

*James Crawford – “God Heals Our Reputation”
“The Justice of God Series” Pt 6*

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6-20-21

Our Church Vision Is to Heal Your Heart & Reputation

So many people are victims of cyber bullying, slander and reputation abuse. In this message we want you to learn how to protect and defend yourself.

In extreme cases you will need to legally protect yourself or your organization. How does a person get healed of this? There are friends who will heal you, laws that protect you and ultimately God has a plan to restore you. God loves you and he does not want to be victimized any longer.

In this message we want you to learn how to effectively heal and protect yourself and how to talk about your pain to people who believe in you. Look at the zeal of God who longs to work on your behalf. This is justice.

Isaiah 54:7

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and **every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt**

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condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me,” saith the Lord.

God hates slander and calls it evil. This devaluing a person’s name is at the heart of what makes slander evil. The Bible tells us, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold” (Proverbs 22:1).

In this context, a good name represents a person’s character, which is the most valuable thing about their identity. A good name is who we are in the minds of others. And since relationships trade in the currency of trust, a reputation is a very precious asset.

So whenever we handle a person’s name — who they are in the minds of others — we are stewarding a treasure that belongs to them. If we damage a person’s reputation unjustly, we are stealing their good name; we are vandalizing their character.

This causes very real, sometimes long-lasting damage to people, because restoring a devalued name is very difficult. Who knows what love, joy, counsel, comfort, and opportunities we take from people if we care for their name carelessly?

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God hates slander.

These things the Lord hates...a false witness *who* speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. (Proverbs 6:16, 19).

It is evil. That’s why Paul promises God’s wrath will reach evil people who slander.

The Bible says...

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and...30 slanderers... (Romans 1:18,30)

This is why James calls it demonic behavior.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

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11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, **demonic**. (James 3:8–15).

Slander occurs whenever someone says something untrue about someone else that results, intentionally or unintentionally, in damaging that someone else’s reputation. And when it occurs, it becomes a divisive, discouraging, and confusing weight that often affects numerous people — sometimes many, many people.

Because of its poisonous power, it is one of the Satan’s chief strategies to divide relationships and deter and derail the mission of the church. We must be on our guard against this closely clinging sin and frequently lay it aside (Hebrews 12:1).

The Subtlety of Slander

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Sometimes saying something untrue and damaging about someone is bold and blunt. But often slander is insidiously subtle, especially since we have heard slander all our lives in almost every context and grown accustomed to it. This means we must heighten our sensitivity to it and lower our tolerance of it.

Slander can wear a hundred masks. I’ll mention a few common ones.

Sometimes we pass along slanderous information that seems almost like harmless hearsay, yet the effect it has on our listeners is to leave them with an unfairly negative perception of another. Sometimes we embellish with information or tone a negative report about someone in order to enhance our listener’s perception of ourselves.

Sometimes we have a very real concern about someone, but we share it with someone who cannot benefit from or help with the concern. We do this because we simply want our listeners to think worse of a particular person.

Or if we share a concern with an appropriate person, we can sometimes indulge our speculations or presumptions, mixing them almost imperceptibly with facts for our listeners, distorting the concern in order to sway an outcome in a direction we desire.

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The net effect of all forms of slander is to unjustly devalue another person’s reputation.

Slander Is Stealing

This devaluing is at the heart of what makes slander evil. The Bible tells us, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold” (Proverbs 22:1).

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God knows. And he hates it. God hates when we speak evil of his name.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

He also hates when we speak evil of others.

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. (Titus 3:1-2).

He will hold us accountable for every careless word we speak.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

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37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:33-36).

This is great incentive for us to “put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander” (1 Peter 2:1).

Fight Slander First in Yourself

The foremost slanderer we must silence is the one inside us. Full of malignant pride, our sin natures are not interested in truth, but in self-glory. So they seek to manipulate others through slander (or flattery) for our own selfish benefit.

Sin (and therefore our demonic harassers) seizes on a concern for or an offense we’ve received from another and seeks to distort it into thinking evil of that person.

Thinking evil of another is assigning imagined or exaggerated negative qualities to them that don’t exist. Often this begins as private fantasies where we nurture our concerns or offense by imagining ourselves justified in our righteousness and others condemned in their evil.

But in truth, all we’re doing is passing our own evil thoughts on to

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imaginings disguised as other people. That’s our sin nature’s slanderer talking. We are fools to listen to it.

And when our slander spills out from ourselves to others — and it will if we don’t catch it soon enough — it is both selfishly indulgent and cowardly.

Slander is indulgent because often what we really seek is the self-flattery buzz of our listener approving and admiring us more than the one we are slandering. We are robbing another’s reputation to get the drug of self-flattery.

Slanderers Are Cowards

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.

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We must grow ruthless in ignoring and silencing our slandering sin natures.

Helping Each Other Fight Slander

When someone slanders another to us, we must remember that we are not mainly fighting flesh and blood, but spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan knows that slander deadens and splits churches, poisons friendships, and fractures families. This does not mean we do not seek civil action or meet this head on with bold confrontation. We will address this later.

But Satan knows slander quenches the Holy Spirit, kills love, short-circuits spiritual renewal, undermines trust, and sucks the courage out of the saints. So our goal, particularly in the context of the church, is to help each other shed demonic weights and avoid satanic stumbling blocks.

So how do we do this? The best way is to become people who are not safe to slander around. We must ask each other questions like:

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Have you shared your concern with this person directly? I’d be willing to go with you to talk to him. Will you do that?

Just to be clear, is this information I should know? Do you want me to help you pursue reconciliation?

Are you doing everything you possibly can to put away “all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander?” (Ephesians 4:31)

How can I help you guard this person’s reputation like a treasure?
(Proverbs 22:1)

In other words, friends don’t let friends slander. Friends don’t let friends act like God-haters (Romans 1:30). The more we love people, the more we hate slander, because a slanderer hates his victims (Proverbs 26:28).

Let us remember that we are stewards of the treasure of each other’s good names. Let us resolve to avoid sharing information that is unnecessarily damaging to another person’s reputation and to repent to everyone affected if we do.

Let us seek to silence the sin nature slanderer within and graciously give and receive others’ help when one of us slips, perhaps unaware,

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into slander. Let us do damage to Satan’s forces by speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Let us lay aside the destructive sin-weight of slander.

When Do We Take Action?

There are times when a person who has been abused by slander must take action. Many times people are intimidated and feel they are doing something wrong if they do. Sometimes Christians are the worst at this.

We think we should play the martyr and let people drag our name through the mud. But God wants to heal your reputation and here are some steps to take.

- 1 – Do not walk through this alone
- 2- Tell your nurturing friends about your pain
- 3- Attempt to entreat the abuser
- 4- Do not respond emotionally
- 5- Be Wise and harmless
- 6- Seek legal counsel
- 7- Issue a letter of cease and desist

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- 8- When you are physically threatened, file charges
- 9- Talk to our church leadership team right away

In an age of social media, that lacks the functional information-spreading restraints of past eras, let us be all the more slow to post (“slow to speak” — James 1:19) analysis, speculation, and commentary on information about another person or group, even if it has become public in our slander-saturated culture, that might eventually prove slanderous.

All the serious biblical warnings about slander still apply, which should make us all, especially those of us with “platforms,” tremble.

Footnote: (In parts of this message I used an amazing article from Desiring God. See the full article here.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lay-aside-the-weight-of-slander>)