



## PART 2

# PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

## Chapter Five

### A LEADER'S DEVOTION TO HIS PEOPLE

We move now from Luke's narrative about the apostle Paul to one of the most poignant, powerful, inspired epistles from the pen of the apostle himself. Here, and in the next few chapters, we're going to look at some key passages from [2 Corinthians](#). It is the most personal, biographical, and passionate of all Paul's canonical letters—and the richest insight into the quality of his leadership.

In the chronology of Paul's life, his relationship with Corinth preceded the Maltese shipwreck by about a decade. Paul first came to Corinth during his second missionary journey, **in approximately AD 50**. The shipwreck episode we have already examined occurred *after* his third and final missionary journey was complete, **around AD 60 or 61**. So as a prelude to our study of 2 Corinthians, we move back nine chapters in the book of Acts and one full decade in time.

Paul wrote [2 Corinthians](#) specifically to defend his apostleship and to answer some major threats to his leadership in the church at Corinth. So he opened his heart very personally on the matter of leadership. In many ways this one epistle alone would stand as a wonderful manual for leaders. If we worked our way systematically through the entire epistle, we could fill a very large volume with insight on leadership drawn from [2 Corinthians](#). That, however, would make *this* teaching far too unwieldy. So my goal in the next few chapters is simply to narrow in on some of the highlights of [2 Corinthians](#), glean the major principles it teaches for leaders, and try to sense the heart of a true leader by seeing how the apostle Paul bared his own soul to those who were under his pastoral and apostolic care.

To set the context for what we are about to study, we need to know something about the city of Corinth, the church Paul founded there, and the circumstances that provoked Paul to write this particular epistle to that church.

## HOW PAUL BROUGHT THE GOSPEL TO CORINTH

[Acts 18](#) describes how Paul first came to Corinth after his visit to the great city of Athens, where he had just given a defense of his teaching to the philosophers in the midst of the Areopagus, a court of the Athenian intelligentsia, named for the hill where it was located, next to the Parthenon ([Acts 17:22–34](#)). It was a forty-five-mile journey west along the coast of the Saronic Gulf from Athens to Corinth.

### [Acts 17:22-34 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.”

<sup>23</sup> “For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

<sup>25</sup> nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

<sup>26</sup> and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

<sup>27</sup> that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

<sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

<sup>29</sup> “Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.”

<sup>30</sup> “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

<sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

<sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.”

<sup>33</sup> So Paul went out of their midst.

<sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”

Corinth is located on a narrow isthmus that connects the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnese (the large peninsula that defines southern Greece). The isthmus is only four miles wide at its narrowest point, and that is where Corinth was strategically situated.

**CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1**

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**Lecture # 17**



Today there is a deep canal near Corinth that allows ships to pass. In the first century, however, ships were actually brought ashore, put on skids and rollers, and transported across the isthmus to the other side. All except the very largest ships traveling the trade routes between the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas usually chose this route, because the 250-mile voyage around the south of Greece was so treacherous and time-consuming.