

PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Nine

THE LEADER'S WARFARE

The apostle Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church had been deliberately and systematically sabotaged by the false teachers' lies. **Paul spent the first seven chapters of [2 Corinthians](#)** replying point by point to various things he knew had been said against him in Corinth. Interspersed in those chapters are a few doctrinal sections, but for the most part, those chapters are intensely personal, highly emotional, and thoroughly pastoral. Paul was seeking to repair the damaged relationship.

By the end of [chapter 7](#), he seemed to have thoroughly unburdened himself. He closed that section with these words: **"I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you"** ([2 Corinthians 7:16 NASB](#)). It reads like a great, sweeping, comprehensive sigh of relief.

Then for two chapters, he turned to the subject of the Corinthians' charity toward the church in Jerusalem. The saints in Judea were suffering greatly under the Roman persecution. The Macedonian churches, under Paul's leadership, had generously organized an offering to help meet the financial needs of their brethren in Judea ([2 Corinthians 8:1-7](#)).

[2 Corinthians 8:1-7 \(NASB\)](#)

- ¹ "Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
- ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.
- ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,
- ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,
- ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.



⁶ So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

⁷ But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work also.”

The Corinthians had offered to participate ([vv. 10–11](#)).

[2 Corinthians 8:10-11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰ “I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.

¹¹ But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.”

Paul spent [chapters 8–9](#) graciously encouraging them to fulfill that commitment. In those two chapters he was gentle, encouraging, and very mild in tone.

But then, as Paul began the closing section of his epistle ([chapters 10–13](#)), his whole demeanor seemed to change in an abrupt, marked, and surprising way. He became firm and militant. He included several pointed rebukes addressed directly and specifically to naive and disobedient people in the Corinthian church who had gullibly jumped on the false teachers’ bandwagon ([2 Corinthians 11:4, 19–21](#); [2 Corinthians 12:11](#); [2 Corinthians 13:2–3](#)).

[2 Corinthians 11:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴ “For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully.”

[2 Corinthians 11:19-21 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ “For you, being *so* wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

²⁰ For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

²¹ To *my* shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*. But in whatever respect anyone *else* is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself.”

[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.”

[2 Corinthians 13:2-3 \(NASB\)](#)

² “I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest *as well*, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,

³ since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.”

For those reading the epistle who may have thought he was finished dealing with the threat of the false apostles, it turned out he had saved the harshest reproofs of all for the end.



In portions of this closing section of the epistle, Paul's language is *very* severe. Here is Paul at his most passionate, contending fiercely against those who were deceptively undermining his leadership.

At the beginning of the epistle, Paul had taken great care to make clear that his self-defense was not motivated by pride or egotism. He continued to make that clear, remarking again and again that every hint of boasting seemed utterly repugnant to him ([10:8](#), [13–16](#); [11:10](#), [16–18](#), [30](#); [12:1](#), [5–6](#), [9](#), [11](#)).

2 Corinthians 10:8 (NASB)

⁸“For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame.”

2 Corinthians 10:13-16 (NASB)

¹³“But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

¹⁴For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

¹⁵not boasting beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,

¹⁶so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, *and* not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.”

2 Corinthians 11:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.”

2 Corinthians 11:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶“Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if *you do*, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little.”

¹⁷What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

¹⁸Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.”

2 Corinthians 11:30 (NASB)

³⁰“If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:1 (NASB)

¹“Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 12:5-6 (NASB)

⁵“On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses.

⁶For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me.”



2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB)

⁹“And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

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.”

And yet, no matter how humble Paul was, he would not blithely turn the Corinthians over to purveyors of lies. He was meek and modest, but he was by no means indifferent.

An apathetic leader is a contradiction in terms. No true leader will ever be uncaring. In fact, this is another fundamental principle of all leadership: *A leader is passionate.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #20

A LEADER IS PASSIONATE

The person who is detached and indifferent is no true leader. All leaders must have passion, and spiritual leaders especially must be driven by an intense passion for the truth, as well as a deep, fervent, and abiding love for Christ. It is impossible to maintain such affections and be passive or unemotional.

In his classic work titled *Spiritual Leadership*, Oswald Sanders even included anger in his list of qualifications for leadership. He wrote:

This sounds like a rather strange qualification for leadership. In another context it could be quoted as a disqualifying factor. But was this quality not present in the life of the supreme Leader? “**Jesus looked on them with anger**” ([John 2:15–17](#)).

John 2:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵“And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

¹⁶and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.”

¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, “**ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.**”

Righteous wrath is no less noble than love, since both coexist in God. Each necessitates the other. It was Jesus’ love for the man with the withered hand that aroused His anger against those who would deny him healing ([Mark 3:5](#)).

Mark 3:5 (NASB)

⁵“After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.”

CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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Lecture # 49



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It was His love for His Father, and zeal for His glory, that kindled His anger against the mercenary traders who had turned His house of prayer for all nations into a cave of robbers ([Matthew 21:13](#)).

[Matthew 21:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“And He said to them, “It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”