



PART 2

PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

Chapter Nine

THE LEADER'S WARFARE

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

You might think such a dramatic judgment would put an end to rebellion in Israel forever. Far from it. The fires were still smoking and the ground was still settling when the next major rebellion broke out. And this time, it was even worse. The entire nation was swept up in it.

Scripture says,

Numbers 16:41 (NASB) (*emphasis added*).

⁴¹ “But on **the next day** all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD’S people.”

They blamed *Moses* for what had happened to Korah! God responded by sending a plague. **Verse 49** says,

Numbers 16:49 (NASB)

⁴⁹ “But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah.”

Paul knew that the false apostles’ insurgency in Corinth had only been pushed underground, and it wasn’t very deep. Or, to switch metaphors, Paul knew there were still some glowing embers from the fires of accusation against him. Somewhere in the church at Corinth, perhaps in some obscure corner, those smoldering sparks were ready to be fanned into flame at the first opportunity. The false teachers were still out there.

Sympathies for the false teachers were apparently still being harbored by some in the congregation. The rebellion and the false teaching had merely gone into hiding, waiting for an opportune moment to break into the open again.

Paul further understood that the effects of slander are always long-lived. Once lies about you have been circulated, it is extremely difficult to clear your name. It's a lot like trying to recover dandelion seeds after they have been thrown to the wind. The lies against Paul had been devised with great cleverness and subtlety. They were mixed with just enough valid facts (cf. [2 Corinthians 10:9–10](#)) to make them believable.

[2 Corinthians 10:9-10 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹“For I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

¹⁰For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.”

They were disseminated by people who were convincingly disguised as truth messengers—“angel[s] of light” ([2 Corinthians 11:13–14](#)).

[2 Corinthians 11:13-14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Paul knew the purveyors of those lies would continue the war they had begun against him. Even if forced underground, the false teachers would simply adopt guerrilla tactics and carry on the fight. They would in effect become spiritual terrorists.

Therefore, Paul pulled no punches in this closing section of [2 Corinthians](#). He wanted to leave the Corinthians with some final words that revealed the depth of his passion. He wanted them to *know* that he regarded the conflict with the false teachers as nothing less than warfare. He wanted to warn anyone who might still be harboring sympathies for the bogus apostles that he was now coming to fulfill his promise of a personal visit ([2 Corinthians 12:14](#); [2 Corinthians 13:1](#)).

[2 Corinthians 12:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴“Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for *their* parents, but parents for *their* children.”

[2 Corinthians 13:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.”

He is not absolutely certain what to expect on his arrival in Corinth:

[2 Corinthians 12:20 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰“For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps *there will be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.”

But when he came, he would be armed for conflict if necessary. If rebellious people and false teachers were still causing problems when he got there, it was going to be all-out war ([2 Corinthians 13:2](#)).

2 Corinthians 13:2 (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.**”

Remember, Paul was their spiritual father ([1 Corinthians 4:15](#)).

1 Corinthians 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, **for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.**”

Therefore, he spoke to them sternly, like a displeased parent. These closing chapters are an extended ultimatum to let them know that he was quite serious about all the things he had dealt with theretofore. His fatherly patience had been exhausted over these matters. He was prepared, if necessary, to execute some fatherly discipline. “I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare” ([2 Corinthians 13:2](#)).

2 Corinthians 13:2 (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.**”

He is prepared to “punish all disobedience” ([2 Corinthians 10:6](#)). So this was a fatherly warning to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 10:6 (NASB)

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

More critically, he had to remove the threat of the false apostles. He wanted them to know that he was coming back with weapons of warfare that were divinely powerful for pulling down their stronghold of lies. He planned to search out and destroy everything that exalted itself against the knowledge of God.

That was why he moved from the calm and tender pleadings of [chapters 1–9](#) to **strong, stern, authoritative words**.

Titus would be delivering [2 Corinthians](#) on Paul’s behalf ([8:16–24](#)).

2 Corinthians 8:16-24 (NASB)

¹⁶“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.

¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.

¹⁸We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel* has spread through all the churches;

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Dr. Eddie Idefonso

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¹⁹ and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness,

²⁰ taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

²¹ for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

²² We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

²³ As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

²⁴ Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”