



## PART 2

# PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

## Chapter Nine

# THE LEADER'S WARFARE

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

But remember that Paul's authority had been placed in dispute by the false teachers. His right to speak for God had been questioned. His apostolic credentials had been brought under attack. This was not merely a personal offense against Paul; it was a full-on assault against truth itself.

Paul had already thoroughly answered the challenge to his apostolic credentials. He had established the fact that he needed no letters of commendation to justify wielding the power of apostolic leadership over them ([2 Corinthians 3:1](#)).

**2 Corinthians 3:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?”**

So here he began by clearly and forcefully putting himself in the place of authority. What he was about to say would be said with his full authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ—“**I, Paul, myself.**” He was invoking the authority of his office.

**2 Corinthians 10:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“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!”**

And yet, even as he did so, it was with deliberate gentleness and meekness (“**pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ**”).

## 2 Corinthians 10:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>“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!**”

He had no desire for conflict. He got no satisfaction out of combat. He was not motivated by venom or vitriol or anger. He recognized that the Corinthians had been deceived and misled, and he had reason to believe most of them were repentant. So he assured them that what he was about to say came from a heart filled with compassion, meekness, and tenderness toward them. He was certainly not looking for a war with *the church* in Corinth.

“**Meekness**” is a humble attitude that expresses itself in the patient endurance of offenses. Paul was free from all bitterness. He had no thirst for vengeance. “**Gentleness**” is virtually a synonym. It implies leniency and long-suffering.

## 2 Corinthians 10:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>“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!**”

Paul had no malice or ill will toward the Corinthians. Rather, he was saying that the attitude of his heart toward them was a faithful mirror of Christ’s own compassion (“**the meekness and gentleness of Christ**”).

**Meekness is not weakness; it is power under control.** After all, no one was more powerful than Christ; yet He said,

## Matthew 11:29 (NASB)

<sup>29</sup>“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, **for I am gentle and humble in heart,** and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”

Paul likewise was keeping his apostolic authority in check. He was not looking for an opportunity to brandish his authority like a club. It was not in his heart to punish the Corinthians. He would do so if he had to, but that would be his last choice.

Jesus Himself exemplified that kind of patience, and all Christians are commanded to follow His example. Peter wrote:

## 1 Peter 2:19-23 (NASB)

<sup>19</sup>“For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

<sup>20</sup> For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

<sup>21</sup> For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

<sup>22</sup> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

<sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.”



No one in the world ever suffered more unjustly than Christ. He was sinless, totally innocent, completely without deceit. And yet when He was reviled, He did not return the taunts.

How merciful was Christ? Isaiah spoke of Him prophetically, saying, “**A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench**” ([Isaiah 42:3](#); cf. [Matthew 12:20](#)).

[Isaiah 42:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>“**A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.**”

[Matthew 12:20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>20</sup>“**A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.**”

What does that mean? The reed was a stiff, cane-like plant that grew near shallow water. Shepherds would whittle reeds into simple musical pipes. When a reed pipe became damaged, or “**bruised**,” the shepherd would snap it in two, discard it, and make a new one.

“**Smoking or smoldering flax**” spoke of a burned-out lamp wick, worthless for giving light. Both represent something useless, something anyone would normally just throw away. But Christ’s ministry was to redeem people who were otherwise worthless, not destroy and discard them. Such compassion set the spirit for His entire earthly mission (cf. [Luke 9:51–56](#); [Luke 19:10](#); [John 8:10–11](#)).