



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Seven

“WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?”

HIS HUMILITY

Paul then made another statement that carries the same argument one step further and makes explicit what he had hinted at throughout his self-defense. Again, this is the theme and a fitting summary of his whole defense: **“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God”** ([2 Corinthians 3:5 NASB](#)).

Although Paul was supremely confident of his calling and quite sure of his own giftedness, he also remembered where those gifts had come from, and he knew they were not from within himself. The source of his adequacy was God. Paul did not for a moment imagine that he was adequate for the apostolic office in and of himself. On the contrary, he knew he was inadequate on his own. About *that*, his critics were right.

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing,” Jesus said ([John 15:5 NASB](#)). The converse is equally true. **“I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me,”** Paul wrote in [Philippians 4:13 NASB](#).

Both sides of that truth are equally important. **“I labored more abundantly than they all,”** Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 15:10](#), **“yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”** (emphasis added); **“By the grace of God I am what I am”** ([v. 10](#)).



1 Corinthians 15:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”

In no way did Paul imagine himself intrinsically adequate for the task to which God had called him. And that realization kept him dependent on divine grace in every aspect of his leadership.

Thus he exemplifies another basic principle of all wise leadership: *A leader knows his own limitations.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #18

A LEADER KNOWS HIS OWN LIMITATIONS

Those whom the world holds up as leaders often exude **arrogance, cockiness, egotism, and conceit**. Those things are not qualities of true leadership; they are actually hindrances to it. The leader who forgets his own weakness will inevitably fail.

Paul, by contrast, drew strength from remembering his own weaknesses, because those things made him more dependent on the power of God. He wrote, **“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong”** ([2 Corinthians 12:10 NASB](#)). When he came to the end of his human resources, that was when the power of God flowed through him. God, and God alone, was Paul's only true source of sufficiency.

People are not effective in leadership merely because they're naturally talented communicators, because they have creative minds, because they have a flair for persuading people, or because of any other natural talents. In fact, if your own abilities are all you depend on as a leader, your own limitations will be your downfall. From a spiritual perspective, human ingenuity and human cleverness tend to corrupt more than they help.