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Foolish Boasting

11: 16-21a

Foolish Boasting DIG: In 10:1 Paul made it clear how he would like to appeal to the Corinthians, so why did he sarcastically resort to boasting, as the false apostles were doing? What is the irony that galls Paul (see 12:11-13)? What things had Paul already boasted about (1:12, 9:2, 10:8, 11:10)? How was that any different from how the false apostles boasted?

REFLECT: Both Yeshua and Paul's gentleness was misunderstood as weakness. How has that resulted in blessing (see Matthew 5:5)? Where do you need to embrace their example right now? What usually happens when you boast like a fool? How can you make sure you are not participating in any foolish boasting? How can you defend yourself against false accusations?

Answer a fool as his folly deserves, so that he won't think he is wise.

Like most people, **the Corinthians** were slow to absorb the truth that divine standards differ radically from those of **the world**. **Paul** had tried to make this clear in **his** former letter concerning the message of the cross (see the commentary on **First Corinthians**, to see link click [An](#) - **The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**). If, however, **the Corinthians** persisted in looking at things from **the world's** perspective, **he** would accommodate **himself** to **their** point of view.²⁵³ But reluctance was written all over **Paul** as **he** fell over the edge into a pool of **foolish boasting**. **He** was **ashamed** to do that sort of thing, and yet, **he** saw no other alternative.



Therefore, **Paul** resumed the theme of **foolish boasting** (see **By - Being Deceived**), after **he** had digressed to defend **his** policy regarding financial support and to reveal the true identity of **his opponents** (see **Bz - Servants of Satan**). **He** had decided to **boast** as **his rivals** did because **he** knew of **the Corinthians'** determination to compare **him** with **them** (see **Af - The Problem with the False Apostles**) and **their** vulnerability after doing so. Consequently, **Paul boasted** about things that were not worthy of **boasting**, and in doing so, answered **the fools** according to **their folly**. As the TaNaKh says: **Answer a fool as his folly deserves, so that he won't think he is wise (Proverbs 26:5)**. There was a danger, however, that some of **the Corinthians** might not see, or wish to see, that **Paul** was simply playing a part.²⁵⁴

Boasting is foolish (11:16-17): I repeat. **Paul** had already asked **his** readers to **bear with him in a little foolishness (11:1)**, and now, following **his** long diversion of **verses 2-15**, **he repeats his** request in slightly different terms: **Don't let anyone think I am a fool. But even if you do, at least receive me as a fool**, as **you** received these other **fools**, the false apostles, so that **I** too, like **them**, may **do a little boasting (11:16)**! **Paul** is conscious that the **boasting** in which **he** was about to engage is an act of **folly**, but **he** doesn't want **the Corinthians** to regard **him** as **foolish** in doing so. In fact, it is only **their** gullibility regarding the claims of **the false apostles** which forces **Paul** to **boast** at all **(12:11)**. But even if **they** thought **he** was actually **a fool** and not just playing-the-fool, **he** asked for **their** indulgence as **he** did **a little boasting** of **his** own. After all, **the Corinthians** had **put up with the foolish boasting of his rivals** without objection, surely **they** could endure a little **boasting** from **their own apostle**.²⁵⁵

Having asked **the Corinthians** to accept **him** as **a fool** so that **he** could **boast**, **Paul** immediately qualified what **he** had said, lest there be any misunderstanding. **What I am saying is not in accordance with the Lord; rather, this conceited boasting is spoken as a fool would speak (11:17)**. **He** was not speaking **in accordance** with, or in

conformity with, a norm established by **the Lord**. For this reason, **he** would not be **boasting in the Lord (10:17)**, except when **he** would **boast in his weakness (11:30 and 12:9)**. Rather, **he** would **boast foolishly** because **he** will be **boasting** in those things that appeared of **his** own making.²⁵⁶

Boasting is fleshly (11:18-21): Many people boast in a worldly way, the way of human achievement, **the way** of power and prestige, and even spiritual experiences, in terms which do not take into account what is pleasing to **God**. It was because **his opponents** had **boasted in a worldly way**, and because **his** converts had been won over by such **boasting**, that **Paul** felt it necessary to indulge in **it** also for **their** sakes, saying: **I too will boast this way (11:18)**, even though **he** was painfully aware that such **boasting** was pure **folly**.²⁵⁷

If **the Corinthians** would not put up with **him** when **he** was **wise** and spoke according to **the Lord**, then, **Paul** scoffed, perhaps **they** would listen to **him** when **he** acted **the fool** and **boasted** in the same manner as **the false apostles** **they** so admired. Ironically **he** appealed to **their** extraordinary tolerance, saying: **For since you yourselves are so wise, you gladly put up with fools (11:19)!** That statement is similar to **First Corinthians 4:10**, where **he** said: **We are weak in Messiah, but you are strong!** Things had not changed much in **Corinth** since **Paul** wrote those words. But neither had **Ha'Shem's** response to **the wisdom of the world**. **He** will destroy **the wisdom of the wise** and make **the wisdom of the world** look **foolish** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Am - The World's Wisdom vs the Good News**). Here, **Paul** destroys the so-called **wisdom of the wise** by embracing **it himself** and in that process, showing it to be **the folly of a fool**. But even after **Paul** descended to the level of **his rivals** in **boasting**, **he** transcended **them**. **He** would **boast** about visible things. What was visible, however, pointed to **his weaknesses** - part of the problem as far as **the Corinthians** were concerned. However, **boasting in his weakness** allowed **him** to talk about the grace of **God**.²⁵⁸

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, What a joy it is to have such a wonderful **father** as you! It is a delight to **boast** about **You**. You are: Holy, Almighty, All-powerful, All-wise, our forgiving **Savior** and our Loving **Father**! As we focus on eternity, we can see our earthly **sufferings** as soon to be over and then the glory of heaven forever! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. In **Your** love things are seen so differently. **You** see our earthly **sufferings** for **Your** name, as opportunities for **You** to reward **Your** children (**First Corinthians 3:13-15**). Thank **You** for not judging our mistakes: **For there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:1)**. Rather, **You** look at our **heart (First Samuel 16:7)**. In your holy **Son's***

name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

The tolerance of **the Corinthians** apparently had no limits. **They** not only put up with **foolish** speech, but also with the despotism of **the tyrants**. **The** intruding **false apostles** had reduced **them** to **slavery** by robbing **them** of **their freedom in Messiah** (Acts 15:1), **in order to bring them into** utter **bondage**, the **slavery** of obedience to the 613 commandments of Moshe (see the commentary on [Galatians Ax - False Brothers slipped in to Spy Out our Freedom in Messiah](#)). **They** had **exploited them** by greedily devouring any and all financial support offered to **them** (Mk 12:40). **The false apostles** thought that **they** were superior to **the Corinthians**, insulted and humiliated **them** (11:20).²⁵⁹ **The Corinthians**, however, were not the first to prefer **tyrants** to more gentle leaders. **The Israelites** rejected **Samuel** for a self-willed and despotic **king Sha'ul** (1 Samuel 8).

With biting irony, **Paul** confessed: **To my shame, I must admit that I have been too "weak" to do such things (11:21a)**. **He** owned up to **his weakness (10:10)**. **His opponents** were absolutely right. **He** had utterly failed in that regard. But **his** dishonor was really **theirs**, not **his**, as far as **God** was concerned. **His** confession became a painful rebuke. As far as **the world** was concerned, **he** was **dishonored**; but according to **ADONAI**, **he** was **honored (6:8)**. If being **"strong"** meant doing what **his rivals** had done, then **he** was unquestionably **"weak."** Yet, it was a **"weakness"** that **God** approved of. **The LORD** never codones the **tyranny**, arrogance, and cruelty that church dictators have inflicted on the Church across the ages.

Paul will show that **his "weakness"** allowed **God's** power to work more powerfully in **him** (see [Cc - How God Uses Suffering](#)). Who is of **Messiah**? **The** boastful **tyrant** who ascends to the throne of **his** own pride, coercing others to bow to **his** will and running roughshod over any opposition? Or the gentle and mild **servant** whose only badge of rule is **his** consideration of others and devotion to their spiritual welfare? This was **Paul's** answer: **Though He was in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, He emptied Himself, in that He took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when He appeared as a human being, He humbled Himself still more by becoming obedient to death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8)**. For even the **Messiah** did not please Himself; rather, as the TaNaKh says, "The insults of those insulting You fell on Me? (Romans 15:3). For you know how generous our Lord Yeshua Messiah was - for your sakes He impoverished Himself, even though He was rich, so that He might make you rich by means of His poverty (Second Corinthians 8:9)."²⁶⁰