



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Six

PAUL DEFENDS HIS SINCERITY

RELIABILITY THAT STEMS FROM CLEAR CONVICTIONS

Next, Paul reminded them from their own experience with him that they had no grounds whatsoever to accuse him of ever being vacillating or unreliable. Not only had he always written and spoken to them in words that were clear and unambiguous ([2 Corinthians 1:13](#)), he had also consistently backed up his words with a life that was dependable and wholly in harmony with what he taught.

[2 Corinthians 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end.”

In fact, Paul said, the doctrine he taught was the whole basis for his constancy and steadfastness. Just as God is faithful to all His promises, Paul himself always strove to imitate that steadfastness by being **decisive, distinct, definitive**, and true to his word. Paul was the very epitome of a transparent man.

So again, he puts it to them bluntly and directly:

[2 Corinthians 1:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*?”

Had he ever said yes to them when he really meant no? In the question itself there is no hedging and no equivocation. *They* were the ones who needed to speak plainly: Were they in fact



accusing him of double-dealing? Paul, in characteristically bold fashion, thus attacked the false teachers' innuendo head-on, and confronted the Corinthians with the absurdity of the charge.

Those who knew Paul personally certainly knew better. He had always preached Christ without equivocation ([v. 19](#)).

2 Corinthians 1:19 (NASB)

¹⁹“For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.”

“All the promises of God,” which Paul had faithfully proclaimed, are themselves unambiguous and certain ([v. 20](#)).

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NASB)

²⁰“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

Paul himself had consistently been as definite and decisive as the substance of his message. So he once again affirmed that truth in bold language, with an oath:

2 Corinthians 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.”

Paul was eager to answer even the hint of any accusation that he had been double-minded or indecisive. He knew that such a weakness—even the mere suspicion of it—can seriously undermine people's confidence in a leader. Leadership cannot afford the luxury of drawn-out doubt and prolonged indecision.

This is another in our long list of leadership essentials: *A leader is definite and decisive.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #13

A LEADER IS DEFINITE AND DECISIVE

Good leaders must be able to make decisions in a way that is clearheaded, proactive, and conclusive. They must also be able to communicate objectives in a way that is articulate, emphatic, and distinct.

After all, a leader is someone who *leads*. Anyone can waffle. Anyone can be timid and ambivalent. The leader, by contrast, must give clear direction. People will not follow if they are not certain their leader is himself certain.

To summarize, then, Paul had always been definite and decisive in his dealings with the Corinthians. He proclaimed a message that was clear and unambiguous. He served a Lord who is true and faithful. And he had always taught them that all the divine promises are Yea and Amen. The Corinthians of all people knew these things well. With a little reflection, they would see that the false teachers' accusations against Paul were without any merit whatsoever.

TENDERNESS THAT IS EXPRESSED IN CLEAR COMMUNICATION

And yet, Paul *had* changed his mind and postponed the visit he originally planned to Corinth. So he explained why. He had made the change of plans for good reasons—not because he was being insincere or phony when he said he would come, but quite the opposite. His deep affection for them—which was by no means insincere—made him want to spare them the grief of a visit that would have been dominated by sorrow, rebukes, chastisement, controversy, and other negatives.

Paul was by no means timid or afraid of such confrontation, but this time he chose to communicate his displeasure to the Corinthians, whom he loved as their spiritual father, via written correspondence, in measured and careful words—so that his next visit to Corinth might be a joyful occasion. *That* was what had ultimately made him change his plans.

Here is another essential principle of leadership, which I hasten to add as soon as possible after the previous one: *A leader knows when to change his mind.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #14

A LEADER KNOWS WHEN TO CHANGE HIS MIND

These twin principles go hand in hand. **While leaders must be definitive and decisive, they must not be utterly inflexible.** The best test of a leader's wisdom is not always the *first* decision he makes. Everyone makes bad decisions at times. A good leader will not perpetuate a bad decision. Circumstances also change, and a good leader must know when to adapt to circumstances.

In Paul's case, his change of mind was forced by a change in circumstances. The irony of the false accusation against him is that Paul was not the one who was being vacillating and hesitant. The Corinthians themselves were, by giving undeserved credence to Paul's critics. Word had somehow reached him of what the false teachers were saying.

He was both **disturbed** and **disappointed** to learn that the Corinthians—who owed their salvation to Paul's faithful ministry and clear, bold, uncompromising proclamation of the gospel—were being swayed by such far-fetched slander. The situation needed to be corrected. Rebukes, severe reprimands, and even chastisement were necessary. Paul did not want his next visit to Corinth to be characterized by such negative interaction.

Therefore, he said, ***"To spare you I came no more to Corinth"*** ([2 Corinthians 1:23](#), emphasis added).

2 Corinthians 1:23 (NASB)

²³ ***"But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth."***

CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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Lecture # 28



Though willing if necessary to take them on face-to-face, toe-to-toe, Paul did not want his personal interaction with them to be dominated by scolding and conflict. He wanted their reunion to be in an atmosphere of joy. He respected them and treasured the relationship he had with them.

So rather than immediately coming to them **“with a rod”** (cf. [1 Corinthians 4:21](#)), he decided to see if he could correct them by letter first.

1 Corinthians 4:21 (NASB)

²¹“What do you desire? Shall I come to you **with a rod**, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”