

GOSSIP

slander, slurs, bitter roots and false witnesses



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Gossip
Slander
Slurs

Bitter Roots

False Witnesses

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PRESENTED TO:

If someone presented this booklet personally to you, there's a reason they did so. They're giving this booklet to you out of love that you might repent.

So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us..... (3 John 1:10)

Gossip, Slander, Slurs, Bitter Roots and False Witnesses

A WORLD OF EVIL

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. (James 3:6)

The tongue contains the fire of hell. Hell is full of gossiping, slandering beings who constantly slur each other. Yet how men love to eat the choice morsel called “gossip” and justify their sins by slurring the character of others. We “corrupt” ourselves by talking about others. How we use the tongue demonstrates to the discerning whether a man’s course is bound for heaven or hell. For this reason, Scripture says a man’s religion is worthless who does not use his tongue in love and keep a “tight reign” on what he says. How many, as James 1:26 states, are totally “deceived” about the quality of their Christianity?

Slander means you use information to prove your point or to support your position in a matter. Even if you are correct, it’s still slander when the cross has not been allowed to do its work. It’s gossip when you talk about someone but have not gone to them first before talking to others. It’s a slur when you witness something but change just enough of the story to fit your own needs. It’s utter sin and folly when we seek to avoid the sin in our own lives by pointing out a sin we see in another’s life.

Any discussion about others is sin when you haven’t surrendered self to the Lord to be crucified to the Lord. It is sin to not hate your own life and deny yourself. Those who do not hate their own lives seek to puff themselves up by slurring, ever so slightly, the character of others. Without death to self and hating your own life, your offer to help others only ends in their destruction. And God will call you to account for their lives.



A POSITIVE FRUIT

Jesus, the man of pure godly love, was referred to as Beelzebub. People considered Jesus demonic, a cult leader, and a man with sinister motives who used manipulative powers to win crowds over.¹ This same slander will be said about those who hate their lives enough to fall in love with Jesus. This promise, Jesus states, should cause us to leap for joy.² Indeed, do not be afraid of their slander, for their secret motives and deceived hearts will be revealed before the whole universe one day. God will make right every wrong slander, gossip and even the slightest slur. God will make your righteousness shine like the noonday sun very soon. So fear not when men slander you, rather rejoice and join with those who are suffering the same thing for Jesus.³ It is a glorious thing to be slandered if you are following Jesus on the narrow road with your cross. For such is the way the worldly repay the love of Christ in true Christians.⁴

It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.” (Matthew 10:25–27)

Before we consider the sin of slander, let us consider again that those who are obedient to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit will face the same trials He did. For persecution and slander to start, you don’t even actually have to live a godly life—you receive it when you really just “want” to be like Jesus. All you have to do is just “want” to be like Jesus without actually even doing it yet.

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:12–13)

If you are going to be obedient to Jesus in *all things*, expect to be slandered and talked about. As 2 Timothy 3:12–13 tells us, we “will be persecuted,” talked about, slandered, and maligned, while others who claim to be Christians are deceived about the truth and go from “bad to worse.” While all this persecution occurs, “evil men” who are “impostors” in Christ will be “deceived” about what constitutes true Christianity and set out to deceive others. The deception occurs because they think they possess the truth while in reality they slander the truth and those who worship God in truth and Spirit. This publication shows you how to guard yourself so that you are not taken in by them. For God uses evil men to sift His church, to keep it clean from those who refuse to honestly hear His voice by way of the crucified life.

Notice the word “obedient.” Most churches deserve what is said about them because they practice foolishness. To claim innocence before God and man when someone talks about you, it must be a false accusation. Only persecution that arises out of your obedience to Scripture, as the Holy Spirit leads, can be considered persecution because of God. After all, every religion experiences persecution and has its defectors. Every group persecutes the other, Democrat against Republican, Pro-life against Pro-abortion, gun control against the NRA, and so on. Persecution

means nothing in and of itself. Look at the Scripture below and see that it was only when Paul preached and lived obedience that they wanted to kill him.

First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and *prove* their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. (Acts 26:20–21, emphasis added)

Preach and live obedience by the Holy Spirit and many will try to “seize” you. Preach what is preached today, live what is lived in the church today and your persecution is nothing more than one man’s opinion against another. It is merely Sadducee against Pharisee. When others gossip about a partying, doctrinally sloppy, self-willed church, that is not godly persecution. That said, let us press on to examine the sin of slander, gossip and slurs.

SLURS

Let us take a look at the seriousness of the lesser that we might see the complete wickedness of the greater. For to cast the slightest “slur” against someone keeps you from being permitted to live on God’s holy hill. We must be sure before we speak that we declared the truth by the authority and power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, unless we “despise(s) a vile man” we will be taken in by their slander and lose our place in the book of life.

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, (Psalms 15:1–4)

Our words count. That is why verse 4 says only those who keep their word, even when it “hurts,” may live with God on His holy hill. God made the universe with His word, and we are of God’s image, so our words carry power. We have the power to bring individuals closer to God and the power to harm them.

To merely cast the slightest “slur” on someone else keeps us from living with God. When we cannot tell the truth about a person or situation, it shows how much of the self-life still exists in us. But to intentionally or accidentally cast even the smallest slur on someone else’s character calls for the deepest repentance on our part. This doesn’t mean we neglect to reveal the wickedness of others, for verse 4 commands us to despise a “vile man.” It does mean if we speak of his vileness, we had better be dead to self and led of the Holy Spirit! We must be sure to make every attempt in love to protect that person—for love “always protects” (1 Cor. 13:7). For whenever you open your mouth to “help” someone, your soul is at stake as well as theirs.

Yet how easily we slur and curse others. We mouth off our quick, self-righteous judgments about how “strange,” “stubborn” or “sinister” another person seems to us. We, in our own wisdom and power, voice our opinions about others and their ministry offering the smallest of criticism. We lift ourselves up so high we often say, “Oh, I like their ministry but don’t agree with everything.” We never think there may be something wrong with our own heart that keeps

us from agreeing and being obedient to Scripture about unity. Can you imagine someone saying of Paul, “Well, I like him but don’t agree with everything he does?” How quick we are to become a part of the noisy crowd of slanderers and curse others while we sing the praises of God.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. (James 3:9–10)

If we speak of another’s wrong and benefit ourselves in some way, we are equal to demons. Beware of the slightest turning of the facts when you speak about someone else or a church. You had better be sure the Holy Spirit is giving you the words and that self is dead, or you will no doubt “cast” a shadow on someone else and sin grievously. To speak negatively, or for that matter positively, about another person requires the utmost of fear and trembling, death to self, the Holy Spirit and God’s timing. Such things do not come easily or cheaply.

AN EXAMPLE

Joseph, who was to wed Mary had a false accusation about her. In fact, he was preparing himself to act on this accusation. No doubt he had prayed about it, sought the Scriptures and felt no sense of wrong about divorcing or “putting away” Mary. Indeed, Joseph had the facts to prove he was correct—Mary was pregnant. God even let Joseph “consider this” fact and conclude that she sinned. This is one reason why Jesus said never to judge by “mere appearances.”

As you read this ask yourself, “How many things does God allow me to think I am correct about, when I’m really dead wrong?” To the degree you can be honest answering that question, reveals how clearly you really see others. It reveals how you slur others or are taken in by false witnesses.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18–20)

So you have the facts about a church, ministry or person do you? You researched it well. In fact, you belonged to the group. Your mind is made up on the matter because you know the truth.

Beware of your facts, for they are *your* judgments and will always be sinful judgments. Just as Joseph used his brain power to conclude the matter about Mary, and by all outward appearances he was correct, so you should never conclude anything by your own wisdom. Most use their own wisdom to find a “comfortable” church. Never mind the fact that crucifixion is not comfortable. Those who look for a comfortable church will never find the church God wants for them.

For example, if you researched Paul’s ministry with this attitude, you never would have joined him. In fact, the more information you gathered about Paul’s ministry, the more confused

you would have become about him. For as Paul himself declares, his ministry was considered an “impostor,” though he was “genuine” in the Lord. Researching Paul’s ministry would have been futile, because of all the conflicting testimony about him.

through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; (2 Corinthians 6:8)

Only by ignoring your wisdom and seeking God’s wisdom can you come to a true conclusion. For in the flesh, you would have concluded that Paul’s ministry was false and he was a troublesome person.⁵ This is why every Christian must move beyond gossip and slander to hear from God who is right. Any church truly of God will be slandered and talked about. Of course not every church that is slandered is of God, but every true church of God will be slandered.

God stopped Joseph from sinning. Joseph was righteous enough that God could get through to him. Joseph’s righteousness and pure heart enabled him to hear God speak the truth. Contrast this with another man who was after the truth. His name was Pilate and he wanted to know the truth about Jesus. Although Pilate’s wife had a dream about the truth, Pilate did not respond and handed Jesus over to be crucified. Pilate listened to the false witnesses against Jesus and lost his soul. Could God be trying to get through to you, but because you love yourself, you refuse to respond? Do you love the noisy self-righteous crowd of sinning church-goers more than the truth that stands humbly before you?

Joseph, again a righteous man who could hear God’s voice, possessed wisdom no one else in town could understand. In the same way, certain things may appear as “fact,” but only those who keep their eyes on God will know the truth. All others will be sinners who commit the sin of slurring others. Many things have been said about Sound Doctrine. Only those who go back into the prayer closet and let God purify their hearts will know the truth.

Even if Joseph was correct about this issue, notice his attitude. He did not want to “expose her to public disgrace.” No wonder God spoke to Joseph; he was a man of godly love. How many swiftly run out to complain of their woes and concerns about another church or person, all in the name of love and concern for others? They can’t wait to go public with their thoughts. I remember being told something said about us, “They really hurt my feelings.” While that is a pathetic statement, it was nevertheless used to defile others to keep them from even considering the truth and becoming more righteous in Jesus. How little a slanderer considers that he could be the one with the attitude problem and sin.

There are times when the Holy Spirit leads us to speak publicly about things. However, if self is not crucified, and we have unresolved sin in our lives, we cannot speak the truth. No one can see clearly another’s sin without removing the plank from their own eye. How to publicly declare sin is not the purpose of this publication, for it requires nights in prayer to know how to publicly deal with sin according to God’s will and love. Rather, this deals with those who want to puff themselves up by running other people down. This publication exposes those who have sin to hide and so persecute those born of the Spirit. For there are always two kinds of individuals laying claim to the name, *Christian*. One is a religious man born in the “ordinary way” of church dogma, programs and self-will, the other is born from above. Though claiming to be a Christian, the person of this world persecutes the one born of the Spirit. These people, though



religious, slur the character of those born in the Spirit. It was the same in Jesus' day, and it should be the same in your life, if you are born of the Spirit. For all who carry their cross unto death to self will be "persecuted" by those born in the "ordinary" Christian manner. It was the same then and "it is the same now."

At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. (Galatians 4:29)

CAIN

Those who love God will be dogged by those who are only religious. The religious feel threatened by those who worship God in truth and spirit, so they reach out to strike. This battle is as old as the creation of man. Cain killed Abel—the unspiritual man against the man filled with the Holy Spirit. To the degree you are dead to self, hate your own life and live for Christ, is the degree you will love others who are of the same spirit. But how many people mirror Cain? They cannot stand the righteous lives of those in Christ.

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. (1 John 3:11–12)

Whom do you love? Do you only tolerate the righteous? Do you despise the righteous whose "actions" are holy, and love the mere talkers in the church? Those of you who claim to be Christians should note well the above warning. This warning is written to Christians, because those who follow Cain's way will seek to destroy you. It is written because those who are not doing so well in the Lord seek to bring down those who are doing well. These wicked ones do not share Paul's spirit that could rejoice when he was doing poorly in the Lord, while others were strong in the Lord.⁶ One must truly love God alone to rejoice in weakness while others are strong in God. The death to self required for this is so strong that most will not permit God to work it in them. Instead, they slur the righteousness of others to sooth their bruised consciences. In the next passage you will see an extreme case where this happened. But often the slurs and bitterness in a church start with small bites here and there against someone, especially leadership.

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. (Acts 14:1–2)

Many people have come close to associating with Sound Doctrine; however, others poisoned their minds. Something in their flesh allowed these sinister folks to work their deadly venom. Poisoned minds are paralyzed toward God's Holy Spirit. The only voice they can hear is their own and each other's. These fools delight only in airing their own opinions and hiding their sins. Their own self-righteousness is all that matters, and they strike out to protect it.

POISONED MINDS

Poisoned minds cannot be reasoned with because no matter what a person does, no matter how righteous the actions, they will always be viewed as something wicked. These kinds of minds reflect Satan's mind. For Satan views everything God does as wicked. Satan really believes God is wicked and seeks to spread the "truth" about God. Many people believe that a certain group is wicked in the same way Satan believes God is wicked. For them, like Satan, it is reality and truth. Some have even gone so far as to believe the lies they started and could pass a lie detector test. For you see, the more you repeat a lie the harder your heart becomes until you can't discern the truth anymore. This is why the Psalm says that God loves a man who speaks the truth "from his heart" by way of a "blameless life."

The next passage shows us how the poisoning of the mind works. In verse 18 Paul demonstrates by his life his Christ-like humility. Then in verse 19 some individuals poison the minds of those listening to Paul's message. As you read the passage, ask yourself, what aspect of self allowed these men to inject their poison into the crowd? What caused them not to be protected from the serpent's poison? Ask yourself this because you need to see what areas of your flesh are vulnerable to those who cast slurs.

Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. (Acts 14:18–19)

Do you see the answer? What sin allowed the Jews from Antioch to inject their poison? The answer: they didn't like the humility and loss of self that the cross brings in a man's life. They wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul because this would help them keep their proper self-esteem, life, family, money, fun, doctrine and religion. Paul demonstrated humility and death to self in his speech, but the crowd didn't want to hear that message. For it was with "difficulty" that Paul kept them from this sin. What difficult sin(s) make you easy prey for those who spread slurs and inject poison concerning the gospel truth? Or do you inject yourself with poison so that you don't have to fellowship with those walking the narrow road? Does something in your spirit tell you that someone is wrong when they may really be very much of God? Or when you left a certain group, did you feel a sigh of "relief" because you left the cross behind? Let us all be careful not to run from the cross that demands all.

Again, Paul's speech wasn't the message they wanted to hear. It is the same in the church today. In fact, much more so for now the tree is dry.⁷ The church preaches about the cross, mercy, forgiveness of sins, humility, revival and denying self, but it is a cross that has been emptied of its power. Today a cross is preached with human fanfare and human wisdom. People's obedience in the church is based on man's zeal, words, story-telling, preaching and motivational skills. Indeed, revival is marketed and called for with all the skill of an advertising executive. It is the false revival that God promised would take place.

Begin to preach and live the cross and you will experience slander first hand. The real question is, are you dead enough to self to be dead to the attack of Satan and his friends? Are you a



man of truth? Consider who influences you, because the people you fellowship with reflects the truth or lie you live.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

Indeed, a false witness cannot stand the fact that the righteous fellowship with Jesus in the truth, and so, with great effort, seek to divide those relationships. Do you fellowship with those persecuted and slandered or are you taken captive by false witnesses?⁸

A FALSE WITNESS

The key word here is “witness.” They saw it. They were there. They had first-hand experience with the person in question. They were witnesses, so we believe them.

A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies. (Proverbs 12:17)

So simple a statement, so true, but so few believe it and often listen to the false witness. Let us begin to be crucified to self, and we will discover most men are false witnesses and cannot be relied upon.⁹

We listen to the false witness because we get something for self out of the deal, just as Eve got something from the serpent. What aspect of self is fed when you listen to a false witness? Is it self-righteousness in a cause or work? Could it be self-justification from the conviction by the Holy Spirit? Do you want their insight because it gives you an excuse not to suffer persecution for Christ? Could it be that not taking their sinister advice would be too upsetting to your comfortable Christian walk? In other words, it is easier to go along with wicked men than to stand against them. For it is always easier on self to not get involved than to stand up against a false witness. How many Christian men and women are “polluted wells” not because of what they do, but because of what they do not do. They do not resist the false witness.

Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked. (Proverbs 25:26)

Instead of giving way to the wicked why not “join with” those who are suffering slander and persecution because of the cross of Christ?¹⁰

TWO SIDES

So many think there are two sides to every story. There is only one side to any story—God’s side. Consider Job for a brief moment. God pounded Job with question after question. God made Job feel like dust. At the end of this inquisition by God, Job says, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5–6).

Job said many wrong things about God, and saw himself correctly, as worthless and in need of much correction. No doubt Job’s friends thought they were right about Job. No doubt they were singing “hallelujah” in their hearts because God had proven them correct. In fact, the

evidence supported the side of Job's friends. After all, they were right. But only God knows the full truth of a situation and He now sets out to deal with them. Don't wait until it is too late for God to set out to deal with you.

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. (Job 42:7-9)

How can a man like Job be that wrong and still be right? Easy, the Lord says so. Job may have been wrong, had faults, wavered, struggled, slipped, sinned and made mistakes, but compared to his friends' sins, he had no faults at all. Only when we see our faults and sins clearly, will we see how others can be more righteous than ourselves, even when they have weaknesses.¹¹

Only those who listen to God know that kind of truth in any matter. Now let us look at the word "witness."

Very often someone will say, "But I was in that church. I saw things firsthand." Many show up at our church talking bad about the church they just left. They boast that they were witnesses who speak the truth. However, we know there is such a thing as a "false witness" and they must be thoroughly tested and dealt with! Some people see things wrong in everyone and everything, and they must be rebuked. We all have sins that cause us to get things wrong, and we must let God deal with these sins if our daily interactions with others are to be truthful.

Some people alter, slur, slander and gossip about the character of others because they have sin to hide. Not to mention that we are all natural born liars, and it is rare to see a man who can tell the truth in the Lord.

Are you running from sin and flesh that you haven't let God deal with? If so, you are a prime target for a false witness or may even be a false witness yourself and not even know it. You may even dislike a ministry, not because they are wrong, but because you do not want to surrender something to the Lord. Haven't you ever noticed that when someone doesn't like some aspect of Scripture that challenges their righteousness, they always attack the person who truly lives Scripture? They never deal with their own sin but seek to find personal fault with a church or person. John the Baptist experienced this first hand. The Jews and John's disciples were debating "ceremonial washing," but the individuals who challenged John didn't address that issue. Instead they attacked his ministry and credibility with God. So be very careful next time you speak against a church or person. God may be trying to bless you by convicting you of sin, but you keep running from Him.

An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." (John 3:25-26)



SATAN AND JUDAS

Consider that Satan witnessed God's glory. You have never seen God's glory, so does Satan have a point about God? Satan did worship in heaven and maybe God has something to hide. Satan had first-hand experience and knows things about God you know nothing about. Are you prepared to trust Satan? If not, then why do you trust man?¹²

Judas ministered with Jesus for over three years. He even ate the last dinner with Jesus. He served Jesus for years, casting out demons, preaching the good news and staying with Jesus almost unto the cross. Maybe Judas saw something we didn't. Too bad Judas killed himself because now we will never know his viewpoint. In fact, Judas probably killed himself from that false guilt Jesus put on him. Maybe you would like to talk to him to get his viewpoint on the issues. Since Satan and Judas are witnesses, should we listen to their viewpoint? Should we tolerate them? You, of course, say, "No." Then why tolerate and listen to people who gossip, slander and slur others?

We think that we don't listen to false witnesses. Of course not, a false witness doesn't seem like a false witness if he tells us what our religious flesh wants to hear. If we want to hear it, it becomes the truth to us. Only those who get into the prayer closet, close the door, and allow God to crucify them, shutting out the clamor of all the talk, have a chance of ever knowing the real truth. For the rebellious are a noisy crowd who spread their altered truths everywhere.

Understand clearly that the only way to know the truth about someone, a ministry or event, is to love God. This love must come from a crucified life and hating of your own life.¹³ We fail to understand the truth because we hold onto our sins as we protest that we belong to God. Consider the Scripture below. Jesus tells them they need to repent and come to God. The crowd protests that they belong to God and have the truth. Jesus then tells them the truth. They cannot understand the truth because their hearts are hard. Think about it; these are religious, church going, promise claiming people who are dead in their sins.

You are doing the things your own father does. "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!" (John 8:41-45)

The trouble is, a false witness plays to the sin and self in people's character to win friends and influence people. The false witness looks for some weakness of self and plays to it. They use our sin to plant seeds of lies, slander and bitter roots. The false witness tries to find out what your flesh wants to hear. That way you can keep your sin or be trapped in their sin with them. When you refuse to let the cross do its painful work, you are vulnerable. Guard yourself well.



BITTER ROOTS

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15)

To keep this “bitter root” from growing underground, unseen, undetected until it’s too late takes a “see to it” attitude by every church member and Christian. Blessed is the church that has leadership that can pull up the roots of those who slur before they start to grow their ugly fruit. Blessed is the church who has leadership willing to stand up against those who bring in their poison, because much trouble awaits a church that is blind to this. In fact, many churches are dead even now in a false unity, empty love and joy because they have poisoned others to the truth of the crucified life.

A bitter root can often, though not always, be discerned by its effect and intentions. That is, does the talk build someone up in righteousness, Scripture, obedience, holiness, submission and death to self or does it win an argument, promote an opinion, justify the talker or align them to a different person? Of course, a “false witness is deceitful.” He only speaks of being concerned for others, of loving them and wanting to free them. But just as Jesus saw through them, those who are dead to self and alive in Christ have His eyes to see through them.

In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:28)

Do you want to be protected and delivered from false witnesses and those who cast slurs on others? If so, be crucified to your flesh. All the logic applied to a situation will do you no good.

DEALING WITH A FALSE WITNESS

There is only one way to deal with a false witness and escape untouched by their poison. Repeat—only one way! That way is found in Proverbs 21:28,

A false witness will perish, and whoever listens to him will be destroyed forever.

This is a salvation issue, by the way. For those who fall victim to a false witness will be “destroyed forever.” The reason is simple. The person who likes a false witness has no desire in their soul for the God of truth and righteousness. It is always amazing to watch those who believe false witnesses. While their lives and the witness’ are falling apart, trapped in sin, both think they can still discern the truth. Their lives are filled with sexual immorality, suicide, impurity, nervous breakdowns, self-indulgence, cursing, self-righteousness, worship of family (idolatry), pride, and not despising money, yet they boast that they love the truth and know the truth about others. No wonder God says in Psalms that He “hates” them, for only those whose “walk is blameless” can speak and see the truth in a situation.

To even “listen” to a false witness will cause you to be “destroyed forever.” You don’t even have to be involved in the conversation. To be destroyed, you only have to stand there and “listen.” That’s it, it’s that easy to be damned to hell forever. Just have lunch with a false witness and you will never have supper with Jesus in heaven. Just talk on the phone about the weather



with a false witness and you will soon never hear the voice of the Holy Spirit again. This is one major battle we are discussing. For whoever is open to the lies of a false witness cannot accept the truth of Scripture.

Our first battle is that we love gossip and it is sweet to us, so we run to it naturally.¹⁴ Next, our flesh finds the message of Jesus to be too tough, and we want a way down off the cross at times. At such times we are very vulnerable to the crowd that bids us to “save ourselves” from the message of the cross. For you see, this crowd too preaches a salvation message, they too promise forgiveness of sins, but they refuse the cross of Jesus that puts all of self to death. Watch yourself at these times when the cross bears down hard on your life, because the grumblers, fault-finders and slanderers of the gospel will come after you. Satan will make sure you hear their cry to come down off the cross—it is a given in the Christian life.

The solution to this major problem is hearing God tell us they are false witnesses before we get around them. Just as Jesus knew in his heart what individuals were before he talked to them, so must we.

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? (Mark 2:8)

Jesus knew not to talk to Herod, but to converse with Pilate. Jesus knew what the Pharisees were about, but still talked at night to Nicodemous, a Pharisee. We cannot be simple ones who love our simple ways and get caught in their wicked net. We must be filled with the wisdom of heaven to not be taken in by a false witness. Only when we have grown up in the Lord, by listening to teachers who know about the crucified life, will we no longer be “tossed back and forth” by men in their “deceitful scheming.” Make no mistake about it, a false witness deceives people about their goal. You cannot spot one by looking on the outside or by how lovingly they talk about the issue. You must have wisdom that comes down from heaven. Like Peter you must be able to see the heart of sinners.¹⁵

The dangers are many. Not only could our flesh tell us they are a good witness when they are not, but we could be like Job’s friends and think we are right with God when we are dead wrong. It may be the voice of our flesh that just doesn’t like the message of the gospel coming against us. Remember, a slanderer always appeals to our nobility, while a true friend of God faithfully wounds us.¹⁶ So, it is easy to confuse the true friend as being from Satan.

DEALING WITH A FALSE WITNESS

There are three steps to dealing with a false witness apart from hating your own life. One, hear from God that they are a false witness. Two, rebuke them. Three, never ever talk to them again.

1. Hear from God that they are false witnesses. Such wisdom only is given to those who “cry out” for it by way of a crucified life.

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from *men whose words are perverse*, (Proverbs 2:10–12 emphasis added)

2. Rebuke the false witness in no uncertain terms. As you rebuke, put your eyes on the “faithful in the land” and only fellowship with those whose walk is “blameless”.

Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure. My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence. Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the Lord. (Psalms 101:5–8)

3. Never talk to a false witness again. The reason is simple. They use “smooth talk” and “flattery” to win individuals over and your support of them only gives credibility to their lies. Fortunately they only “deceive” those whose “minds” are “naive” concerning the sinfulness of man and the glory of the cross.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. (Romans 16:17–18)

Remember a false witness always has sin they run from and seek to hide. They refuse to “walk in the Light” and thus live a lie.¹⁷

HOW TO SPOT

Look to yourself first if you don’t want to be taken in by a false witness, bitter root or even a slur. For only as we get the plank out of our eyes will we see clearly enough to know the truth of a situation.¹⁸

HAVE YOU EVER:

- Changed a story to make yourself look better, whether by mistake or on purpose?¹⁹
- Been irritated with someone and not confessed your irritation to them?²⁰
- Talked about those God is disciplining?²¹
- Had a bad attitude about someone and didn’t confess to them?²²
- Been correct on an issue and didn’t have permission from the Holy Spirit to speak about it, but talked anyway?²³
- Hated a message that was brought to you and didn’t like the way it was done?²⁴
- Thought a person couldn’t be that good? Or that a ministry sounded too good to be true? Ever tried to hunt down and prove that someone was sinful?²⁵
- Loved someone, but were poisoned by others to hate them?²⁶
- Been sure that you were right about a conversation, but refused to see if there is something in your flesh that caused you to hear it wrong?²⁷
- Seen something you didn’t understand and blamed the leadership?²⁸
- Traveled from person to person, or place to place to make sure everyone understood your point of view?²⁹



- Flat out lied about someone?³⁰
- Cursed someone or hoped for evil to take hold of them?³¹
- Caused division in a church because your sin was exposed?³²
- Had casual conversations, attitudes or rebellion that lead to a bitter root growing in a church? Ever been upset with someone and thought of them as a “fool”?³³
- Left a group because you were in your flesh?³⁴

HOW TO REPENT

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, you need to repent. But how should someone repent of such sins? In order to repent the following must be there.

1. Come fully into the Light, before God and man with all that you have done.³⁵
2. Do not hold onto any thought that you are right on some point.³⁶
3. If your correctness led to sin because of your attitude, then you are 100% guilty.³⁷
4. As the Lord leads, you must speak to those you defiled, confessing your sin. Be careful you are not taken back in again by those who continue to hold onto their sin.³⁸
5. You must never, ever speak to the person who started the bitter root again. If they need to be brought to repentance let someone else who is stronger in the Lord do it. Remember, you were taken in by them once.³⁹
6. You must never associate with or talk to those who continue in the slander, slurs or gossip.⁴⁰
7. In fact, you cannot even eat lunch with them ever again.⁴¹
8. Prepare yourself to join with those who are of God and suffer the same kind of slander you helped to spread.
9. Repay the truth four times the amount you lied. Never tire of telling others how wrong you were and the real truth. Go out of your way to make things right. Just as slander is a public sin so is the repentance process. Everyone must know you sinned and are repenting. You must “stand up” so that everyone knows you are guilty and that God is forgiving you. You will now do four times the good as the harm you did.⁴²
10. Ask God to show you daily how you believe and spread half-truths. Plead with God that your “yes” will be “yes” and your “no” be “no.” Because anything other than this comes from the “evil one.”⁴³
11. Pray hard for the Holy Spirit to control your tongue and to reveal how you slur individuals in “small” ways. Ask God to show you how often you curse individuals by saying they are “stupid,” “ugly,” “weird” or whatever personality things you don’t like.⁴⁴
12. Finally, and most importantly, ask God to show you what about your flesh caused you to be taken in by these sins. Plead with God to crucify and put to death all areas of your flesh where you are vulnerable to the sin of slurring. Ask God to send you His Light so you can see what makes you stumble. Otherwise, Satan will come back to take you captive permanently.

YOUR AMBITION SHOULD BE:

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 1:9)

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business . . . (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

DON'T BE DECEIVED

It is critical for you to understand that if you committed any of these sins, your relationship with God is on hold until you repent. Indeed, your salvation and relationship with God has been on hold from the day you were a part of those sins. Remember, those who even “listen” to a “false witness” will be “destroyed forever.”

God has not been answering your prayers and guiding your life. You have been on your own doing your own religious or pagan thing. It doesn't matter how much you speak in tongues, or what doors you think God opened for you, for the truth is God has been opposing you until you make this sin right. If you do not see this as true, you are still trapped in your sin and do not understand anything about the Truth. Just read how God says you will be put in prison for being angry and slurring your brother.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Matthew 5:21–26)

Indeed, you will never escape if you don't repent today.

BITTER ROOT

Don't let the sun go down on your anger concerning anyone.⁴⁵ Whenever you have a bitter root starting, no matter how small, get yourself humbled and broken completely before the Lord. Whether it be anger, frustration, being a little upset, or whatever you want to call the attitude, repent now. If you sleep on it you give Satan a foothold into your life and into the church. Nothing destroys the spiritual life quicker than leaving the smallest of attitudes unrepented.

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15)



Beware of repenting in such a way as to point out the faults of others. If you are the least bit upset, you are 100% wrong.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:25–27)

Pray for leadership that will “see to it” that no bitter root grows up. I have seen firsthand the destruction caused by men who refuse to take the leadership required to love and protect the Body. Deal with the person who has a bitter root powerfully and quickly. If the person with the smallest bitter attitude will not confess their sin, get rid of them as quickly as possible.⁴⁶ Put them outside the camp until they repent, or disfellowship them totally.⁴⁷ To know how fast the Holy Spirit wants you to deal with these sins, read through the book of Exodus and Numbers. Notice as you read Scripture how quickly God deals with attitude problems and their destructiveness. I have sinned in the past by not dealing with them quickly enough and can tell you the results are not pleasant ones for a church. Don’t commit the same sin I did.

As you read Scripture note how often a general attitude of slurring and grumbling comes back on the leadership as God presses the cross into their lives. It may have started with the members slurring each other or grumbling towards the Lord, but if not stopped will wind up focusing in on leadership. Expose someone who has an attitude quickly so that the sin does not grow, “causing trouble” and “defiling many.” For such sins as these cause some individuals to “miss the grace of God.” Don’t let it be you who are responsible for individuals who miss the “grace of God.”

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15)

Now that you know these things, we look forward to fellowshiping with you in the Light. We write these things “so that”...

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

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ENDNOTES

1. John 7:49
2. Luke 6:23
3. Psalm 37:6–7, 1 Peter 5:9, 2 Timothy 1:8
4. John 7:7, Psalm 109:5
5. Acts 24:5
6. 2 Corinthians 13:9
7. Luke 23:31
8. 1 Thessalonians 3:5–8, Note the measurement of true faith.
9. Romans 3:13
10. 2 Timothy 1:8
11. Philippians 2:3
12. John 2:24
13. John 12:25, Luke 14:25–35
14. Proverbs 18:8
15. Acts 5:3, 8:23
16. Proverbs 27:6
17. 1 John 1:6–7
18. Matthew 7:5
19. Matthew 12:34
20. Ephesians 4:3
21. Psalm 69:26
22. James 5:16
23. John 8:28
24. Luke 7:32
25. Matthew 15:19, Zechariah 7:10
26. 2 Peter 3:16–17, 1 Thessalonians 3:6–8
27. Proverbs 14:6–8
28. 2 Corinthians 1:14
29. Acts 14:19
30. John 8:44
31. Proverbs 26:2
32. 3 John 1:9–10
33. Matthew 5:22
34. Ephesians 4:3, James 5:9
35. 1 John 1:7
36. Job 42:7
37. Hebrews 12:15
38. Galatians 6:1
39. Galatians 6:1
40. 2 Timothy 3:1–5
41. 1 Corinthians 5:11
42. 2 Timothy 1:8, Acts 9:16
43. Luke 19:8
44. Matthew 5:37, James 5:12
45. Ephesians 4:26–27
46. Numbers 12:1–15
47. Ephesians 5:1–7