2 Corinthians 10:1-11

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[0:00] All right, let me read, first of all, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, the Apostle Paul writes, 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.
This is the word of the Lord. All right, I'm going to give you just 30 seconds to think about it. You can chat with the person next to you, you can pray about it for a moment. You can highlight anything that just stands out to you or write down any quick questions that you might have, and then we'll start working through it together.
All righty. All right, you ready to dive into it together? Sorry to interrupt you, but let's get cracking, and we can keep these conversations going afterwards as well.
[1:57] It'll be great every dinner. There'll be some food for thought questions and things. There is a paradox at the heart of this passage that I think is captured by the juxtaposition, do you remember that big word, by the juxtaposition of the first sentence with the dominant image that Paul uses.

Okay, so the first sentence, Paul says, I, Paul, myself, entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Right, so the first sentence is about meekness and gentleness, but then by the time you get to verse 3, the dominant image is about waging war, in verse 4, weapons, destroying strongholds, etc.
Right, so how can Paul be both meek and mild, and so he wants to be so gentle on the one hand, and yet so fierce and ferocious like a warrior on the other hand? Do you see how strange that is? Is Paul like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, if you know that old story, but it's getting old now. It was already old when I was, it's like from the 1800s. But sort of full of contradictions, sort of bipolar you might say, you know, sort of unstable.
Some people are maybe always quarrelsome, you know, always in fight mode, it's sort of exhausting. While others are always lovely and genial and always nice, sometimes too nice, you know, sort of saccharine sweet and a bit cowardly.
[3:22] But Paul seems to kind of inhabit both extremes. He is a lover and a hater, you know, or a lover and a fighter. He is a peacemaker and a warrior.

He wants to be gentle, but he's always up for warfare. The question is what makes him this way? So as we dive into it, I want us just to have a think about this riddle together.
First of all, when you read the first line slowly, I think another strange thing pops out, which is how much Paul draws attention to himself.
Did you notice that? That he is entreating them, that he himself is entreating them, and so on. Actually, he says, you know, I, Paul, myself, I am entreating you.
It's very emphatic. And I take it that Paul begins this final section of the letter this way, because as we've seen before, all the controversy in Corinth is swirling around Paul.
[4:25] It's not that Paul just really loves to talk about himself. No, actually, he'd much rather preach Christ than leave himself in the background. But sometimes the two things are inextricably linked, right?

So that in order to defend the honor of Christ, he has to defend himself. And in order to protect the Corinthians from false teaching and so on, he sees that he has no other choice but to talk about himself and his own ministry and trying to explain himself to them and what he's on about and all

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that kind of stuff.
Now, that word entreating is also worth lingering over, because it's really the verbal form of the word comfort that we've seen so much before in this letter.
You could say that Paul is wanting to comfort the Corinthians with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Now, if you're wondering how those two things can be related, entreat is a good translation.
It's just hard to capture this word, the full meaning of this word in English. First of all, remember that comfort is not primarily, at least, about kind of warm and cozy, you know, Uggboot-type comfort, but comfort in the sense of fortifying someone.
[5:40] Remember the little fort in comfort or courage in encourage, right? I think in the old days, older English, these words packed a little bit more punch, which is why they're in our translations, but I wonder if our translations need to update a little bit more.

Now, encouragement just sounds like you're trying to make someone feel good, but really this word has to do with summoning someone to take courage or fortifying someone.
So Paul is trying to entreat the Corinthians or exhort or urge them to take courage, to encourage them or comfort them. He is doing the ministry of comfort or encouragement that he's been talking about throughout the rest of the letter.
Does that make sense? And he wants to do it by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Now, you might know Christ was famously meek and mild. I mean, isn't he?
Compassionate towards the vulnerable and the brokenhearted. He was not too tough to cry at the graveside of his friend Lazarus. He didn't come to break the bruised reed or to snuff out the smoldering wick.
[6:49] And so Paul sees himself here as operating on behalf of Christ and operating even in and through Christ. Actually, Christ operating through him. That Christ, you know, the Lord Jesus said that he would be with his people until the very end of the age.

How he actually does that is by his word, carried along by his spirit in the mouths of his people and sometimes in the pens of his people too.
So Paul sees that Christ is working through him here, doing this work of comforting his people in meekness and gentleness, just like a good shepherd that we've been singing about.
But now keep reading in verse 1. You see how Paul almost sort of interrupts himself before he goes off on a tangent about Jesus, which I don't know if that could ever be said about Jesus, if Jesus is ever a tangent.
But what I mean is he almost wants to talk about Jesus, but he stops himself and he drags himself back to talking about himself. See in verse 1? I, who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away.
[8:00] Now this is a really important line just to understand the logic of this passage and what Paul's talking about. Paul is quoting or alluding to what his opponents have been saying about him here.

Okay, so this is not what Paul really believes about himself, at least not exactly. No, what he's saying is that, you know, I have heard that some of you have been criticizing me, and your criticism is that I'm humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I'm away.
Now, it's like he says the same thing back down in verse 10. For they say, his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak. Right? And his speech is of no account.
You see that? So we tend to use the word humble kind of with positive connotations, and it can be used that way in certain contexts, but it's also commonly used negatively, this word, about someone who is lowly and pathetic and sort of servile in manner.
You know, like a sort of sniveling, worthless slave, as opposed to a lord of the manner, oh, captain, my captain type, who the Corinthians can respect, that kind of thing.
[9:11] So I think that's how it's being used here. The problem with Paul is not just that he's two-faced, but that when you meet him, he's pathetic. You know, he sends these great missives, these, you know, fiery-sounding letters.

Maybe even he's a bit of a bully in his letters. Think of the severe letter that the Corinthians received. Paul sounds very powerful when he's arguing and, you know, logic and so on. But then when you meet him, you discover his bark is much worse than his bite.
He's all bluster and wind. There's no real substance or power to his ministry. He's a total disappointment. That's what the accusations seem to be about.

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So in verse 2, Paul continues his entreaty. You know, this is how you see me, but in 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.
In other words, Paul is saying, you want me to be bold in person, do you? I really don't want to be. I'd really rather not be. This is the difference between meekness and weakness.
[10:25] So think about this. Meekness is controlled strength. Meekness is controlled strength. Whereas weakness is about not having enough strength, right?

Or maybe not having any strength. Christ is very powerful, of course, always has been, always will be. At any point, he says in the Gospels, he could have called down myriads of angels to defend him.
And one day he will ride at the head of an army of angels and exert the full force of his wrath against those who refuse to obey the Gospel. Well, this is, I'm thinking of 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. So Christ is very powerful, but because he's also so perfectly self-controlled, he never just flies off the handle or vents to let off steam.
No, he's meek. The Greeks use this word to talk about anger that is properly governed. Anger that is properly governed.
Now, I know most of you aren't parents, but some of you might be, so I'll just give you a little tip about parenting as an aside. The godly parent is supposed to discipline their children in meekness, right?
[11:42] Punishing disobedience is important and requires strength. And there is a natural and appropriate power imbalance between parents and their children that parents are supposed to use for the benefit of their child.

Whereas it is the weak parent who either loses control of their children altogether because they refuse to discipline them, or who loses control of themselves and then uses discipline as a mask for selfish anger, venting frustration, abuse, you know, venting exasperation, etc.
So in the Bible, God wants self-disciplined parents to discipline their children in love. Anger properly governed is a good thing, but anger out of control is a terrible thing.
See the difference? And so back to Paul. Paul's relationship with the Corinthians is a bit like a father's relationship with his children. In fact, that's how he describes it elsewhere.
And I think at the moment, his children are behaving a little bit like unruly teenagers, right? I'm not quite there yet, but the Corinthians, it sort of takes the wisdom of Solomon to rein them in and reason with them.
[13:04] And again, not through any fault of Paul's parenting, right? You know, you're never ultimately in control of your children. But Paul is saying to his children, as it were, that I could use boldness with you, if that's what you want.

You know, I could bring out the big wooden spoon. Is that how you want me to come? You know, but I'd rather not. I'm begging you that when I come, I might not have to show boldness.
I can be meek and gentle. He wants to be meek and gentle. Except, of course, he is planning to use boldness against some, he says in verse two, those who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.
Which leads us to the next section. So Paul is eager to be gentle, but he is ready for war. And in fact, there is a sense in which he is always engaged in warfare. He's happy to describe his ministry this way.
In verse three, he says, for though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. Right? You see the difference. Prepositions are really important here. So even though it's subtle, pay close attention, because in a sense, this is the difference that the Corinthians could not see.
[14:16] Paul walks in the flesh, but he doesn't wage war according to the flesh. Think back to the jar of clay illustration in chapter four, verse seven.

Paul said, but we have this treasure in jars of clay in order that the surpassing power might belong to God and not to us. And if you were here way back when we looked at that verse, you might remember, it's not just about God showing off his power more clearly.
No, it's actually about whether in our ministries, in our service of one another, in our lives, we really use God's power or not, or God's power or human power.

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There is a way of doing ministry that empties the cross of its power. Remember that line from 1 Corinthians. There's a way of doing ministry that is really depending on human power, as Paul calls it here, the flesh, rather than on divine power.
So Paul refuses to engage in a merely fleshly ministry, not just for moral reasons, but for sort of pragmatic reasons, if you know what I mean, because he wants his ministry to be really effective and powerful rather than just powerful looking.
[15:32] So God's power, he recognizes that God's power is tied to the preaching of the cross. God's power is tied to the weakness of the preacher. God has chosen, particularly thinking about the cross, God has chosen to only work through cross-shaped ministry.

You know, authentic Christian ministry has to be weak, has to be done in humiliation, has to be done in suffering, because it has to resemble the cross. The messenger of the cross has to model, has to be a model of the message he preaches.
Does that make sense? So Paul has embraced the fact that he is a weak jar of clay, a pretty pathetic, fragile, disposable pot, because he wants to make sure that all the power in his ministry comes from the gospel, comes from the knowledge of God, proclaimed in the gospel, centered on the cross, because only that has the power to transform and change people and bring people new creation life.
That human power can only do so much, it can't do that. So coming back to this passage then, see how Paul talks about waging war. In verse 4, 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.
[17:07] So again, think about the kind of power that Paul is talking about here. It is the power to destroy arguments, the power to destroy opinions, every lofty opinion, to take captive thoughts.

What kind of power can destroy arguments? Paul's not talking about swords or votes, is he? These things don't win arguments.
I mean, they may appear to sometimes, but these things don't have any power to destroy arguments. And he's not particularly talking about signs and wonders or miraculous fireworks types of power.
He's talking about the power of better arguments. He's talking about the power of the truth over lies. He's talking about the power of the gospel, the power of words, the announcement that Jesus Christ is Lord, and then the subsequent explanations and justifications and implications and so on that need to be fleshed out that can vanquish the lies of the devil and roll back the darkness.
Notice how Paul's ministry takes thoughts captive and brings them under the Lordship of Christ. I love that way of thinking about what's happened in my own life, what's happening in church week after week, what's happening when we're doing evangelism, right?
[18:33] Our rebellious thoughts or the thoughts of others are being hunted down and taken captive by the gospel and then, as it were, dragged back and forced, as it were, under the Lordship of Jesus.

You know, we're presenting people to Jesus and insisting that their thoughts bow down to him. Did you know that Jesus Christ is Lord? So he will be coming back to establish his kingdom, he demands your obedience, your repentance, so stop rebelling against him.
He is offering you forgiveness on the basis of his death. This is the only way anyone can be worthy to enter his kingdom. Good works cannot save you, rituals cannot save you, law keeping cannot save you.
Do you see, this is gospel preaching, right? And some of those things need more implications and explanations and justifications and so on to spell them out, but this kind of preaching has real power to change as it changes your thoughts, as it takes your thoughts captive.
It may look weak and sometimes I think Christians don't understand just how much power they have experienced. You know, because very often people don't feel like they have been born again.
[19:52] Surely that should feel wonderful like a rush of wind or something like that, but no. or they don't feel like they've been made alive. They don't feel like Christ is in them or that they are part of the heavenly gathering, that we are sort of seated up there in heaven right now, whatever it is.

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So very often the Christian life feels ordinary and boring and powerless and transformation is so slow, maybe you start to feel like you're not really a Christian at all. But don't be discouraged.
We all feel like that. Why do you think the New Testament keeps reminding people and teaching people about what's really happened to them? It's because you can't feel it directly.
Often you can't see it for years and years and years. It's because very often it doesn't feel like anything, but it's still true. We might feel like a very small, pathetic church at times, but actually it's a miracle that anyone is here this evening acknowledging the name of the Lord Jesus, submitting to his rule, let alone a whole congregation of us.
who have come to salvation through the power of the gospel. And there are congregations and congregations meeting all around the country and all around the world because of the same gospel.
[21:08] Maybe in your life the gospel defeated the great lie of atheism. You know, that there is no God or Islam or Hinduism, some other false religion. these are powerful lies that hold billions of people in chains and darkness, but the gospel can overcome them.

Perhaps the gospel has defeated the lie of hedonism in your life or materialism. You know, that life is just about enjoying yourself, fattening up on stuff, comparing yourself to your neighbors.
brothers, that lie is pumped through TV screens and pasted up on billboards all around the country, you know, 24 hours a day. But the gospel has the power to conquer it.
And dear brothers and sisters, if there are still lies in your life, ruling over different areas of your life, it's worth knowing and remembering, if you don't know this already, remember all sin, every sin you're stuck in, all sins are underpinned by lies.
If you are stuck in pornography, if your marriage has problems, if you are stealing or speeding or greedy or grumbling or whatever it is, it's always because there is some lie that you believe at some level that you need to destroy.
[22:31] And the only thing that has the power to rout all your lies is the gospel. The momentous good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

So if you want to change, what you have to do is, if you can, hold up your sin, as it were, as closely as you can to the fiery light of that news, you know, then you will see it wither and die and melt away like a snowflake on the surface of the sun.
That is how Christian transformation happens. The lies of the devil cannot withstand the gospel of the Lord Jesus in all its righteousness and brilliance. And all its grace and truth, knowing you're forgiven, knowing you're loved, all of which is wrapped up in the gospel, knowing you're free.
This is how you get dragged away from the lies and you get to walk in the light. So in verse 6, Paul is talking about his readiness to bring punishment. Again, think about the godly parent.
Paul has a plan to discipline the church at Corinth. I think specifically he is expecting to excommunicate the troublemakers and he says when the rest of the church are with him, right, when the rest of the church are fully obedient, ready to back him, then he is going to be able to drive out the disobedient.
[23:57] Again, think about the purpose of this letter. In many ways, you could describe it as Paul's purpose in writing to Corinthians is to try and bring the obedience of the Corinthians to completion. Remember, they have begun to repent, but now they need to follow through.

So Paul is saying when your obedience is complete, then we will be ready to punish every disobedience, driving out the disobedient or perhaps bringing them to repentance with the power of the gospel.
We will destroy their arguments, we will take their thoughts captive and so on. Okay, now into verse 7. In the second half of the passage, Paul begins by saying, look at what is before your eyes.
Sometimes when I am looking around the house, I cry out to Catherine for help and she says, it's in the cupboard. And I say, no it isn't, I've looked there.
And she says, yes, but have you looked with your eyes? And invariably, somehow she's right. I'm not sure why I was missing it. It was at eye level right in front of me usually.
[25:00] Anyway, I think I was looking down or above something. Anyway. Okay, which is all to say, I'm not quite sure what Paul means in verse 7. There is a bit of ambiguity in the Greek because sometimes imperatives can take the same form as indicatives.

So if you're looking at an NIV, I think, I think the NIV takes it as an indicative. So translations go both ways. As the ESV puts it, Paul may be commanding the Corinthians to look at what is before their eyes.

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In other words, he is saying something like, come on, isn't it obvious? Can't you see what's right in front of you? You know, look with your eyes, darling.
And either, what he might be saying is so obvious, either he's saying, you know, that he belongs to Christ because you see that's where he goes next. If anyone is confident that he is Christ, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ, so also are we.
Right? So that might be the obvious thing that Paul is saying to look at. Or some have suggested that Paul may be talking about the church themselves. So, you know, if you want to see the power of Paul's ministry, then just look with your eyes.
[26:13] Look around you. Aren't you yourselves my letter of recommendation, et cetera? Right? So maybe he's saying that. On the other hand, as the NIV puts it, yeah, I think, he might just be stating something about them which is actually their problem, that they look with their eyes.

Right? They look, but not deep enough. They don't, they're only, they're not living by faith, but by sight. You know, remember earlier in the letter, he wants them to look at the unseen things rather than the transient, temporal things that they can see in this world.
So maybe he's just saying, you guys keep just looking with your eyes. You keep looking at the superficial things rather than looking more deeply. Well, so I'm telling you all this because I'm really not sure which way to jump.
I'm not sure how to take it and perhaps you can explain to me over dinner what you think it means. That would really help me. Either way, I think the punchline is the same. So even if we get stuck on this little confusion, the punchline is the same that Paul does want the Corinthians to see the truth. And of course, he doesn't want them to just see the superficial ministry of the false teachers who have been undermining him. He doesn't want them to be fooled by that. He wants them to see the authentic ministry that he's been doing among them.
[27:30] And he goes on to talk about the authority that Christ has given him to minister to them. And at the same time in verse 8, he wants to talk about the purpose of that authority.

That Christ, again, he doesn't want to tear them down. He wants to build them up. He doesn't want his warfare metaphor to be misunderstood. There is a sense in which he's prepared to destroy and to bring down.
whether that be the arguments of the false teachers or just the false ideas that arise in our heads. We often have to preach to ourselves to destroy the lies and the half-truths that creep into our hearts.
But Paul's aim ultimately is not destructive but constructive. He wants to build the Corinthian church around the gospel to set people free from lies so that they can walk in the light and experience all the joy of following Jesus and being one of his subjects.
He wants to bring unity to the church in Corinth by having a big fight with the false teachers. And he wants to bring peace by making war.
[28:37] He wants to bring harmony and peace by rooting out the lies that are causing division. Okay, so it's time to wrap up. Let me just think with you for a moment about some of the take-home applications of this passage.

I think there are three basic directions kind of avenues to go down. And I think I've got a slide, Joel. Is that right, mate? Yeah.
Listen to how Paul Barnett puts it in his commentary. This is just a really helpful commentary on 2 Corinthians. He writes, throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul portrays the conversion of believers in general in terms of his own specific and unique experience.
It is also likely that in describing his unique ministry as an apostle, he is describing pastoral and evangelistic ministry in general. Several implications may be drawn from Paul's pastoral method in the writing of this letter.
First, those engaged in Christian ministry should, like Paul, model themselves on Christ, his meekness and gentleness, using the weapons of the Spirit, not the flesh, confident that God will achieve his purposes through such a ministry.
[29:45] Secondly, let those who attempted to be dismissive of the ministry of others take heed lest they pass judgment by outward and secular criteria, meaning worldly criteria, such as the numerical growth of a congregation.

The Lord judges his ministers. So I think that sums it up well. Basically, he makes three points that I kind of want to draw out. If I can just kind of break it down for us. In the first place, I think this

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passage says something about the Apostle Paul.
And how we should relate to him. Right, it's important that we have a good understanding of and relationship to the Lord's Apostle. Particularly the Apostle who was set aside for us Gentiles. Submitting to Christ means submitting to Paul. We mustn't forget that. But number two, although Paul was unique in some ways, in other ways, he is putting himself forward as a model of ministry for all of us.
He wants us all to abound in the work of the Lord. Not to receive the grace of God in vain. To imitate him as he imitates Christ and so on. So this has big implications for how we conduct our ministries, how we serve one another.
[30:55] It has big implications for pastors, of course, but also for fathers and mothers and growth group leaders and ES executives, et cetera. The big challenge to us, I think, is do we want to have ministries that look impressive or ministries that are actually powerful?

Do you see? Paul wants the Corinthians to see the difference between the kind of power he wields and the kind of power the super apostles deal in. And of course, it goes back to the Lord Jesus. But the Lord Jesus is meek and mild. You know, he's so tender and warm at times and ferocious at other times. I mean, you would not want to be a Pharisee in some of those confrontations, would you?
You know, he is harsh, hilarious. You know, he points out their flaws, exposes them so sharply at times.
It would be terrifying and not to mention awkward at some of those dinner parties. But it goes back to Jesus. Paul is committed to that kind of meek but ferocious ministry that he's copying from the Lord Jesus.
[32:08] And we need to be too. And then thirdly, as Paul Barnett says, this passage has implications then for how we judge the ministries of others. You know, how we evaluate them. Are we too dismissive of those whose ministries look weak or too overawed or easily deceived by those ministries that look impressive?

You know, when you see that some ministry is really thriving and popular and wonderful, you think, oh, well, it must be great. What would make you think that? You know, you see a ministry that's crumbling and weak or collapsing or something, you think, oh, it must be, something must be terrible there.
Well, why? They even abandoned the Lord Jesus, didn't they? So, on the one hand, and I think this is sort of pronounced because it's easy to confuse meekness with weakness.
You've got to be able to spot the difference. It's easy to confuse loving discipline from someone with God-given authority with harshness, bullying, or intimidation tactics.
Or, on the other hand, it's easy to confuse flattery with genuine, sincere love. You know, someone strokes your ego, someone thinks you're wonderful, says they love you, praises you, but they only really love themselves.
[33:30] Can you tell the difference? Or, likewise, someone might be really bullying or abusing you. I hope this never happens in our church. We need to be careful that it doesn't.

But, wherever you might end up, someone might spiritually abuse you under the guise of spiritual authority. You need to be able to see when they're telling lies and mistreating you.
See, it takes so much wisdom and maturity to discern the difference. I think about the fact that Paul is defending himself here. How can you tell the difference between a leader who is defending themselves for their own sake, as it were, or defending themselves for your sake, for Christ's honour, for the good of the gospel and the church, which is what Paul is doing.
The thing that this passage is trying to alert us to, I think most of all, is that things are not always as they seem. All that glisters is not gold.
We need to make sure we really understand what authentic gospel ministry looks like, because there are lots of compelling counterfeits out there. There are sly and subtle ways of doing fraudulent ministry that the naive are easily deceived by.
[34:50] For me personally, I think back over a long list of my heroes who bring me great comfort, like Paul, but others who were perceived by some to be mad or to be arrogant or to be cruel, to be bullies, to be divisive and quarrelsome, to be pathetic and weak and so on, who I consider to be some of the greatest, most godly, wonderful servants of the gospel whom the Spirit has ever produced.

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Listen to how Calvin, for instance, describes his time in Geneva during 1554. Calvin should be one of your heroes. He's one of mine. Millions of people around the world love Calvin.
He says, dogs bark at me on all sides, everywhere I am saluted with the name of heretic and all the calumnies that can possibly be invented are heaped upon me. In a word, the enemies among my own flock attack me with greater bitterness than my declared enemies among the papists.
This is not how I feel about you, by the way. If you are trying to attack me, you're not doing a great job, so anyway, I'm not feeling it at all, but anyway. But then Philip Schaaf, so Philip Schaaf writes in his histories about Calvin.
They resorted to personal indignities and every device of intimidation. They nicknamed him Cain and gave, which is hilarious, anyway, and gave his name to the dogs of the street.
[36:17] They insulted him on his way to the lecture room. They fired one night 50 shots before his bedchamber. They threatened him in the pulpit, et cetera, et cetera. Or Charles Spurgeon.

Charles Spurgeon's wife used to keep a scrapbook of newspaper clippings insulting her husband. I'm not sure I would recommend, but anyway. They obviously had a good sense of humor, and Spurgeon would say, that's one for my collection.
So the Essex Standard called him a ranting fellow. The Daily News described his pulpit buffoonery and utter ignorance of theology. The Saturday Review described him as a coarse, stupid, irrational bigot, an ignorant, conceited fanatic.
I like that one as well because Spurgeon responded by saying that a true Christian is one who fears God and is hated by the Saturday Review.
Apparently his friends used to call it the Satanic Review or the Saturday Reviler. But anyway. The Christian News of Scotland said, Mr. Spurgeon, in our estimation, is just a spoiled boy with abilities not more than mediocre.
[37:34] Spurgeon. Mediocre abilities. And we could go through many others. Charles Simeon, I think of. He was locked out of his church. Amy Carmichael was accused of kidnapping children because she was helping them in an orphanage.

Closer to home, I think of the Jensen brothers down in Sydney. Philip's been called a, what was it? A rat bag, anyway. Vandalising the Anglican Church.
William Taylor in the UK was described, I think by his bishop or one of the bishops nearby, as the Osama Bin Laden of the Anglican Church. The point is, friends, that you shouldn't read everything, you shouldn't always believe what you read in the newspaper.
These men and women are heroes. Don't always believe what you hear on the grapevine. Again, we need to be discerning, right?
You know, I don't want to use these stories as then an excuse for real bullying or arrogance or promoting licentiousness or cruelty or whatever it is, but very often it takes discernment to distinguish Christ-like, authentic gospel ministry that has this kind of right and proper meekness but warfare to it versus ministry that is outrageously, you know, overly harsh or just panders to everyone and keeps everyone happy.
[38:57] Do you know? So if you keep your worldly glasses on, just going to rattle off a few things here, if you keep your worldly glasses on, then true humility will always look like arrogance, kind discipline will look like cruelty, grace will look like license or promoting license, truthfulness will look like divisiveness when actually lies cause division, courage will look like quarrelsomeness, wisdom will look like folly.

So you've got to keep your wits about you if you want to see the truth. Let's pray. Loving Father, we humbly acknowledge that we are all sinful and prone to wonder and we are vulnerable to these sins in the way we treat one another.
When we are criticized and attacked, we pray that it might be undeserved, that it might be inaccurate, that we would be truly righteous and loving in our behavior always and bringing honor to your name.
But also help us not to be frightened when people slander and malign us. Help us not to just try and pander to popular opinion or flatter people. And help us not to be deceived by those who would make a good showing in the flesh but are not really engaged in authentic Christian ministry.
Thank you for the faithful men and women who have gone before us and who stood the test against great opposition. Help us to follow in their footsteps and to contend for the faith in our day and age.
[40:29] For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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