

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXIX. The Vast Value Of God's Word
I. Handling Slander
(Psalm 119:65-72 [Teth])

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The ninth Commandment states, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor” (Exodus 10:16), but today, slander is practically systemic in society, and one might not know that such a prohibition even existed:

(1) Slander occurs in our national politics, “Democrats spent billions of dollars warning American voters that Donald Trump posed an imminent threat to democracy, that his economic policies would benefit only his wealthy friends, that he was literally a fascist. In the end . . . it didn’t matter,” for the voters elected Mr. Trump to be their next president. (“Democrats enter Trump presidency without a plan.” (Republican-American, November 7, 2024, p. 13A) This story from the Associated Press, part of the establishment media, continued with no expressed concern that the President-elect actually is an imminent threat to democracy now that he has been elected: it added a comment by Representative Ro Khanna, a Democrat from California who said, ““There needs to be new thinking, new ideas and a new direction. And, you know, the (progressive) establishment produced a disaster.”” (Ibid.) The left’s warning that Mr. Trump was a threat to democracy was apparently political slander meant to collect more votes!

(2) Slander occurs in the realm of our government health programs: “President-elect Donald Trump says he will nominate anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services,” adding, ““For too long, Americans have been crushed by the industrial food complex and drug companies who have engaged in deception, misinformation, and disinformation when it comes to Public Health.”” (Jill Colvin, “Trump chooses anti-vaccine advocate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as health secretary,” Ibid., November 15, 2024, p. 6B) In response, Dr. Peter Lurie, president of the left-leaning Center for Science in the Public Interest and that elicits mixed messages on GMOs (mediabiasfactcheck.com/center-for-science-in-the-public-interest-scp-i-bias-and-credibility/) gave the opposite view, that ““Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is not remotely qualified for the role and should be nowhere near the science-based agencies that safeguard our nutrition, food safety, and health.”” (Ibid., Colvin)

(3) Slander occurs in the entertainment field: Andrea Peyser, a reporter for The New York Post, in her November 8, 2024, story, “But I’ll still haunt you, Martha” (p. 13) gave a response to Martha Stewart’s “new Netflix documentary . . . ‘Martha’” in which Martha had said of Ms. Peyser, ““New York Post lady was there . . . just looking so smug. She had written horrible things during the entire trial. But she is dead now, thank goodness.”” Andrea’s story started off stating, “I’m alive, [expletive]. Even if the Domestic Dominatrix thinks she’s finished me off . . . Stewart” is “an ‘ill-mannered dominatrix,’ ‘the queen of control freaks,’” a “now-ex-con,” a “Circus Marthamus,” etc.

(4) Slander occurs at the grassroots level: “An Oxford University student killed himself after becoming a victim of ‘pervasive cancel culture’ over an unproven allegation made by his ex, a UK court has heard . . . The unspecified allegation . . . resulted in (20-year-old Alexander) Rogers being ‘ostracized’ as part of a ‘pile-on’ effect, a court hearing into his death was told. Dr. Dominique Thompson, an expert who probed Rogers’ death, called the student a victim of ‘pervasive cancel culture.’ ‘It was shocking to hear that students were treating each other in this way, but I was not surprised by this pattern of behavior,’ she told the court, adding that Rogers had been described as ‘upstanding’ by those who knew him.” (Emily Crane, The New York Post, November 8, 2024, p. 31)

Need: So, we ask, “How does God direct that we respond to slander?”

- I. The psalmist faced so much slander that his true character was no longer evident to others v. 69a, 70a:**
 - A. In verse 69a KJV, the verb “forged” (“smear” ESV; “smeared” NIV) translates the Hebrew term *tapal*, “plaster over, smear, stick” (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1082; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 381).
 - B. With this context, *tapal* implies that the psalmist was figuratively so plastered over with slander by his foes that his real character had become unrecognizable to onlookers, Ibid.
 - C. The psalmist’s slanderers are described in Psalm 119:70a ESV as being figuratively “unfeeling”!
- II. However, God had allowed this mistreatment to occur to rectify the psalmist’s waywardness, v. 67, 70b:**
 - A. Prior to this slander, the psalmist admitted that he had “gone astray, erred” (*shagag*, Ibid., p. 992-993), v. 67a.
 - B. The pain of this experience had led the psalmist to correct his way, driving him to obey Scripture, v. 67b, 70b.
- III. As a result, the psalmist had come to experience God’s great blessings, Psalm 119:71, 65-66, 68, 72:**
 - A. The psalmist realized that it had been good for him to face affliction that he might learn God’s Word, v. 71.

- B. He testified that God had dealt wholesomely with him when he kept God's Word, Psalm 119:65.
- C. Indeed, the psalmist had gained so much confidence in God's goodness through the healing of His Word that he asked the Lord to teach him good judgment and knowledge from the Scriptures, Psalm 119:66.
- D. The psalmist's appreciation of God had grown in accord with God's wholesome deeds in fulfilling His Word when the psalmist had come to rely on God's promises of help during his crisis with the slander, Psa. 119:68.
- E. In the end, the psalmist had come to appreciate the truth of Scripture more than thousands of pieces of gold and silver, what corresponds to our American idiom of "more than all the money in the world," Psalm 119:72.

Lesson: *Intense slander that is so extensive that it makes one's true character no longer recognizable to onlookers is allowed of God to drive one with great motivation to obey God's Word and to teach him depths of edifying truth that he would otherwise never grasp and leave him richly blessed of the Lord. We should then handle intense slander by going to Scripture for its insight to align our lives with God's will for His blessing.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) If we observe unedifying slander, or if we face it, (a) may we utilize the pain that it produces as motivation to dig deeply into Scripture (b) first to learn greater truths (c) only to apply them for greater levels of obedience to the Lord (d) for rich divine blessings and fulfillment.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

We can use the discomfort we sense over the issues of slander we noted in our introduction as motivation to turn to Scripture for its edifying correctives, directives, and resulting divine blessing (as follows):

(1) On the slander in our national politics, (a) we know from 2 Timothy 3:13 that people in the latter days of Church History will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Thus, we should not be surprised to see efforts by politicians to try to control the thinking of the electorate by deception! (b) We also know that Proverbs 10:19 ESV claims, "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." (c) In our politics, we should always be wary of candidates who use many words to make excessive claims since there is usually a degree of error in them, and there is always a motivation to manipulate voters! Rather, we should pay closer attention to those who use restraint in their speech, who provide meaningful content on facts!

(2) On the slander regarding issues of government health programs, (a) we know from 1 Timothy 5:23 that home remedies are always wise to use for low level physical issues that keep one from needless medical costs incurred in going to emergency rooms! (b) We also know that in view of 2 Timothy 3:13's warning about increasing deception, ingesting natural foods and using natural medicinal resources that the Creator provides are better for our health than many items that have been processed or modified for sale with the intent of making a profit (Genesis 1:29; 1 Timothy 4:4-5). (c) We also know from 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 that functioning independently is to be preferred for the meeting of our material needs, what also applies to our health needs. (d) Thus, the more independently we can function from government health agencies or man-made medicines, the better health we will generally enjoy, and the fewer problems we will face in trying to navigate a world of conflicting claims related to government health agencies.

(3) On slander in the entertainment industry, (a) Proverbs 18:12 NIV states, "Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor, and (b) Proverbs 18:21 NIV asserts, "The tongue (speech) has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." (c) The entertainment industry shines a spotlight on an entertainer's words and actions, so those in the "rich and famous" category do well to use humility, kindness and gentleness better to produce long-term good responses from other people! (c) For those of us who are not in the spotlight of fame, we can likewise keep our words and actions humble and kind for better relationships with others.

(4) On slander at the grassroots level with the "woke cancel culture," (a) we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to produce love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our attitudes, for these qualities violate no law (Galatians 5:16, 22-23 NIV)! (b) Also, if we do not associate with those who adopt unbiblical ideas and instead saturate our minds and hearts with Scripture, we will be happy, liberated and productive **as individuals** (Psalm 1:1-3), the **opposite** of "woke" ideology that **pressures** people to **yield to stifling group identities!** [Note: The psalmist claims that avoiding bad associations and delighting in Scripture causes one to blossom **individually**, seen in one's figuratively being like a tree that brings forth **his** fruit in **his** season with **his** foliage not falling so that whatever **he** does prospers, Psalm 1:3! In contrast, the ungodly are figuratively like barren, dead chaff that is blown away in the prevailing winds that sweep across a threshing floor on a dark night (Psalm 1:4)!]

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we deal with slander by becoming absorbed in Scripture for healing, direction and blessing.