



PART 1

PAUL IN CHAINS: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Chapter Three

TAKING COURAGE

When Luke described the storm as “no small storm” in [Acts 27:20](#), he was not kidding.

[Acts 27:20 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰“Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.”

Here is a fourth characteristic of all wise leadership: *A leader speaks with authority.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #4

A LEADER SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY

Paul had God’s own promise of safety. He was confident it was true. He knew God was still in control of the winds, and that if God wanted Paul to testify before Caesar, a shipwreck would be no obstacle. Moreover, if God promised the safety of every soul on the ship, Paul could rest in the confidence that God would keep His word.

Therefore Paul was able to speak with the utmost boldness and conviction. His remarkable assurance was not born of *self*-confidence; it stemmed from the certainty that God would do as He said.

[2 Timothy 2:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

Notice: When we say good leaders speak with authority, we’re not merely saying that they speak with an authoritative attitude. Pomposity and arrogance aren’t the same as authority. Paul’s amazing aplomb [confidence, composure, and skill shown especially in a difficult situation] was utterly devoid of anything like egotism or insolence. It did not reflect a feeling of



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superiority or a sense of self-importance and conceit. Rather, the amazing authority with which Paul spoke was an unshakable authority derived from his absolute certainty that God’s Word was true and His promises were trustworthy.

Of course, there’s no denying that there was a commanding air to the manner in which Paul seized the moment. He *did* speak definitively. He *did* sound certain and assertive. **A true leader is able to speak with such boldness because he knows whereof he speaks.** He speaks with confidence—with authority—because he knows what is true. He sees it plainly. In Paul’s case, he stood on God’s own authority. He had direct revelation from God!

And so do we. God has spoken clearly in His Word to us. Scripture is the very voice of God, alive and powerful—and for the believer, illuminated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Scripture, said Paul, is **“the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).**

1 Corinthians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”

It reveals what He thinks—and He thinks in perfect accord with the will of God, as does the Holy Spirit (**Romans 8:26**).

Romans 8:26 (NASB)

²⁶“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words.”

We can’t expect angelic revelation, since that was unique to the apostolic era. They didn’t have the New Testament. We do, **and that is where God still speaks.** Every leader who is a Christian has far more than any worldly leader, because we have God’s truth and His Spirit as our teacher.

All of this means that a leader **must know** the Scriptures. He must *believe* with an unshakable conviction that God’s Word is true. And he must be able to *communicate* the truth of God’s Word with confidence and conviction.

Paul also understood that there **is** a vocal and verbal element to leadership that cannot be discounted. Listen to this testimony from **Pastor John MacArthur**: “A few years ago, I spoke at the local police academy’s graduation ceremony. Afterward, I was talking to a commander about how difficult it is to get through the academy. He told me about one student they dismissed from the academy because his voice was too soft and high-pitched. I expressed some surprise about that, but he pointed out that you can’t come up behind someone and say with a voice like Mickey Mouse, “Put ’em up! You’re under arrest!”

The voice of authority must convey strength and power. Unless you really know what you’re talking about, you can’t speak clearly or with authority. And if you can’t verbally project **certainty, confidence, and courage** based on knowledge, you’ll find it very difficult to lead people.

A leader doesn't say, "Well, we could go this way, or we could go that way. Let's vote." In the business world or the athletic world, the true leader is always the guy who pulls everyone into the huddle and says, "This is what we do. Here is how we do it. This is how we win." Then he lays out a clear and sensible plan and says, "Now, everyone, go do your job." He knows what he's talking about. He understands the problems. He sees the solutions. He communicates it all clearly so that everyone is motivated to do what's needed.

In the apostle Paul's case, he had a word from God. **That is what sets spiritual and biblical leadership apart from every other kind.** We can speak with absolute confidence, as long as we derive our authority from the unshakable truth of God's Word.

Despite what some who listen to my tapes might think, I don't speak with authority on *everything*. I've been invited many times to be a guest on *some radio talk show* to give my opinion. Sometimes I decline. When someone asks me my opinion about our government's economic or foreign-relations policies, I usually offer no opinion. I don't have enough valid information about those things to have an authoritative opinion. Ask me about some moral or ethical question, however, and that's another matter. Why? Because I know what Scripture says about those things. I have authority for my opinions on such matters. And when given the opportunity, I always point to my source of authority. I don't like giving *mere* opinion.

People are looking for authority they can trust. And people who love the truth will follow someone who communicates God's truth with authority. There's no need to tiptoe around facts, evade hard issues, or equivocate on clear matters. If you know the truth, speak it with authority! That's what true leadership does.

You wouldn't hear Jesus say, "I'd like to share something with you. I have a thought that might be worth your consideration." He amazed people by the way He spoke with authority. Of course, He had inherent authority, because He was God incarnate. But His manner of speaking contrasted starkly with that of the Scribes and Pharisees. [Matthew](#) said,

Matthew 7:28-29 (NASB)

²⁸ "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;

²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes."

The scribes were accustomed to quoting rabbinical opinions as their source of authority. They treated truth as theory, often quoting many different possible interpretations of the law and rarely speaking definitively about anything. Ultimately, they substituted human opinion and human tradition for the authoritative truth of Scripture ([Matthew 15:6](#)).

Matthew 15:6 (NASB)

"He is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by *this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition."

Jesus came on the scene and, by contrast, He quoted no one's opinion. He said things like, **"You have heard that it was said...But I say to you..."** ([Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 43-44](#)).



Matthew 5:21-22 (NASB)

²¹ “**You have heard that the ancients were told**, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’

²² “**But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell.*”

Matthew 5:27-28 (NASB)

²⁷ “**You have heard that it was said**, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’;

²⁸ **but I say to you** that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Matthew 5:31-32 (NASB)

³¹ “**It was said**, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’;

³² **but I say to you** that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 5:33-34 (NASB)

³³ “Again, **you have heard that the ancients were told**, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’

³⁴ “**But I say to you**, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God.”

Matthew 5:43-44 (NASB)

⁴³ “**You have heard that it was said**, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴ “**But I say to you**, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

He spoke with divine authority. He had the truth of God. And He said so plainly:

John 8:26 (NASB)

²⁶ “I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.”

The wise spiritual leader stands on the very same authority. **For us, it’s not**, “I say to you...”; **it’s**, “Thus saith *the Lord*.” But it is the very same authority. And when you do that correctly and accurately, you lift up others and ennoble them.

That’s what Paul did. He was not abrasive. He was not abusive. He was not arrogant or self-aggrandizing. But he was confident in the promise of God, and his words conveyed that confidence.