

Prophetic Insight
August 4, 2017

**Besmirchers Murder With
Their Mouths**

A half century or so ago when the US was a Bible-based society, personal and public actions were guided by the Golden Rule: *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 7:12). Prayer opened each classroom’s day, and students were reprimanded when their actions toward others created disruption and pain.

You might say that this golden rule of behavior was the foundation to many of our laws. In its basic sense a lawbreaker is simply someone who does something to others which they wouldn’t want done to themselves. We live in an era in which the truth of Matthew 7:12 has ceased to represent the heart motive of individuals or society at large. So our laws as well as law enforcement have become ineffectual, a parody of what the framers of our Constitution intended. You could say that a large part of society does whatever makes them feel good or gives them a sense of superiority compared to others.

Attached to our July 28, 2017 Prophectic Insight, *When Ungodliness Gains National Prominence*, is an illustration revealing various values and beliefs of many Christians which are *offensive to God* (see above, right). Yet out of His mercy and holiness Father is confronting these values which misrepresent Him. He purposes that those who claim to be His would *live by the center circle* as their heart and life motivation.

In this Insight the Holy Spirit reveals another sin that pours from the mouths of many Christians to dishonor and damage the reputation of others: *besmirching*.



The word **besmirching** is seldom used today. But from Father’s perspective it is a heinous activity. That’s why the Holy Spirit impressed on us to address what’s so prevalent among many who claim to be “Christian.” To *besmirch* someone is to maliciously speak lies and half-truths about them with the intent to *discredit them* in the opinion of others or *intimidate them* into silence or inaction.

The three most common types of besmirching are:

- **Gossip:** sharing negative information about another person with people who aren’t part of the problem or the solution. 
- **Slander:** disclosing partial truth in order to hurt or discredit someone or to gain support for yourself.
- **Bullying:** using superior strength or influence to intimidate someone, typically to force him or her to do what the bully wants. 

The Bible offers numerous examples of individuals who are true to God yet are besmirched by others. Here are a few:

•Jeremiah: He prophesied the downfall of Israel and then lived through the disastrous aftermath. Repeatedly maligned especially by religious leaders, only two friends, Baruch and Ebed-melech, remained loyal to him.

•A faithful afflicted psalmist lamented, “*All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse*” (Psalms 102:8).

•Jesus: A group of Jews bent on arguing with Him answered, ‘*Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?*’” (John 8:48).

•Jesus: The response of those for whom He laid down His life was this: “*The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One*” (Luke 23:35; also John 15:20).

•John: Not one to back down from what needed to be addressed, the apostle declared, “*I wrote to the [called-out-ones], but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church [the collective called-out ones]*” (3John 1:9,10).

No one wants to be besmirched by others. But following the path set by our Lord Jesus, others throughout the ages have loved God so devotedly that their hearts determined by His grace and power to serve Him even when it meant exclusion, persecution, or death. But all too often in today’s sin-tolerant, ego-sensitive society, most people want to be accepted, even if they have to sell their soul to gain the approval of others. As cyber-bullying and social media influence have demonstrated all too clearly, to

be besmirched publicly is like a death sentence for relationships and even self-acceptance.

But we who love and follow Jesus are called to a very different response: to stay true to His call on our lives and to encourage each other when we do endure besmirching. Rather than being surprised or upset when those who live by the world’s ways and standards destroy your reputation with words or actions, remember that you’ve been warned to expect this:

“*Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man*” (Luke 6:22).

“*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*” (2Timothy 3:12,13).

Besmirching is a key weapon in Satan’s sinister arsenal against authentic followers of Jesus to ostracize them among their families, faith communities, and anywhere else they may be bearing fruit for the Kingdom. But how sad that so many in these relational arenas are easily seduced into joining in with the besmirchers to eagerly imbibe the slander and gossip. How few even ask questions to discern if the juicy tidbits are true. Even fewer seek out the besmirched person to hear the other side of the story:

“*The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him*” (Proverbs 18:17).

However, there is a Divine Listener Who will ultimately confront both besmirchers and those who take negative information and run with it. Consequences await people who spread rumors and

never bother to find out if they're true:

*"But I tell you that men **will have to give account on the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken"* (Matthew 12:36);

*"Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; **keep watch over the door of my lips**"* (Psalms 141:3).

As a first line of defense remember that you're responsible for what comes out of your mouth. Secondly, be very careful about what you repeat to others. Gossip and slander normally get passed along from person to person through what you say or write or text. This is when your words become a **rumor**, a report that may or may not be true.

But the holy reputation of Jesus is brought down by the many within Christendom who eagerly circulate gossip or slander they've heard. And those who listen to gossip and slander without probing its veracity and hearing the other side find themselves being seduced into the **sin of injustice**.

Be warned! People have an evil proclivity to hear negative reports about others:

*"The words of a gossip are like **choice morsels**; they go down to a man's **inmost parts**"* (Proverbs 18:8).

When Mike counseled religious leaders years ago, he discovered that over half the wives of clergy were seeing professional counselors. Why? Because they heard from their husbands the bad reports about people in their faith community. Often these women found themselves seduced into bitterness against an individual who had done nothing to hurt them. Worse, these wives became the source of spreading rumors about what their husbands had told them. The end

result for these ladies was seeking counseling to relieve their burden of guilt.

Mike served as an elder in a large faith community in which a huge amount of negative information was floating around especially about various men in the congregation. As he pursued the source of the slanderous comments, he traced them back to the women's prayer group. Under the guise of "prayer needs," men and even children were being slandered: "Please pray for my husband, he's always getting angry at our kids," or, "Please pray for my son. He's hanging around so-and-so, and that boy is a bad influence."

Maybe you've heard the story about the consequences of besmirching someone else.

A woman went to her pastor and told him how she had slandered another person. The pastor asked the woman if she had a feather pillow. When she said she did, he told her to take it outside, cut it open and let all the feathers out.

The next day she returned to the pastor and told him she'd done as he requested. He then told her to go find all the feathers and come back to see him. Hours later she came by and told him the wind had blown most of the feathers away. He replied, "That's what happens when you slander or gossip. You can never take your words back. The harm has been done."

If we are to represent Jesus in the flesh to our needy world, let's pay close attention to what we say:

*"If anyone considers himself religious and **yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue**, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless"* (James 1:26).

*"Whoever would love life and see good days **must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech**"* (1Peter 3:10).

How To Identify A Habitual Besmircher

At one time or another in our lives just about everyone has found themselves either speaking a lie about someone or listening to a lie. But some people are *habitual besmirchers*. They're so addicted to sharing false reports and their minds are so tainted by deceit that they can't distinguish truth and falsehood.

It's these people that Satan uses to rob others of dignity and credibility. After all, Jesus's verdict on Satan is this: "*When [Satan] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies*" (John 8:44). Most besmirchers are very clever in that they're careful not to dishonor or smear *everyone*. Always selective in their audience and ill reports, they keep a particular group close to them through flattery or purchasing favor from those whose ongoing support they seek. But there's a snare awaiting those cronies:

"A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin" (Proverbs 26:28).

"Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet" (Proverbs 29:5).

"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives" (Proverbs 27:21).

Confident in the support of the ensnared, the besmircher bellows whatever he pleases against "**The Ostracized Group**" of the moment. This pattern of flattery and/or purchasing favor can take place within families, faith communities, workplaces, schools — and government. Ironically, those who were at one time seduced into the besmircher's inner group later find themselves besmirched. You might call this "**The Haman's Gallows Scenario**" (Esther 7:9,10).

Several symptoms describe habitual besmirchers. These individuals:

- *focus on their own rights*
- *have unrealistic expectations of others*
- *use people for personal ambitions*
- *backtrack if confronted with the truth*
- *stir up discontent in others*
- *magnify reports of discontent*
- *demonstrate an inability to restore*

These questions may help you identify if *you* give way to besmirching.

- Are you a wife who calls her mother to belittle and complain about your husband? We've seen the Christian landscape strewn with divorces that began with wives besmirching their husbands to other people.
- Are you in a small group with a 'seemingly needy couple' who may end up destroying your gathering by using you all to constantly air their problems about each other? Neither party really wants help. They're just trying to recruit people to take sides with them against their spouse.
- Are you a "closet psychologist," robbing people of their dignity by inferring that you know their inner motivation? The essence of control is to imply motivation without asking the person *why* he or she does something.
- Do you use racial or sexist slurs of any kind?
- Do you bad-mouth your parents? If you do, you'll find it very hard to relax in relationships, especially with people in authority over you.

Please take note.

When someone starts to talk badly about another person, *ask them to stop!* Help them recognize that they are destroying the dignity and reputation of an individual who is made in God's image and for whom Jesus sacrificed Himself. And if you do choose listen, remember this: **What goes around comes around!** You're likely to be the next target.