



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Seven

“WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?”

HIS CALLING

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #17

A LEADER IS SURE OF HIS CALLING

2 Corinthians 12:11 (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.”

This was not arrogance on his part; God had well and truly called him to such an office.

Such confidence is a great and necessary strength in leadership—to be so secure in your giftedness, so emphatic about your calling that no trial, however severe, could ever make you question your life’s work. Effective leadership depends on that kind of **resoluteness**, **courage**, **boldness**, and **determination**.

People often ask me what I would do if I weren’t in the ministry. I find the question impossible to answer, because I cannot conceive of doing anything else. I know beyond any shadow of doubt that I am called to preach the Word of God.

I have been told that I would make a fine lawyer, because I don’t mind an argument. Several people have said I might be a good coach, because I like to motivate people. Others have told me I could have a fruitful career in sales, because I know how to be persuasive. Truthfully, I have



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never considered any of those things for a millisecond. There are no alternatives for me. Preaching is what God has called me to, and I simply cannot imagine myself doing anything else. I didn't choose a career because I thought it was the best of several options. I can completely understand what Paul meant when he said,

1 Corinthians 9:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

Or, in the words of the psalmist, “I believed, therefore I spoke” ([Psalm 116:10](#)).

Psalm 116:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰“I believed, therefore I spoke, “I am greatly afflicted.”

Psalm 116:10 (AMP)

¹⁰“I believed (trusted in, relied on, and clung to my God), and therefore have I spoken [even when I said], I am greatly afflicted.”

Those in secular positions of leadership likewise need to embrace their calling and be wholeheartedly devoted to the tasks they have been given. In the words of the Old Testament sage,

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.”

No leader can be truly successful who considers the present task a stepping-stone. You can't be distracted by the future and effective in the present.

The coach tells the team about to play a weaker opponent on the way to a critical game against a strong rival, “Don't look past this game or we'll lose.” Teams still lose that way.

I've always believed that if a leader takes care of the present task with all his power, the future will open up for greater opportunities. Living in the fantasy of those future opportunities, however, debilitates us in the present.

Paul was a one-track person. There weren't any options or alternatives in his life. That is why he never doubted his calling or his giftedness.

People in leadership who indulge in self-doubt will always struggle, because every time things get difficult, they question the validity of what they do. *Should I be here? Should I go elsewhere? Should I get out completely?* Unless you have absolute confidence that you're called and gifted for what you are doing, every trial, every hardship will threaten to deter you from your objective.

I have never met an effective leader who wasn't competitive. Real leaders desperately want to win. Or, rather, they *expect* to win—to achieve the objective. That passion to attain the prize is what Paul himself described in [Philippians 3:14](#), and notice that it stemmed from his *calling*:



Philippians 3:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul knew that **“the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”** ([Romans 11:29 NASB](#)).

He believed in the gifts God had given him. He trusted the power of God in his life. He knew beyond any doubt that God had set him apart for leadership, even from birth ([Galatians 1:15](#)). So he could set his eyes firmly on the prize.

Galatians 1:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased.”

Paul wasn't alone. All the apostles ministered with the same kind of confidence Paul had. [Acts 4](#) describes how Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin (the ruling body of Judaism in Jerusalem) to give an account for their healing of a lame man at the temple gate. After they gave testimony, [verse 13](#) says,

Acts 4:13 (NASB)

¹³“Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.”

The apostles' extraordinary confidence did not come from formal training. It came from the fact that Christ had chosen them, trained them, and empowered them with His Spirit. Even in the face of death, their confidence remained unshaken.

Therefore, when the Sanhedrin instructed them, under pain of death, to stop speaking of Jesus, they simply replied, **“For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”** ([Acts 4:20 NASB](#)).

Then they prayed,

Acts 4:29 (NASB)

²⁹“And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.”

That was the strength of all the leaders in the early church. Their confidence did not rest on their personal abilities. It wasn't *self*-confidence. Self-confidence is arrogance. But it was a strong and unwavering conviction that they were called.

Remember Paul's words, **“Such confidence we have through Christ toward God”** ([2 Corinthians 3:4 NASB](#)).

The false teachers came along with *self*-confidence. They claimed *they* were adequate. They weren't; they were peddlers of the Word of God ([2 Corinthians 2:17](#))—corrupt, hucksters, insincere.



2 Corinthians 2:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

Who is fit for the task of influencing other men and women? Who is the authentic, qualified, acceptable leader? Is it the guy whose only credentials are written on a piece of paper? Or is it the one who has an untarnished reputation for integrity, the one who has a living letter of commendation written in the lives of the people he has influenced, and the one who has such a bold confidence in his own calling that he doesn't waver, no matter how severe the opposition?

To ask the question is to answer it.