



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Six

PAUL DEFENDS HIS SINCERITY

RELIABILITY THAT STEMS FROM CLEAR
CONVICTIONS

TENDERNESS THAT IS EXPRESSED IN CLEAR
COMMUNICATION

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?”

And immediately we encounter another major principle all leaders need to bear in mind: *A leader does not abuse his authority.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #15

A LEADER DOES NOT ABUSE HIS AUTHORITY

Paul had legitimate apostolic authority over the Corinthians. It was clear, God-given spiritual authority, confirmed by undeniable signs and wonders ([2 Corinthians 12:11–12](#)). But he used that authority in a pastoral, not an authoritarian, style.

[2 Corinthians 12:11-12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ “I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most



eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”

He might well have written to the Corinthians the same thing he said to the church at Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 2:7-11 (NASB)

⁷ “But we proved to be gentle among you, *as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.*

⁸ Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

¹⁰ You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

¹¹ just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you *as a father would his own children.*”

He *did* say to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 4:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

¹⁵ For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would not have* many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”

And here in **2 Corinthians 1**, he wrote,

2 Corinthians 1:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.”

He had no interest in lording it over the Corinthians. He refused to risk spoiling his relationship with them by repeated personal clashes. In the words of Augustine, “As severity is ready to punish the faults which it may discover, so charity is reluctant to discover the faults which it must punish.”

Remember that Jesus said leadership in His kingdom is different from worldly leadership for precisely this reason:

Luke 22:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ “And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’

²⁶ But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.”



Paul was the epitome of a leader with a servant's heart. He perfectly fulfilled what the apostle Peter said every pastor should be:

1 Peter 5:2-3 (NASB)

²“Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

³nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Paul himself knew that “a servant of the Lord must not quarrel” (**2 Timothy 2:24–26**).

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NASB)

²⁴“The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,

²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

²⁶and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”