



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Nine

THE LEADER'S WARFARE

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #20 **A LEADER IS PASSIONATE**

Great leaders who have turned the tide in days of national and spiritual declension have been men *who could get angry at the injustices and abuses which dishonor God and enslave men.*

Other strong affections as well—including joy, gladness, sorrow, compassion, fear, and love—are equally essential in leadership. The person who is cold, unfeeling, aloof, or apathetic can never be a truly effective leader.

Human passions, of course, pose certain hazards. They are subject to abuse and misuse. They can severely cloud the rational faculties. Leaders, while never devoid of feeling or intensity, must harness their passions rather than being harnessed by them. Our zeal must be focused, carefully governed, and used for godly purposes. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:23](#)).

[Galatians 5:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³“Gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Godly self-control involves not only the mortification of sinful lusts ([Colossians 3:5](#)), but also a degree of restraint in the expression of legitimate passions.

[Colossians 3:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”



Solomon wrote, “*Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit*” ([Proverbs 25:28 NASB](#)); and “*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city*” ([Proverbs 16:32 NASB](#)).

Nonetheless, there is:

[Ecclesiastes 3:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“**A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance.**”

[Ecclesiastes 3:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸“**A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace.**”

The time for war had come against the lies of the false apostles, and Paul did not attempt to conceal his earnest passion as he concluded this second epistle to the church at Corinth. He even began that closing section by introducing a warfare motif:

[2 Corinthians 10:1-6 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“**Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!**

²**I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.**

³**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,**

⁴**for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**

⁵**We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,**

⁶**and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”**

In all the warfare the apostle endured—including various **riots**, **stoning’s**, and **beatings** from which he barely escaped with his life—nothing was more difficult or more relentless than the warfare he waged for the preservation of the Corinthian church. Little did Paul know during those first twenty months or so when he launched his ministry in Corinth that **he would ultimately have to engage in a years-long battle just to preserve the truth of the gospel in that church.**

But false teachers had come in almost as soon as Paul left. They had directly attacked Paul’s leadership. And they achieved a shocking degree of success in turning that church against their founder and spiritual father.

Paul fought back. His epistles to the Corinthians pleaded for their repentance and expressed his deep love and abiding commitment to them ([2 Corinthians 2:1-4](#)).

[2 Corinthians 2:1-4 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“**But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.**



² For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?

³ This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be *the joy* of you all.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

The biblical record seems to suggest that most in Corinth *did* repent of their disloyalty. That is why Paul’s heart was turned from despair to joy when Titus reported to him that the Corinthians had received his severe letter (the non-canonical rebuke he had apparently sent after [1 Corinthians](#) but before [2 Corinthians](#)) with sorrow and repentance ([2 Corinthians 7:6-16](#)). That was a major turning point and a great victory.

[2 Corinthians 7:6-16 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ “But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

⁸ For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

⁹ I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

¹¹ For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

¹² So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

¹³ For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

¹⁴ For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the truth*.

¹⁵ His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

¹⁶ I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”

Nonetheless, it is significant that Paul's immediate response was to write [2 Corinthians](#)—another long letter filled with **pleas for repentance, gentle admonitions, words of correction,** and even **strong rebukes**. The conflict was not yet over. Paul knew what every good leader knows: **Rebellion always sows seeds for more rebellion.**

We see this vividly in the Old Testament account of Korah's rebellion. Korah had stirred up the Israelites against Moses' leadership. They demanded that Moses step down. God himself judged Korah and his followers in the most vivid and immediate way: The ground opened up and swallowed them alive ([Numbers 16:23–33](#)).

Numbers 16:23-33 (NASB)

²³ “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁴ “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’”

²⁵ Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him,

²⁶ and he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.”

²⁷ So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out *and* stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones.

²⁸ Moses said, “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing.”

²⁹ “If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, *then* the LORD has not sent me.”

³⁰ “But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD.”

³¹ As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open;

³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions.

³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.”

The people of Israel were eyewitnesses of what happened to Korah and his followers. They saw the ground miraculously open up, literally consume the rebels, and then close over them. They also saw fire from heaven incinerate 250 of Korah's closest followers ([v. 35](#)).

Numbers 16:35 (NASB)

³⁵ “Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.”