Corinthians 11 serves as a powerful reminder for believers to exercise discernment and be wary of false teachers who may present a distorted gospel for selfish gain. It highlights the importance of looking beyond superficial claims and examining the true character and motivations of those who seek spiritual leadership. Furthermore, Paul's example teaches that true strength in ministry is often found in recognizing our weaknesses and relying on God's power. His "godly jealousy" for the spiritual purity of the church underscores the need for vigilance in maintaining devotion to the authentic Jesus and the true gospel.