



One definition of *slander* is "a false, defamatory statement." We find that the word *defamatory* refers to an attack on the reputation of another or on the well-being of a person.

According to the Bible, slander includes the following:

- **Whispering:** Psalm 41:7; Proverbs 16:28; Romans 1:29
- **Backbiting:** Psalm 15:3; 101:5; Proverbs 25:23; Romans 1:30; 2 Corinthians 12:20
- **Evil Surmising** (guessing): 1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:23
- **Talebearing:** Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 24:28; 26:20, 22
- **Babbling:** 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16
- **Tattling** (telling a secret; chattering; gossiping): 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15
- **Evil speaking:** Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 36:3; 55:21; Proverbs 12:18; Ephesians 4:31; Titus 3:2; James 3:6
- **Defaming:** 1 Corinthians 4:13
- **Bearing false witness:** Exodus 20:16; 23:1; Proverbs 12:17; 19:9; 25:18; Matthew 19:18
- **Judging uncharitably:** Matthew 7:1-5
- **Raising false reports:** Job 1:11
- **Repeating matters:** Deuteronomy 19:16; Psalm 31:13; Proverbs 6:19; 17:27-28; Jeremiah 9:4; Amos 7:10; Romans 1:28-31; 13:9-10

Slander

There are other Scriptures in the Bible that deal with slander. We read in Proverbs 10:18, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool." Proverbs 11:9 tells us, "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." Jeremiah 9:3 and 8 state: "And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. . . . Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait." Also, Psalm 50:20 states, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son."

Slander is a common evil among religious people today for three reasons. First, it is not properly classified. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he classed backbiting and whispering with fornication, murder, and every other evil work. Observe how it reads in Romans 1:28-31: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

If people would take to the fact that slander is as great a sin as adultery, it would, to a great extent, disappear from our ranks.

A second reason why slander is so common among us is that those who are found guilty of slander are not held to the same radical form of confession and restitution as those found guilty of lying, stealing, and committing adultery. If ones are found guilty of these things, they are forbidden to testify, pray, preach, or take any part in religious services until they have confessed it to God and man, deeply repented and prayed through. The slanderer should be held to a similar form of repentance.

The third reason slander is such a common malady among religious people is that they have such a meager

conception of the value of reputation. It is my opinion that slander is the greatest of crimes! It is worse than murder; it is worse than theft. Think of it this way: the thief gains something by his theft, the slanderer gains nothing. Is there or can there be any comparative value between money and reputation? Reputation is the foundation stone of influence and usefulness. It is the door to society. Destroy a man's reputation, and he is cut off from his fellows, cut off from his family, and God's designs are defeated.

Zenophon said that three persons are injured by every slander: the slanderer (by reflex influence), the person who listens to it, and the person being slandered. Could the slanderer but realize that he inflicts an incurable wound and sends a fellow being halting to the grave, he would doubtless slander no more.

How cruel and inhuman it would be to hinder a struggling, drowning man from rising and swimming to shore. Every slanderer commits a similar offence.

Let us look at some common ways of slandering a fellow creature. First, we slander one by expressing to others our bad opinion of an absent person, that is, to express what we have thought, suspected, or feared concerning him or her. A few thoughtless words have started the wheel of slander revolving in a thousand minds, placing a feeling of discontent on more than a million good men and women. Be careful what you say, how you say it, and where you say it, lest by a thoughtless expression you sink a soul, to rise no more.

A second way of being guilty of this gross offence is to unnecessarily mention the faults of an absent person. It may be necessary in some instances to mention the faults of an absent person to rectify a matter or prevent a greater evil, but to do so otherwise is a rank violation of the two following commandments: "speak evil of no man" (Titus 3:2) and "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31).

Another form of slander is when a person unnecessarily creates suspicion in the minds of others regarding the sincerity, honesty, and uprightness of an absent person. The man or woman who does this is guilty of destroying the reputation and influence of his or her neighbor, and thus becomes a violator of the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16).

We slander others when we tell the most objectionable part of anything affecting the reputation of another, yet omit the less objectionable, whereas if both sides of the matter were clearly explained and set in the proper light, the persons concerned would not be so severely censured. If we should place all the blame upon another, when at the same time we were conscious of being somewhat faulty in the matter, we would be to that extent slandering our neighbor.

A slanderer is one who makes a practice of carrying news, repeating rumors, and circulating evil reports. Often a slanderer is one who has backslidden or who is cooling off. Oh, the damage that has been done to the church through slander.

Lastly, slander is to speak of a person's faults to others before speaking to him or her. How unfair it is to condemn a man before having heard his side of the case, thus giving him a chance to clear himself! Even unsaved judges will not condemn a man until they hear his side of the case.

The Bible says in Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Even to a publican, we owe the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

No doubt, you will, at one time or another, be tempted with the sin of slandering. I trust that you will realize the seriousness and great damage that is caused by slander. I pray that we, as the Church of God, will guard against this.

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