

Fear of Slander by James Jennings

by James Malachi Jennings

James Jennings addresses the serious issue of slander, exploring its definitions, consequences, and God's view on this destructive behavior within the church community.

Duration: 1:13:07

Scripture: Matthew 27:12

Topics: "Slander", "Christian Living"

Description

This sermon focuses on the dangers of slander and how to respond to it biblically. It emphasizes the importance of living a godly life, responding graciously to slander, and seeking clarity through communication. The speaker highlights the vulnerability to Satan's lies and the need to put the best spin on situations, avoiding bitterness and responding like Christ in the face of slander. The message encourages self-examination, humility, and trusting in God's vindication.

Transcript

2 Corinthians 12:20 For I fear..." We all have fears, don't we? "...I fear that perhaps, maybe, possibly, when I come, I may find you not as I wish, that you may find me not as you wish, that perhaps, maybe, possibly, there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder." And I want to use this text just simply as a springboard to somewhat of a topical message this morning on slander. On slander. Let's pray again.

Father, Lord, we need You. This has already been prayed. It's already been sung.

It's already been thought in our own minds. Lord, we need You. Lord, I just feel as small as can be.

Probably not. I probably should feel smaller. But Lord, You are the strength, the rock, the refuge.

Just pray, Father, please come and help. Lord, send Your Holy Spirit and quicken my mind. Lord, bring me out of any dullness intellectually, spiritually.

Lord, search my heart and try my own ways and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, I just pray, meet with us now. Please, would You feed Your sheep? Lord, would You protect the church? Lord, would You just come and help? Lord, we need Your help.

Whether preaching or hearing, Lord, our eyes are on You to help us. So please, Lord, draw near. Please be kind to us.

Lord, be kind to Charles and Tim as they preach now. Lord, draw near to them and strengthen them. Lord, be with David in Austin and Temple.

Would You give him grace and timely messages? Lord, be with Tafik as he's over at another church locally preaching this morning. I pray You'd give our brother grace. Lord, I'm sure evangelistically proclaiming the Word, would You save people there? Lord, we need You.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Why speak on this? Notice how Paul had fear that perhaps he'd come and find slander among other things going on in the church. He says it two times.

Verse 20, perhaps. Perhaps there may be such. He was implying he wasn't certain it was there, but he saw the possibility that it could be there.

And if it was there, those at Corinth would not find Paul as they wish. What does he mean by that? Meaning they'd find Paul against them. Rebuking them.

Dealing with them. That's what I believe he means by they wouldn't find Paul as they wish. They want Paul on their side.

So I too am bringing this sermon not at all based on knowledge that slander is going on. I just want to say that right up front. I'm not up here knowing of that and aiming at anybody.

And I'm not trying to put an idea in our minds that as a church, we've got slander going on. I don't want to do that. That's not why I'm bringing this message.

But rather, like Paul, lately, I've just had the fear. I frankly have just had fear that perhaps this sin of slander could even creep into my own life as I know I've committed it in the years past at different points. As I'm sure most of you could say, you have not been perfect in this area.

So I'm bringing it more as a reminder this morning for you, the believer. For us as a church. You know, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2, he said we must not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not what? We are not ignorant of his designs.

We're not ignorant of the devil's schemes and tactics. So part of the reminder this morning is going to be reminding you of a tactic of Satan that he will use against us to divide us that we not advance the Gospel. You know, we need to be awake in this area of slander.

I mean, even just last night, I was on a phone call. I'd taken a break from studying this and someone called with a question and we kind of got talking and he asked about something and I kind of mentioned stuff about something. And when he hung up, I just felt unsettled.

I just wondered, did I say too much? Did I say anything that painted this other person in a bad light? I was asking myself, here I'm about to preach on slander, and I'm asking myself, did I just in any way commit something like that in a subtle way? And I called the brother back and he said something that was on his mind as well. Now we both couldn't totally figure it out. We didn't believe it was directly slander, but we just knew something too much was said.

Something was said that wasn't the most loving thing. It wasn't the best. So let's think real quick.

What is slander? Can you guys hear me okay? Okay. This mic is different. It's hanging down on my chin.

I wasn't sure. Slander is saying, I'm going to say it in many different ways, damaging information about someone else's character. That's one way you could say it.

Said with malicious and spiteful intention. So part of it is what is the motivation driving the person? Sometimes when we think of gossip, gossip sometimes is very full of slander. You're saying something to someone that should not be shared and it's full of slander, damaging information about someone's character.

Slander is not always 100% untrue. When you think of slander, we're not talking about something that's completely 100% untrue. Usually, it has some measure of truth in it.

However, it is subtly twisted and slanted to smear someone's reputation. Sometimes it's just a little twist and you smear someone's reputation with one comment. Just like that.

It's giving partial truths at times. You slander by not telling the whole perspective. You just give a person this much information and it makes them think damaging thoughts of an individual.

You didn't give the whole story. Or you could say slander, it's giving something that is fully true, but it's giving it purposely in order to damage that person's reputation. What you share, there's nothing inaccurate about the details, but your intention in even sharing it is to damage the person's reputation.

Maybe you do something from long ago in the past and you're sharing it to damage their character, even though it's totally true what they did those years ago or whenever it happened. Slandering, it's misrepresenting someone. Twisting something.

That they said. I thought of Romans 3. Hey, you don't need to turn there. They said this, in view of Paul's teaching, they said why not do evil that good may come? Why not do evil that good may come? And Paul says this, as some people slanderously charge us with saying.

You hear that? Paul's saying they're slanderously going out there and they're saying we're teaching this. We're not teaching that. So slander, it is charging someone with something they didn't do.

Slander is accusing someone as believing something they don't believe. You know, so-and-so, they think this. Do they? And if I hear that and they don't believe that, wow, all of a sudden I have ill thoughts of them just based on that one comment.

Misrepresenting them. Slander is purposely giving a bad report about someone. It is speech that puts unfounded and bad thoughts into someone's mind about someone else.

All of a sudden, a person had no ill thoughts of a person. And all of a sudden they do based on a comment someone said. Now obviously, maybe it was entirely true.

And they should have ill thoughts about that person because of their actions. But what was the intention behind the person saying it? Think of it even more subtly. Sometimes we say of someone, we say, I think brother so-and-so did this.

Notice what I've just done? I've put a thought in someone's mind that brother so-and-so maybe did something. I don't know for certain if they did. I think Zeke, I saw him down there at that club or something like that.

Probably shouldn't have used your name or anyone's name. But the point is you can say that and all of a sudden it puts a thought in someone's mind. That's slander in a more subtle form.

I think. I don't know. I'm slanderously charging someone with something I don't even know if it's true.

Putting bad thoughts in someone else. Slander is that false information what damages someone's reputation in your eyes and thus your perspective and perception on them changes entirely. Total shift of perception upon that person.

And how often it's not even based on something that's true. A total lie or a half-truth and all of a sudden, I as an individual completely have a different perception of someone. They don't deserve for me to have that different perception of them because it's not even true.

But because of slander, all of a sudden I have that. I thought nothing wrong of them until I heard that misrepresented information. You think about some of the biggest slanderers in the land are the false teachers.

Because who are they ultimately slandering? God. You want to talk about misrepresenting? It even says in 1 Corinthians 15, Brother Jeff shared from that chapter, Paul says even in that very chapter, he says, then we would be found misrepresenting God. If we're teaching that, there's not going to be a resurrection.

Misrepresenting God. Think of that. It's one thing for me to misrepresent you, but false teachers are misrepresenting God.

And they charge God with things that are not true of Him. That's a good reminder for us. Do I? I mean, I remember 1 Corinthians 15 thinking to myself when I read that years ago, do I misrepresent God in any way? And then with slander, do I misrepresent any of you in any way by something I say that damages your character? You can think of it like this.

What is slander? It's character assassination. You know, what do assassins do? They kill the person's physical body. What does a character assassin do? When they assassinate your character, they seek to defame and destroy your character.

A lot of our media in the world is full of that. It's trying to destroy the person's credibility and reputation. Think of it like this.

Someone said this, slander is a coward's revenge. Slander is a coward's way of getting revenge. It made me think a few years ago as a church, what happened? We had charges being brought against tons of families in the church to Child Protective Services Agency about how parents were disciplining their children.

And we got investigated as a church. What was it? Two years ago? Why did that even happen? Why were those slanderous charges, which after they investigated, they couldn't find anything? They looked at six or seven families. No problem.

Why did that even come about? Because of a coward who wanted revenge. And their cowardly way of getting revenge is to slander individuals in the church and the reputation of the church as a whole. Trying to get back.

Slander. It's a coward's revenge. Think of it like this.

Slander is a tool that the selfishly ambitious use to seek to damage another because that other person is excelling them and going beyond them. What a thing. These little comments where you can put someone down.

Slander their good name. Misrepresent them totally based on selfish ambition. They're getting more praise than me.

I can maybe put a bad word in so people think this about them. And when they think negative of them, guess what they'll think of me? They'll think better about me. We'll look at that later.

Absalom did that very thing. Slander, another way to look at it, it's doing evil to a friend. Who here wants to do evil to a friend? I don't.

I don't want to do evil to any of you. The psalmist said, who will ascend the hill of the Lord? He who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of Him who never slandered.

Yet Christ said hard things. Christ exposed wicked deeds of the darkness. It was not wrong intention.

It was simply wanting to expose the wickedness. Christ did this perfectly. And yet, who was probably slandered more than anyone who's ever lived? Jesus Christ.

You've got a demon. The list goes on. The things they called Him.

You're a drunkard. Incredible. Even to the cross, Christ went as a lamb to the slaughter.

And it says He didn't open His mouth. Incredible humility for our sakes. So that is what slander is.

Just said in some different ways. It's saying something with a malicious intent to damage that person's reputation. You know what's scary? Sometimes we say stuff and we don't think there's any malicious intent.

And there is. It's just so subtle we're not picking up on it. So we've got to think deep about that.

Let's think really quick of the destruction of slander. When we think about destruction, you think about bombs. You think about nuclear warfare.

Hiroshima. You think about Iraq. You think about destruction.

You think about these pictures you see of Syria. These barrel bombs being dropped on the people over there. I just read last night about a convoy when they had that supposed ceasefire.

A convoy with all these trucks just sitting there waiting to load up stuff to go feed the people in the city and guess what happened? Planes and bombs destroyed all of it. Twenty people died. All the goods destroyed.

Almost. That's what we think about when we think of destruction. Let's think of the destruction of slander.

Because part of what makes me fearful of slander in my own life being there or in the church in any way, part of what makes it fearful, and I'm sure for Paul, is he understood the destruction of it. When you understand how much destruction something can cause, you're all the more careful to not touch it. Slander is that which can separate close friends who've had a genuine and dear relationship for 30 years or more.

Proverbs 16.28 A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer, or as the NAS puts it, a slanderer separates close friends. I've seen that with my own eyes. One of the hardest things in the Christian life is losing genuine relationships with brothers and sisters.

It's hard. I've seen it from others' perspectives. I have seen people who were close for 30 plus years.

30 years of genuine fellowship. 30 years of true love. This is not a superficial relationship.

And guess what separated that relationship? Guess what bomb went off and destroyed it? Slander. Just like that. And it separated close friends, like Proverbs 16.28 says.

Some of you may be sitting there thinking, I haven't really seen that. I hope you don't have to see that. But part of not seeing it, is for you and me as individuals to not be on the side of the one who's doing the slandering and causing the separation.

We have to be aware. So, I have fear. I'm terrified of slander.

It is something that destroys churches. I have fear that I don't want to be the one who's slandering someone and causing the separation. I have fear that I not believe a slander about a brother.

Terrified that if someone says something to me that's untrue, that I believe it. I don't want to do that. I have fear that someone may slander my own name to someone else and in return, cause separation in our relationship without me even knowing it.

You know, why is there distance with me and so-and-so? What's going on? Well, it turns out someone slandered my name to them. And they never came and talked to me about it. They just believed it.

And it's starting to separate. Close friendships. So, that's my introduction.

What is slander? Thinking of the destruction of it. I hope you guys see why this matters. Slander is a bomb that can destroy the church.

It can destroy close relationships. You know, our relationships are not bulletproof 10 years in. You kind of think you get to the 10 year stretch with another Christian.

Like nothing can separate us now. We're hand in hand to glory. Look, we've got an adversary out there who's going to do everything he can to make that not happen.

That's why we've got to be aware of the schemes of the devil and not ignorant of them. Lest we get taken out. And Jesus Christ, He wants us to be one.

He wants us to keep maintaining the unity we do have right now. Satan does not want us to maintain that unity. As Paul said in Philippians 1, strive side by side together for the faith of the Gospel.

Here a question is, what's God's view on slander? Slander is obviously very destroying. It separates close friends. You know, if God wants unity among genuine Christians, do you think He wants slander there? Separation? To put it like this, slander is something that ought not to be done by the Christian.

I get this from Romans 1. Listen here, He says, God gave men up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. You think, well, that means they're out there involved in homosexuality. Sure, that's one of the things.

A debased mind to do what ought not to be done. And you know what's one of the things on the list that ought not to be done? Slander. Slander.

Gossips and slanders. And right next to slander, hand in hand is haters of God. Isn't that amazing? Slander is on the same level as being a hater of God.

How many of you have put a list like that? He committed the sin of slander. And he's a hater of God. Jesus Christ, He wants us to be one.

Slander prevents that. You better believe, if I live a life of slander, not only am I hating my brethren, which is hating Christ, because when I sin against the brothers, I'm ultimately sinning against Christ because we are the body of Christ. Think about God's view on slander.

It's the speech of a fool. Proverbs 10.18 says this, Whoever utters slander is a fool. When words are many, transgression is not lacking.

But whoever restrains his lips is wise. Whoever utters slander is a fool. Foolish.

So what is God's view on slander? It's utterly foolish sin. Utterly foolish sin. It sows discord among the brothers.

It splits churches. It drives some to depression. When you think of slander and depression, anyone come to your mind? A pastor of old.

Say again? Spurgeon. I mean, Spurgeon, boy, he got blasted in the newspaper. It had an effect on him.

He said this, Down on my knees have I often fallen with the hot sweat rising from my brow under some fresh slander poured upon me. In an agony of grief, my heart has been well nigh broken. You want to think of the damage of slander? Here you take a godly pastor like Spurgeon and it's about crushing him.

Now we know it doesn't have to be that way. The Lord Jesus, He didn't let it crush him. We know there's always a way of escape.

But it can lead to that. So slander is very destructive. Let's ask this question.

Where does slander come from? What is its source? If I need to be aware of slander, where does it come from? What is its source? Two things I want to point out. First, inside of you and me. Inside of you and me.

Matthew 15, out of the heart, come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witnesses, and slander. Led astray. And desires in our hearts, it says in James.

So one source of where slander comes from is the heart. Think about it like this. A person who is overly critical and judgmental, if they have that spirit in their heart, just constantly being critical, you know what's

going to happen? You know what's going to come out of that heart that's gratifying this critical, judgmental spirit? They're going to slander someone.

They're going to damage someone's reputation. Because they're going to have ill thoughts of others. What happens when you don't love and you have ill thoughts of someone? It's so much easier now to speak negative of the individual.

Slander, it can be a product of deeper issues. 1 Timothy 6, verse 4, it says this, He has an unhealthy craving for controversy for quarrels about words which produce something. Controversy and quarrels about words produces something.

It produces slander. Isn't that amazing? Quarrels produces slander. Paul is saying the person who gets into quarrels and controversies will find those very quarrels producing slanderous thoughts towards the other person.

You get so heated in this debate, this quarrel about who's right. And in pride, you so want to be right, that all of a sudden you just open yourself up to look for ways to think ill of that person and damage their reputation. Because you want to be on top.

Quarreling produces slander. You know, you get home from that heated conversation and it's just that much easier to bad mouth that person, to speak ill of a brother, to exaggerate something and therefore be lying. Secondly, where does slander come from? Turn to 1 Peter.

1 Peter. 1 Peter 5 comes from the devil. Look at v. 8. Be sober-minded.

Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Now you may say, well, nothing in the verse says anything about slander.

Nothing is there about slander. How does that deal with slander? Well, we need to ask, what does devil mean? If you've heard Charles Leiter's sermon on your adversary, the devil, or the slanderer, it literally means the slanderer. The false accuser of the brethren.

Satan, his name means the slanderer. The devil is the accuser of the brethren and he accuses them before God day and night. So, Satan, he's an accuser of the brethren.

One way he seeks to devour us is slander. If you look at that verse right there, he prowls around looking to someone to devour. What does devour mean? Devour means to drink down.

To swallow up. To destroy. I mean, the devil is out there looking to drink you down.

To get his grasp on you like a lion. And that devil is a slanderer. He's our adversary, it says.

Prowls around. Your adversary. Think about adversary.

What does that mean? He's our opponent. He's our enemy. An enemy.

So guess what? Slander is not just about what goes on inside. But there's actually another component. Something going on on the outside.

Not just about my own sin in the flesh. But I've got an enemy out there. An enemy who's prowling around.

I thought of this movie years ago. I saw *The Ghost in the Darkness*. If you guys have seen that or not, it's a partially true story.

They were trying to build a bridge in Africa. A railroad, thank you. A railroad in Africa.

And all these workers started to get killed. Turned out there was two lions. They killed around 35 or more people.

And eventually they killed the lions. And think of us as a church. We're not trying to build a railroad.

What are we trying to do? Advance the Gospel. And you know what we don't want to happen as we're trying to advance the Gospel? We don't want the devil to come around like he did those lions in Africa did and kill 35 of our members. We don't want him to devour.

And the Bible says that's what Satan prowls around like. He's like a roaring lion. He's seeking someone to devour.

It would be very easy to build the bridge if I didn't have any lions trying to kill me. Couldn't be great, right? If we didn't have an enemy on the outside. But reality check, we do.

And one of his big tactics is slander. His very name, Devil, means he's the accuser of the brethren. Let's ask this, how does Satan go about slandering? And I basically got these brief thoughts from Charles Leiter.

His sermon is excellent. He's preached that maybe six or seven times because we constantly need reminders of this. We constantly need reminders.

Again, that's my mission. This is a reminder. How does Satan go about slandering? First, what does he do? Satan slanders the reputation of God to man.

He slanders the reputation of God to man. The Devil wants to misrepresent who God is to you, the Christian. Because if he misrepresents who God is to you, the Christian, then guess what? You're not going to have the peace you should have as a believer.

You're not going to have the comfort you should have as a believer. The Devil wants you to think ill of God because he'll kill your fruitfulness rather than feeling like I can go to God and pray in this time of trial. The Devil will be saying, God doesn't want to hear from you.

God wants you to have a pity party and go do penance and earn your way back into His favor. Satan will say that to you. You think of in the garden, Satan said to Eve, did God actually say? Did God actually say that? Did God actually say that He doesn't count your sins to you? That they're actually counted to Jesus Christ? You're going to believe a truth as glorious as justification in the midst of your trial? Satan's saying, oh, you can't believe that.

It doesn't apply to you. Those thoughts! The Devil. He's a slanderer.

Satan will suggest wrong ideas of God to man. If your simple question is, is there anything about God that you view wrongly this morning? Some of us, there can be such a slanderous thought about something about God that we don't even know it until we're reading the Bible and it dawns on us. You know, I thought that was true of the Lord.

This verse totally tells me that was not true of God. False teachers misrepresent God. How many people have a wrong view of God? Because the Devil.

I tell you, if you're struggling, don't let a slander from Satan, a malicious attack on the character of God, don't believe it. That can be the worst thing you can do in the midst of struggling. Don't believe it.

Go to the Scriptures and say it is written. This is right here. That thought is not from the Lord.

That is not the Holy Spirit. That is my adversary the Devil and he's trying to devour me with this thought about God. And he's accusing God and it's not even true.

It's a lie. Satan also does what? He slanders the reputation of man to God. We find that multiple places.

I quoted it earlier. The accuser of our brethren is cast down. What does he do? Revelation 12.

Accused them before our God day and night. We find the same thing in Job. Satan accuses us before God.

Incredible. I mean, Satan's out there trying to find every way he can to spread lies. Spread lies.

Just a brother mentioned this morning. We're thinking of Titus 1. God who never lies. Satan always lies.

But our God, He never lies. Now here the big one is, we're thinking about where does slander come from. One, there's times in our own hearts, our remaining sin, our fallen flesh, that we'll have these things come out maybe in a time of a critical judgment.

Being unloving. Then we've got the devil who's the slanderer. And this is another thing he does.

He slanders each other to one another. You hear that? Satan slanders each other to one another. The reputation of man to man.

Here this thought comes about one of you in my mind. And it's not even true. No basis for it.

And there the devil is slandering you to me to try to make me think ill of you. Satan is prime on doing that. They said to Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie? In some way, Satan filled their heart to lie.

He was influential in getting them to lie. And this, the devil, the father of lies, he's out to get us. Think about this in a practical way.

This may happen when someone does not say hi to you. What is the devil sitting there saying? Maybe I didn't say hi to someone this morning. What did Satan tell you? What was he there speaking into your ear? Or what was your own heart, maybe not giving in in a loving way, not believing the best, you in your own heart gave into? Whether it's A or B, what is it? I've experienced that.

And so I know what he says. He's saying, see, they don't care about you. They didn't say hi to you.

They ignored you. They don't care about you. It's not only they don't care about you, they've got something against you.

And not only do they have something against you, they're not even going to talk to you about what they've got against you. It's like he's just digging deeper and deeper until you cut him off and say no. No, I'm not

going to believe that lie.

I'm not going to let this root of bitterness get yanked into my heart and consume me and defile. I remember years ago when that happened to me. Someone didn't say hi to me, and eventually I talked to them.

And they just said, oh, I was just so distracted. I was about to preach. I wasn't sure what I was going to say.

I was just walking by like I was the only one in the room. And you're like, oh man, I was pretty rotten to think that about them. That happens.

It happens. You may not get a response from an email. Satan's saying, oh, they got something against you.

They didn't respond. They got something against you. And I remember one situation.

A brother told me he had emailed a brother to reproof him on something, and he never got a response. And when he saw the brother, and you know what this older brother did? He thought the best. And when he saw the brother, he brought it up.

He said, did you ever get my email? And you know what the younger person said? I never got it. It never showed up in my inbox. You see, love thinks the best.

They never got my email. It's in their spam folder. The devil, in our own even selfishness, will think the worst.

They got it and they're not responding. I don't have Facebook. My wife does.

Facebook has allowed this thing when you send a message, it says they've seen it. You know what I'm talking about? So it's kind of like my wife once opened the message and now the person knows I saw it. I need time to think about a response, or I don't have time to respond.

And if I don't respond now, maybe Satan's going to slander them saying I'm never going to respond. Or maybe you opened it and saw it and you didn't. You know what love thinks? They didn't open it and see it.

Their kid got a hold of their phone and he accidentally opened the message and that's why it said it was seen. And the reason they never responded is they never saw the message. Putting the best spin on it.

You think of how many misunderstandings. It's heyday for the devil. Just a misunderstanding.

I mean, just total misunderstanding. And Satan's right there saying they don't care about you. They hate you.

They this to you. I mean, someone's texted me before and I didn't respond and they texted back and said, do you love me? You didn't text me. It's like I was in a meeting for two hours.

I wasn't on my phone. Satan. Now the good news, as Brother Bob Jennings said, if a Christian, remember this, the devil is a defeated foe.

Defeated when he sinned. Defeated at the cross. When redemption was accomplished.

Defeated in the life of Christian. And he'll be defeated finally when cast into the lake of fire. He's out there roaming seeking whom he can drink down.

Let's think a couple examples. Take a little while to turn there. You could if you wanted.

Turn to 2 Samuel 15. 2 Samuel 15, 1-6. We see Absalom who's the king's son.

Previously, he lived two years without coming into the king's presence and guess what? He finally comes into the king's presence after those two years. And now he gets the king's approval. People obviously saw that.

They heard Absalom was in the king's presence. Him and his dad must be okay. And you know what Absalom did? He started a conspiracy to overthrow his own father to get the throne.

Well, if you're going to do that, what's a good way to go about doing that? Well, one way is damage your father's reputation. Right? Slander him. And so we read there, v. 1, After this, Absalom got himself a chariot and horses and 50 men to run before him, and Absalom used to rise early and stand before the way of the gate.

And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would intercept them. He would call to him and say, from what city are you? And when he said, your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel, Absalom would say to him, see, your claims are good and right, but there's no one designated by the king to hear you. My dad, he won't hear you.

No one's designated. Do you think that's true? We find out earlier throughout these letters, David, he had his kingdom in order. It says in chapter 8, David reigned over all Israel, and David administrated justice to all his people.

See, I don't think David was failing on that. Absalom is slandering his father's character right there. Then Absalom would say, verse 4, Oh, that I were judging the land.

Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice. And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he'd put out his hand, take hold of him, and kiss him. Talk about flattery.

Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Isn't that amazing? Men would come to the king for judgment on a dispute, and Absalom would be standing at the gate to catch them before they got there, and he would slander his own father.

He doesn't have anyone who can listen to you. But guess what? Your lucky day, I'm here. I mean, what a chance that I would be right here to listen to you when no one else will.

I care about you. That's damaging. Damaging.

And it says he stole their hearts. The hearts of the men. That is what slander does.

It steals someone's heart away from a certain person. When the devil slanders God's character to you, what does that do? It steals your heart away from a love for God because you have a misrepresentation of God. Same thing with people.

Satan is slandering that brother or sister to you to try to steal your heart ultimately away from them. To break the unity. To separate close friendships.

So in short, Absalom was saying, view David wrongly and view me highly. And you think David knew? I mean, his own son's out at the gate intercepting people. Slandering.

Giving a bad report. Incredible. Think of Meshibbetheth.

The very next chapter. 2 Samuel 16. We find David having fled from Jerusalem after Absalom did take over.

So it worked. He took over. In verse 3, we find David asked Ziba, who's the servant of Meshibbetheth.

He says this, Where's your master's son? That is, Meshibbetheth. And Ziba said to the king, Behold, he remains in Jerusalem. For he, Meshibbetheth... So this is what the servant says of his master.

He's saying this of Meshibbetheth. For he said, Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father. So imagine being David.

You're there and you hear, Where's Meshibbetheth? And Ziba the servant says, Oh, he stayed back there. He kind of saw this as a prime opportunity to get all his stuff back. He betrayed you, David.

Is what Ziba is saying. Yet we find, Is that true? Is it not? In view of that, David gave all the land of Meshibbetheth to Ziba. Isn't that amazing? David couldn't call him up and say, Meshibbetheth, is this true? You know, it just took him at his word.

We find in 2 Samuel 19, 24-27, we find of Absalom's death and of Meshibbetheth coming down to meet the king. And Meshibbetheth expresses, I've fasted from shaving or washing my clothes ever since David departed and until the day David came back to safety. I mean, here you've got a guy who's fasting.

David had said, you'll eat at my table all the days of your life. Meshibbetheth loved David, I believe. Verse 25, David said, why did you not go with me? Tell me your perspective.

You know, the Proverbs say one puts out his case and the other comes along and examines it. David now, he already gave away his land. Oops.

But he's coming and he's asking him, why did you not come? And Meshibbetheth answered, my lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said to me, I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king. For your servant is lame.

He's a crippled guy. Verse 27, Meshibbetheth says to David, Ziba has slandered your servant to my lord, the king. Ziba slandered him.

You get the idea. Ziba's heading out with the donkeys and he thinks, huh, Meshibbetheth's crippled. Let's leave him behind.

I can get the glory for bringing all this stuff to David. I can lie about Meshibbetheth and then I can get all this land. Yet, in the end, we find out Ziba slandered Meshibbetheth to David.

So, those are two examples. Throughout the Scriptures, we find slander. Men being slandered.

We're going to find that throughout our lives as Christians. Being slandered. Being spoken ill of.

That brings up this question, what should our response be to slander? What should our response be? First, I want to give a preventative, a precautionary measure to take. Meaning, this is how you respond when you're slandered. This is how you should be living.

That when slander comes about, you do respond righteously. Paul said in Ephesians, he said, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you. So put it away, along with all malice.

Is that all we do, Paul? Are we just putting stuff away as Christians? No. There's also things we're putting on. And Paul says there, be kind to one another.

Tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God and Christ forgave you. This is the point. If you're busy loving others and being kind, it'll be hard for Satan's slanders to find a place to stick.

When your heart is overflowing with love for others, the devil comes and slanders you and it's kind of like, yeah, am I going to believe that about them? No. Not going to happen. If we busy ourselves with speaking the truth and being full of love, then we'll automatically in some way make the right response to slander.

Yet, I've found in my own life, if I'm caught being critical of others, it's all the easier to give in to slanderous comments. James 4 says, do not speak evil against one another, brothers. Think of this.

If you observe the season in your life in which you're most prone to give in to slanderous thoughts in your mind, you'll probably find in that season, it is a season of subtle selfishness, lack of love, and care for the interests of others and not your own. You'll see it's a season of a neglect of Jesus Christ. How can I be beholding the glory of the Lord and being transformed as I view Christ through the Scriptures, even through some of those psalms, and then go and indulge in the sin of slander? Or indulge in the sin of not believing the best? And thinking the worst about people? Look, if I'm consumed with Christ, it's going to be very difficult at that moment to go in that direction.

If I'm walking by the Spirit. Think how important love is. You know, Mark read Hebrews.

Stir one another up to love and good works. Look, if we're busy loving each other, it's going to be pretty easy to do good works. It's going to be pretty easy to serve one another.

Love is huge. One of the things I constantly find myself wanting to do better and growing is to affirm my love to others better. Affirm.

Affirming. Brother, sister, I'm on your side. I love you.

I care about you. I have your interest and view. I'm sorry I've not got to talk to you for such and such a season.

Things have been happening. I love you. Even recently, a pastor friend, he saw another pastor he had not really got to talk to in years, and one of the first things that other pastors said to him, he gave him a hug and he said, Brother, just so you know, I have nothing against you.

Nothing against you. Why would he say that? Because he knew Satan has tactics. He's wanting to slander.

And I want to reaffirm my love. I've got nothing against you. So that was kind of a preventative.

But what should our response to slander be? Here one thing is, communication is vital. Anyone who's married knows that. If I have a thought or if I wrongly think something about my wife in some subtle way, what's the quickest way to get clarity on that? To talk to her.

To bring it up in a loving way. Hey, you know, this happened. Why did you do that? Did you remember that I mentioned we shouldn't do that and you did it? Oh, I didn't remember that.

I didn't hear that. My wife has never said, oh, I heard that and I just willfully rebelled. Thankfully, God gave me a godly wife.

Communication is vital. How often a slanderous thought could be resolved if we simply talked to the person on the phone. Not emails.

On the phone. If you have to do an email, so be it. You call them up.

You talk to them. There's times I didn't do it on the phone. It didn't turn out as well as I would have hoped.

Emails can be confusing sometimes. A person's tone. It's easier to reaffirm your love face to face.

You call them up. You say, I keep having this thought. Can you just give me clarity? Just give me clarity.

I'm not charging you with anything. I'm not accusing you. Just help me understand.

Why did you say this? Why did this happen? Now obviously we need to balance this out. I'm not saying that to every evil thought we're to go right away and talk to the person in regards to it. What I am saying is that if you cannot shake it and you're fighting to believe the best, but you just can't overcome, then communicate with that person.

The more mature thing to do is when ill thoughts come, we believe the best, we move on. It's not like every time we've got to get clarity. We've got to get clarity.

But if you've got something this morning that you can't shake, get clarity. Talk to the person. Don't let it be a wedge between you and a brother or sister.

I mean, how often I found the moment I talked to them calms the whole storm. I mean, the whole storm goes away. And I realize that was pretty pathetic, pretty small.

What do we do when someone slanders someone to us? Obviously, you don't hear them out. If you get the point, if you know right away they're damaging someone, you don't hear them. You rebuke them.

And you tell them as Matthew 18 says, you go to that brother. You need to keep this between you and him alone. Why are you telling me? Go to him.

In most cases, that's going to be the thing to do. There's obviously time we come and we get counsel on certain situations because it would be more damaging to go right to the person. And that's right to do.

That's not slander or gossip. When people may come and they're trying to get an insight, maybe even not using the person's name. They just want insight.

John Bloom said this, slander is cowardly because it's a way of nurturing a concern or an offense and gaining sympathizers without doing the courageous work of bringing it directly to the source of our concern or offense. Our rationalizations for this can be countless. But essentially, we don't have the guts to deal with it head on.

This means our character is in serious question since we are willing to vandalize another's character to gain allies. That's true. Because I know I've been the coward sometimes.

How did he put it? You don't have the guts. You love yourself too much. So let's gain more people on my side.

If I go to them, I might actually find out I'm wrong. I don't want to go to them and find out I'm wrong. Then I've got to humble myself.

So maybe let's get more people on my team and I maybe never will have to find that out. Here's a question. When Satan slanders someone to you, when you have a thought that is ill and damaging of someone in this church or anyone, what do you do? What do you do? First thing, put the best spin on it.

I remember hearing that years ago. Just saying it like that. The best spin.

Incredible. That's like 1 Corinthians 13. Love believes all things.

That's the idea. Putting the best spin on it. Just like we looked at earlier.

The reason they didn't respond to my text message is because they got a new number and they don't have that phone anymore. That's the best spin. The worst spin is to say the reason they didn't respond is they picked up their phone and they looked at my text message and you're daydreaming in your mind about them doing that and they got angry at it and they put their phone down.

I mean, which way are you going to think? Immaturity thinks the one way. But being like Christ thinks the other. Putting the best spin on it.

Look, we also must realize this. There are times the information is true and is not slanderous and we need to expose it. Silence can be destructive.

People can get so scared of saying anything negative about anyone and doing any type of confrontation, they're just silent. We just all need to love each other. Again, that doesn't mean we let sin go unchecked in the dark.

Ask yourself, what's your motive? Is it to protect the church? The individual? What motivates you? We need to be able to report confirmed and documented sin to the right people. Okay, so we just looked at what should our response be to slander? I gave a preventative. Then what do we do when someone slanders someone to us? And this is, I guess, kind of similar.

But how do I respond to personal slander? Personal slander. That's when it gets hard, right? When it's personally right at you. With the Internet, boy, that can be tough.

I feel for guys like Tim. There's a whole lot of people just slandering him on the Internet. Don't go looking.

There's a guy in the Netherlands. His whole life is butchering Tim, Paul Washer, John MacArthur, and all these other guys. I mean, just ripping on them.

How do you respond to that? Here the first thing is are you actually living a godly life? That's the first thing. Make sure you're actually living a godly life with a clear conscience. 1 Peter 3, having a good conscience so that when you're slandered, what happens? Those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

So first thing, how do I respond? Live a godly life so that none of the charges can stick. Because if the charges do stick, then ultimately it's not slander because it's true. It could be said with an intention that is malicious.

Secondly, how do I respond? 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says when we're slandered, the ESV renders it in treat. I like the Holman. It says we respond graciously.

When slandered, we respond graciously. Graciously. You know that person who slanders us, what do they want us to respond like? They want to get us agitated.

Because then they win. Conrad Murrell said this in an article on slander. Very helpful.

Listen to this. Conrad says this. The accused does a most prudent thing.

So you're the person being accused of something. How do you respond? While affirming your innocence, he does not fail to consider the possibility of truth in the allegations against him. Do you hear that humility there? If we would be honest, then we have nothing to fear from objective examination.

Meaning if I don't want to examine myself, I've got something to hide. But if I'm willing to examine myself, that's good. The truth of the matter is when people accuse us, there is usually some truth in what they say.

And while the whole of the slander may be a lie, we must not shrink to acknowledge what is true and be rebuked and corrected. Thus, personal slander can be an occasion for soul searching, for personal discipline, and for learning to trust the Lord in the face of popular rejection. So that's a good way to think about it.

Slander is an opportunity for soul searching. Search me, O God. What grain of salt is true in what they said? They maybe exaggerated it, but if there's something true, what an opportunity to grow and become like Jesus Christ.

And oh, I just prayed that at the last prayer meeting. Lord, do whatever it takes to make me like Christ. And here the Lord's giving me an opportunity.

Some will cry out, everyone's slandering me and this and that. Tim said years ago, usually the people who cry the loudest about slander are the ones most guilty of it. How do I respond to personal slander? Don't get bitter.

Bitterness is a sin. Are you going to respond to their sin by sinning? Where's that going to get you? It's going to get you a grieved Holy Spirit. No communion with Christ.

It's going to put you in a pit of depression. I want to read one more quote from John Bunyan. From Grace Abounding.

This is under the heading, how do you respond to personal slander? Listen to John Bunyan. I need to learn from him. He responds very well.

It began, therefore, to be rumored up and down among the people that I was a witch, a Jesuit, a highwayman, and the like, to all which I shall only say God knows I am innocent, but as for mine accusers, let them provide themselves to meet me before the tribunal of the Son of God. The judgment seat. There to answer for all these things with all the rest of their sins, unless God shall give them repentance for them, for which I pray with all my heart.

But that which was reported with boldest confidence was that I had two wives at once. Now these slanders I glory in. Wait, what? You glory in them, John Bunyan? They're going around saying you have two wives? I glory in them because Jesus said, blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil of you falsely for My sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven. Bunyan goes on to say, so then what shall I say to those that have bespattered me? Shall I threaten them? Shall I chide them? Shall I flatter them? Shall I entreat them to hold their tongue? No, not I. Were it not for that these things make them right for damnation, that are the authors who are saying the slanders, I would say unto them, keep reporting it, because it will increase My glory. Therefore, I bind these lies and slanders to Me as an ornament.

It belongs to My Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached, and reviled. I rejoice in the reproaches for Christ's sake. Now that is a pretty high way to respond.

But I think it's very similar to the Lord Jesus Christ who we're going to look at. Ornaments. It belongs to My Christian profession.

Do you guys know that? When you signed up in the Lord's army, I don't know if you saw in the fine print, you're going to get slandered. Evil things will be spoken of you that are not true. People will malign you when you don't join them in their flood of debauchery.

But keep living a godly life with a good conscience. How did Jesus respond to slander? Matthew 27, But when He was accused by the chief priest and elders, He gave no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, Do You not hear how many things they testify against You? But He gave no answer, not even to a single charge.

And you know what Pilate's response was? The governor was greatly amazed. Why would he be greatly amazed that Jesus did not give a response even to a single charge? What's so amazing about that? I'll tell you what's so amazing about it because what's our natural response when we're being slandered? It's to defend ourselves. Right away.

I mean, I even sometimes feel my body stiffen up. And it's just like I've got to defend myself. Christ, in humility, did not defend Himself against those slanders and accusations.

It spoke of someone who was entirely trusting themselves and their reputation to God the Father. He was completely secure. Christ knew this is granted to happen.

This doesn't mess up my security. Like John Bunyan, this is just more glory. Think of Matthew 11.

They said the Son of Man came eating and drinking. They say, look at Him, a glutton and a drunkard. A friend of tax collectors and sinners.

And what was Christ's response? He said this, Wisdom is justified by her deeds. What does he mean? He said Christ was vindicated that the slanders were not true by how He lived His life. So someone butchers your name, what's one ready to respond? To say that by the grace of God, I will be justified by my deeds.

In this life, it will be proven by my life that your charges are not true. Are not true. His life was a testimony of perfect righteousness.

And He got slandered more than anyone. I mean, what a thing. So when we get slandered, and sometimes the charges brought against us are true.

It's not slander. It's 100% true. Sometimes it's slander and it's 90% true.

So, in conclusion, what are we most susceptible to? What are we most vulnerable to? My own personal danger is not that I go slander one of you. That's not where I feel vulnerable. And I would think the majority of you, that's not the issue.

You're not here today and it's just a struggle. I just keep speaking ill of people. I don't think that's it.

The issue is Satan, as we already looked at, slandering them to you. Satan giving ill thoughts of another brother or sister in this church to you. That is the area I think we're the most vulnerable.

When the devil says they think this of you, and rather than believe the best or get clarity on the situation, we're selfish and believe the worst. That's where I feel vulnerable. Responding wrongly.

Right when that thought from Satan comes. Rather than put the best spin on it, putting the worst spin on it. And what happens when you go down that route and you believe that which is not true? What happens when you don't talk to the person? You hold it inside? You start getting bitter.

Is anyone here with something boiling inside of you towards anyone else? You can't stay in that state. It'll ruin you. Because it's not a good conscience.

And if you don't hold to the faith and a good conscience, you shipwreck. If you're boiling inside, you've got to deal with it. As others have said, don't let yourself be lion food.

Don't be lion food. Why do I say lion? Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion. Our adversary, the slanderer, is prowling around looking for someone to devour.

Don't be his food. And believe something of God that is not true. And believe something of a brother and sister that is not true.

Don't do that. May we keep openly communicating as a church when wisdom discerns it is wisest. So I think that's all I have.

But 2 Corinthians 12. I fear that perhaps, perhaps... Again, I'm not saying this is going on. I just wanted to give a reminder on these things.

To help you all not become lion food and to help myself not become that. Because you are His prey. He's out to get you.

But remember, He's defeated. And if you're here and you're not a Christian and you're a child of the devil, and your will is to slander and malign and speak evil and that's what you do at school, the good news is

Christ, He came and He never slandered. He never lied.

He never sinned. He spoke perfectly. And He died on the cross to pay for sin.

And He can forgive you. He can give you His record. Your record has slander, accusations, lies, deceit, exaggerations.

Christ? He has none of that. He's got perfection. And He'll take His record and give it to you if you turn to Him and trust in Him.

So let's keep striving together as a body and remember these things. Let's pray. Father, I just pray, Lord, that as Paul said, Lord, we can have fear of something like slander.

Lord, I hope that's all I ever have is fear of perhaps in my own life, my brothers and sisters, perhaps it could happen here or there. Lord, thank You for the blessed unity You've given us as a body. Lord, would You help all of us to just even remember these things that we walk worthy of the cross.

Lord, help us to do this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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