

# Step 10 on Slander or Calumny.

by St. John Climacus

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*St. John Climacus emphasizes the dangers of slander and the importance of love and self-reflection in overcoming judgmental attitudes.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 101:5, Proverbs 10:12, Proverbs 11:13, Matthew 7:2, Luke 6:37, James 4:11

**Topics:** "Slander And Gossip", "Judging Others"

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## Description

St. John Climacus preaches about the dangers of slander, highlighting how it stems from hatred and malice, draining the blood of charity and leading to the ruin of chastity. He emphasizes the importance of not judging others, attributing blame to the demon who suggests sin rather than the person who falls. St. John encourages practicing love and mourning instead of hasty and severe judgment, as judging others can lead to self-ruin and a lack of self-awareness of one's own sins.

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## Transcript

1. No sensible person, I think, will dispute that slander is born of hatred and malice. Therefore it comes next in order after its forebears.

2. Slander is an offspring of hatred, a subtle yet coarse disease, a leech lurking unfelt, wasting and draining the blood of charity. It is simulation of love, the patron of a heavy and unclean heart, the ruin of chastity.

3. Some girls do wrong without shame, and there are others who secretly and with apparently great modesty behave still worse than the former; and it is the same with shameful passions.<sup>4</sup> There are many insincere maidens, such as: hypocrisy, vice, melancholy, the remembrance of injuries, disparagement of others in one's heart. They appear to propose one thing, but they have something else in view.

4. I have heard people slandering, and I have rebuked them. And these doers of evil replied in self-defence that they were doing so out of love and care for the person whom they were slandering. I said

<sup>4</sup> Romans i, 26.

to them: 'Stop that kind of love, otherwise you will be condemning as a liar him who said: "Him who secretly slanders his neighbour, him I drove away."<sup>1</sup> If you say you love, then pray secretly, and do not mock the man. For this is the kind of love that is acceptable to the Lord. But I will not hide this from you (and of course think about it, and do not judge the offender): Judas was in the company of Christ's

disciples, and the Robber was in the company of murderers. And what a reversal when the crisis came!

5. He who wants to overcome the spirit of slander, should not ascribe the blame to the person who falls, but to the demon who suggests it. For no one really wants to sin against God, even though we do all sin without being forced to do so.

6. I have known a man who sinned openly and repented secretly. I condemned him as a profligate, but he was chaste before God, having propitiated Him by a genuine conversion.

7. Do not regard the feelings of a person who speaks to you about his neighbour disparagingly, but rather say to him: 'Stop, brother! I fall into graver sins every day, so how can I criticize him?' In this way you will achieve two things: you will heal yourself and your neighbour with one plaster. This is one of the shortest ways to the forgiveness of sins; I mean, not to judge. 'Judge not, that you be not judged.'<sup>2</sup>

8. Fire and water are incompatible; and so is judging others in one who wants to repent. If you see someone falling into sin at the very moment of his death, even then do not judge him, because the Divine judgment is hidden from men. Some have fallen openly into great sins, but they have done greater good deeds in secret; so their critics were tricked, getting smoke instead of the sun.

9. Listen to me, listen, all you malicious reckoners of other men's accounts! If it is true (as it really is true) that 'with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged',<sup>3</sup> then whatever sins we blame our neighbour for, whether bodily or spiritual, we shall fall into them ourselves. That is certain.

10. Hasty and severe judges of the sins of their neighbour fall into this predicament because they have not yet attained to a thorough and constant remembrance and concern for their own sins. For if anyone could see his own vices accurately without the veil of self-love, he would worry about nothing else in this life, considering that he would not have time enough for mourning for himself even though he were to live a hundred years, and even though he were to see a whole river Jordan of tears streaming from his eyes. I have observed that mourning, and I did not find in it even a trace of calumny or criticism.

11. The demons, murderers as they are, push us into sin. Or if they fail to do this, they get us to pass judgment on those who are sinning, so that they may smear us with the stain which we our selves are condemning in another.

12. This is one of the marks by which we can recognize malicious and slanderous people: they are plunged in the spirit of hatred, and with pleasure and without a qualm they slander the teaching or affairs or achievements of their neighbour.

13. I have seen some committing the gravest sins in secret and without exposure, and in their supposed purity they have harshly inveighed against persons who have had a petty fall in public.

14. To judge others is a shameless arrogation of the Divine prerogative; to condemn is the ruin of one's soul.

15. Self-esteem without any other passion can ruin a man, and in the same way, if we have formed the habit of judging, we can be utterly ruined by this alone, for indeed the Pharisee was condemned for this very thing.

1 Psalm c, 5.

2 St. Luke vi, 37.

3 St. Matthew vii, 2.

16. A good grape-picker, who eats the ripe grapes, will not start gathering unripe ones. A charitable and sensible mind takes careful note of whatever virtues it sees in anyone. But a fool looks for faults and defects. And of such it is said: 'They have searched out iniquity and expired in the search.'<sup>1</sup>

17. Do not condemn, even if you see with your eyes, for they are often deceived.

The tenth ascent. He who has mastered it is one who practises love or mourning.

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