



## PART 2

# PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

## Chapter Eight

### A LEADER MADE OF CLAY

#### CLAY POTS ARE STURDY

This quality is absolutely essential to anyone in leadership: *A leader is resilient.*

#### **LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #19**

#### **A LEADER IS RESILIENT**

That was Paul's life. The trials were profound and seemingly endless:

**2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

<sup>26</sup> *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

<sup>27</sup> *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."

And, he added,

**2 Corinthians 11:28 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> "Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."

All Paul ever really knew in his life was tribulation. But even though he was constantly assaulted, scraped and scoured, pressured, put in the flames, and otherwise abused, none of that could destroy him. He had a kind of invincible resilience, because the power of God was at work in him. His critics therefore were left having to face the undeniable impact of his life.

It was a powerful rebuttal. **How could anyone explain the influence of Paul's life and ministry?**

**How could they account for his zeal, his persistence, his durability, and his unwavering faithfulness?**

If Paul himself was weak and common (as the false apostles themselves were so eager to point out)—if he was merely a humble clay pot—then the only possible explanation for such a remarkable life was the power of God. This was undeniable proof that Paul was a true servant of God, and his accusers were false apostles.

## CLAY POTS ARE EXPENDABLE

Because they cost little to produce and have no intrinsic value, clay pots are virtually disposable. As a clay-pot leader, Paul did not mind giving himself away. He did not fear death, slander, persecution, or suffering. He wrote,

### **2 Corinthians 4:10-12 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> “[We are] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

<sup>11</sup> For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

<sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you.”

The preceding [verses 8](#) and [9](#) were a short litany of the sufferings he endured.

### **2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

<sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

[Verses 10–12](#) explain the significance of the suffering. Paul's mortal flesh—this inconsequential clay pot—was a kind of tureen from which the sufferings of Christ were continually being poured out. Thus Paul elevated his suffering to a lofty, noble, spiritual level. It was not really Paul whom the enemies of truth wanted to kill; it was the Lord Jesus. The same evil hatred that put Christ on the cross is still at work in the world, but now it pursues His faithful servants. Paul was bearing all that abuse daily—“**always [being] delivered to death for Jesus' sake**” ([v. 11](#), **emphasis added**).

### **2 Corinthians 4:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> “For we who live are **constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake**, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

Notice the word **always**. There was no relief from the suffering.



It was a kind of perpetual, daily death. In [1 Corinthians 15:31](#), he said, “I die daily.”

[1 Corinthians 15:31 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> “I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die daily.**”

In [Romans 8:36](#) he drew the same truth from [Psalm 44:22](#): “We are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

[Romans 8:36 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>36</sup> “Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

[Psalm 44:22 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> “But for Your sake we are killed all day long; We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

In [Galatians 6:17](#) he said,

[Galatians 6:17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> “From now on let no one cause trouble for me, **for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.**”

Such suffering is inevitable for any leader who is faithful to Christ. Jesus gave a long discourse on this subject in [Matthew 10:16](#),

[Matthew 10:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

He reminded them,

[Matthew 10:24-26 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.”

<sup>25</sup> “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!”

<sup>26</sup> “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”

He went on to add,

[Matthew 10:28 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

In [John 15:18–21](#), the Lord also told His disciples:

[John 15:18-21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.”



<sup>19</sup> **“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”**

<sup>20</sup> **“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”**

<sup>21</sup> **“But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.”**

Paul told Timothy,

**2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”**

**Walter Chalmers Smith**, a poet, hymn writer, and minister in the Free Church of Scotland during the nineteenth century (author of the famous hymn “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”), wrote these lines:

But all through life I see a cross  
Where sons of God yield up their breath;  
There is no gain except by loss,  
There is no life except by death,  
And no full vision but by faith,  
Nor glory, but by bearing shame,  
Nor justice, but by taking blame;  
And that Eternal Passion saith:  
Be emptied of glory, right and name.

That is a fitting manifesto for Christian leaders. Christ calls us all to the kind of sacrifice that is best characterized (the way Paul portrayed it) as perpetual dying.

Paul mentioned death some forty-five times in the New Testament. Normally, he used the **Greek noun *thanatos***, which speaks of death as a fact.

Here in **2 Corinthians 4:10**, however, he uses a **participle, *nekrosis*** (“dying”), which speaks of the process of human mortality.

**2 Corinthians 4:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”**