



## PART 2

# PAUL IN CORINTH: LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE

## Chapter Nine

# THE LEADER'S WARFARE

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

“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](#)).

[Luke 9:51-56 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>51</sup> “When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

<sup>52</sup> and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

<sup>53</sup> But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

<sup>54</sup> When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

<sup>55</sup> But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

<sup>56</sup> for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village.”

[Luke 19:10 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”



**John 8:10-11 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> “Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”

<sup>11</sup> She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world: ([John 3:17](#); cf. [John 12:47](#)).

**John 3:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> “**For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world**, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

**John 12:47 (NASB)**

<sup>47</sup> “**If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world**, but to save the world.”

Remember that even Jesus’ most scathing denunciation—a blistering diatribe against the religious leaders of Jerusalem in [Matthew 23](#)—ends with Christ weeping over Jerusalem ([v. 37](#)). Compassion colored everything He did.

**Matthew 23:37 (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup> “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.”

Paul said, in effect, “**I come to you with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. I am willing to be patient. I want to be gentle and lenient. I have no anger or malice toward you.**” The Corinthians knew that was an expression of his true heart, because they knew the apostle so well.

But Paul’s enemies had also observed his meekness, and they had already tried to put a negative spin on it. They claimed Paul seemed gentle only because he lacked real courage. He pretended to be bold from a distance. But in person he was gutless. Face-to-face, he was a wimp. As we observed in the previous chapter, they said,

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

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

They were saying, in effect, that he was like a dog behind the gate that barks its head off, but when you open the gate it runs in the other direction. “*Get Paul far enough away and put a pen in his hand and he becomes fierce. Bring him here and he’s weak; he lacks courage.*”

They had misconstrued both his boldness and his compassion. It was a very clever accusation, because it was hard to answer by a letter. If he tried to defend his strength from a distance, they could say he made their point. If he wrote them a gentle reply, they would say *that* showed they were right about his “**weakness.**”

So instead, he acknowledged the accusation, but only in a sarcastic throwaway line. (In effect, he more or less dismissed the charge without responding to it directly in so many words.)



**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!”**

Then he replied in a way that welded his strength and his tenderness together. He began with a clear expression of compassion, but then he immediately began to speak with a calm firmness that soon rose to a militant tone. The note of gentle sarcasm signaled the shift from compassion to firmness.