

PART 3

AN APPROVED WORKMAN: LEADERSHIP HELD TO A BIBLICAL STANDARD

Chapter Ten

HOW NOT TO BE DISQUALIFIED

In these final chapters, we will look at what qualifies a leader to lead. We begin, however, by looking at a common pitfall that can easily *disqualify* a person from leadership even after he has made a good start. This is the one snare that has probably caused the downfall of more leaders than any other hazard: **a lack of personal discipline.**

Naturally gifted people sometimes find it hard to maintain discipline. The musician who has superior skill might perform well without a lot of practice. The talented athlete might play well without working as hard as his teammates. An artist with extraordinary abilities might not have to work very hard to excel. **For that reason, some of the most talented individuals in the world are also the most undisciplined.** We frequently see shocking evidence of this in the lifestyles of celebrities and sports heroes.

Paul was a supremely gifted natural leader. We can deduce that from the fact that even as a young man, he was given oversight of the Sanhedrin's campaign against Christians ([Acts 7:58](#)).

[Acts 7:58 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵⁸“When they had driven him out of the city, they *began stoning him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

In [Acts 26:10](#), recounting his fierce opposition to the gospel before he met Christ, he said,

[Acts 26:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰“And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up **many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.**”



The fact that he could cast a vote strongly suggests that he himself was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling council in all Judaism.

To attain such stature at so young an age speaks of an amazing intellect and superior gifts. And yet we have already seen abundant proof that the apostle Paul was not one to rest on his own **natural abilities**, **intellectual prowess**, or **leadership gifts**. Paul said,

1 Corinthians 15:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; **but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**”

And thus Paul highlighted for us another critical, indispensable, and supremely important quality every leader must maintain: *A leader is disciplined.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #23
A LEADER IS DISCIPLINED

Self-control is absolutely vital to lasting success in any endeavor of life. Many people do attain a degree of prominence on the strength of sheer natural talent alone. **But the real, influential leaders** are the ones who devote themselves to personal discipline and make the most of their gifts. Those who utterly lack self-control will invariably fail, and they forfeit the example of integrity so essential to the best kind of true leadership.

The apostle Paul, as we have already seen many times, was absolutely certain of his calling. He confidently defended his apostleship when others attacked his authority. He had no doubt whatsoever about his rightful place as a leader. After all, he was called in an extraordinary way to a unique role. Paul indicated that the risen Christ even appeared to him in physical form (**1 Corinthians 15:8**; cf. **Acts 23:11**).

1 Corinthians 15:8 (NASB)

⁸“And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

Acts 23:11 (NASB)

¹¹“But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

In fact, Paul’s face-to-face encounter with the glorified Lord was so remarkable and so singular that he pointed to it in defense of his apostleship (**1 Corinthians 9:1**).

Paul also had the same ability Jesus gave the Twelve to work miracles, signs, and wonders (**2 Corinthians 12:12**; cf. **Matthew 10:1**).

2 Corinthians 12:12 (NASB)

¹²“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”



Matthew 10:1 (NASB)

¹“Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

No wonder Paul was so sure of his calling. God had specifically singled him out and ordained him to his missionary role and his apostolic office. God’s calling and approval of Paul was made clear to all. In fact, Paul’s apostolic commission was repeatedly confirmed in so many powerful and dramatic ways that even the most determined efforts of numerous scheming false apostles could not succeed in disqualifying him.

And yet Paul himself spoke with great apprehension about the possibility that he might yet be disqualified.

We might expect Paul to be so confident in his calling that he would never entertain any fear of ultimate failure. Shouldn’t Paul of all people be immune from anxiety about the risk of being declared ineligible? But he wrote about that very concern in the most honest and explicit way.