

What to do when provoked, criticized, or slandered?

Escaping Criticism  
by  
Pere Borrell del Caso  
1874




2 Corinthians 10:1-18:

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—


I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh....

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. ...


Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. ...




I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. ...




Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. ...



But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. ...



We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. ...



"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

- 2 Corinthians 10:1-18



What we observe about Paul when provoked, criticized, and slandered:

What we observe about Paul when provoked, criticized, and slandered:

1. He is both gentle and strong in the Lord.

Gentle:

Verse 1: I, Paul, myself *entreat* you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—

Dane Ortland (Gentle and Lowly): *“In the one place in the Bible (Matthew 11:28-30) where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who he is, we are not told that he is ‘austere and demanding in heart.’ We are not told that he is ‘exalted and dignified in heart.’ ...*

*We are not even told that he is ‘joyful and generous in heart.’ Letting Jesus set the terms, his surprising claim is that he is ‘gentle and lowly in heart.’*

*...Lowly gentleness is not one way Jesus occasionally acts toward others. Gentleness is who he is. It is his heart.”*

Strong:

Verse 2: I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

Things to note about “gentle and strong”:

a. It’s not either-or, but both. The gospel makes you both gentle and strong.

Things to note about “gentle and strong”:

b. We tend to have wrong ideas of being gentle and strong

*Consider Jesus...*

Dan Doriani (Are you Gentle like Jesus?):

“Somewhat surprisingly, the classic lexicon defines *praus* (Greek word for gentle) as ‘not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.’”


Consider the antonyms to establish meaning:

To be gentle is the opposite of being “quarrelsome” (2 Tim. 2:24–25), “jealous,” and “ambitious” (James 3:13–14, with 1:19–20 and 1 Pet. 3:16).


Dan Doriani: “We see, then, that the gentle can be assertive, *but they do not assert themselves*. We can be strong and assertive, yet gentle if we leverage power not to assert self, but to promote the cause of God or the needy. ...

*Jesus was forceful, even confrontational, yet gentle because he used his powers for others. The same holds for us. The question is not how strong we are, but how we use our strength (in the gospel).*






Dan Doriani: *"We learn gentleness by observing how Jesus was gentle and then following him. If we try to notice gentle people, we may especially look for people like ourselves, just a little nicer. Instead we should look for people who have a way of putting others first."*




Again, gentleness is not a matter of style—doling out hugs and cupcakes or speaking softly. It's a character trait, so it applies equally to hulking football players and little old ladies. Above all, it describes Jesus and the way his Spirit creates fruit by transforming us into his image."




What we observe about Paul when provoked, criticized, and slandered:


2. He does not fight fire with fire.



Verses 3-4: For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. **For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh** but have divine power to destroy strongholds.



Sam Storms: *"What are the world's weapons that Paul repudiates? Human ingenuity and wisdom, showmanship, flash, charm, powerfully persuasive personalities, eloquence devoid of the spirit."*



Verses 4-6: For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have **divine power to destroy strongholds.** **We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,** being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.



Application:

a. Are you fighting the **right** battle?



*The gospel is worth the fight.*



Application:


b. Are you fighting the right battle **rightly**?

*Do you recognize a current situation in your life where you're trying to fight a spiritual battle with worldly weapons such as deception, manipulation, and intimidation? How is that working for you?*




Application:

c. While Paul speaks of a spiritual battle in reference to others (false teachers and their unbelief and rejection of the gospel), **keep in mind that there is in each of us a battle within.**




What we observe about Paul when provoked, criticized, and slandered:


3. He boasts not in himself but in the Lord.



Verses 13-18: But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. ...



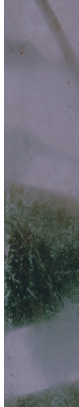
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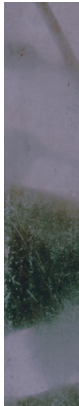
Boasting in God as a subversive habit  
(John Starke)



John Starke: “We boast in what we treasure: ‘Look at what I have here!’ We boast in our strengths: ‘Look at what I can do!’ We boast in our accomplishments: ‘Look at what I’ve done!’ We boast in our associations: ‘Look at who I know!’”



John Starke: *“This work of boasting and adoring is a counterhabit. The normal bent of our hearts is to magnify ourselves. Our natural, selfish, inward orientation is our main obstacle to fullness, and our society seeks to indulge this impulse—to think and marvel at ourselves first. ...*



*It is the archenemy of spiritual vibrancy and growth. Boasting in the Lord is a counterhabit that begins to shape our prayer into a communion of love.”*

**Summary: What we observe about Paul when provoked, criticized or slandered:**

- 1. He is both gentle and strong in the Lord.**
- 2. He does not fight fire with fire.**
- 3. He boasts not in himself but in the Lord.**

**A moment to pray and reflect**



**Dane Ortland: "We cannot present a reason for Christ to finally close off his heart to his own sheep. No such reason exists. Every human friend has a limit. If we offend enough, if a relationship gets damaged enough, if we betray enough times, we are cast out. The walls go up. With Christ, our sins and weaknesses are the very resumé items that qualify us to approach him."**

