



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Seven

“WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?”

He said, in essence, that the only person who is really adequate to lead is the one whom God has made a leader. Self-made leaders are utterly incompetent. By contrast, Paul said, “**Our sufficiency is from God**” (3:5).

2 Corinthians 3:5 (NASB)

⁵“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

That statement is the key to this brief passage and a summary of Paul’s whole self-defense.

Paul was being attacked on several fronts: his character, his influence, his calling, and his humility. The false apostles who had successfully infiltrated the Corinthian church had relentlessly assaulted him by striking repeatedly at each of those targets. Notice how skillfully the apostle replied.

HIS CHARACTER

Paul was somewhat on the horns of a dilemma as he defended himself. He knew that no matter what he said in his self-defense, the false apostles would try to use it as proof that he was proud, egotistical, or boastful. They would try to twist whatever he said into another accusation against him. Yet he *had* to defend himself, because he was the founder and leader God had chosen, equipped, and appointed for the Corinthian church. If they wouldn’t listen to him, they would not hear the truth at all. He was not about to abandon these people whom he loved to evil, false, spiritually incompetent leaders.

Paul's response to his critics highlights another fundamental principle of leadership: *A leader doesn't abdicate his role in the face of opposition.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #16

A LEADER DOESN'T ABDICATE HIS ROLE IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION

The apostle had little interest in self-promotion; hence little interest in self-defense. He really hated having to speak in defense of his character. He preferred to be thought of as a low-level galley slave at the bottom of a ship, pulling an oar. He despised boasting about himself, rather than Christ. But he *had* to answer the assault or give up the church to false teachers.

No matter how unpalatable it was to Paul to engage in self-defense, **he needed to oppose the threat of these bogus apostles for the sake of the Corinthians.** They were in danger of being misled by the false accusations against him. If they turned against Paul and abandoned his leadership, they would be left completely exposed and susceptible to the false teachers' damning doctrinal heresies.

One truth every leader will eventually discover is that people are shockingly fickle. It's amazing how easily they can be swayed by lies about a leader whom they know and love. We see this all the time in contemporary life. Sometimes it seems, the more a government leader tries to be a principled person of integrity, the more vilified he or she will be in the media. Gossip tabloids exist to publish deliberate lies about well-known people. Even the mainstream press seems bent on discrediting leaders who seem especially worthy of respect. The victims of such lies all know how fragile true loyalty can be. That's because the fallen human heart is bent toward rebellion (cf. [Deuteronomy 31:27](#); [Acts 7:51](#)).

[Deuteronomy 31:27 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁷ "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death?"

[Acts 7:51 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵¹ "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."