



**The Christian's Response to
Slander**
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"Having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ." ¹--1 Peter 3:16

Introduction

In the passage of 1 Peter 3:16 Peter speaks about the reality of Christians suffering for their good manner of life in Christ. This is emphasized not only in this passage, but also throughout the entire letter of first Peter. In this brief study, it is my desire to provide several principles that will help us tremendously to have a proper response to slander. I will, therefore, briefly analyze the word slander and then practical principles on how to respond to it will be provided. As we examine this brief study, let us keep in mind the words of James 1:22, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." Remember that the only way to benefit greatly from God's Word is to put it to practice in our daily lives (Luke 11:28).

Definition of term

The word "**slander**" comes from the Greek word *epereazo* which has several meanings: to insult, to treat abusively, to use spitefully, to revile, in a forensic sense, to accuse falsely, to threaten (Thayer, 1908). The Strong concordance defines this word as to insult, to use spitefully, and to falsely accuse. The words "falsely accuse" are very strong in the Greek, namely, "to spitefully abuse, to insult, to traduce."² This particular Greek word only appears three times in the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28; 1 Peter 3:16). Let us read these Bible references where the word appears. I will cite the King James Version:

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which **despitefully use you**, and persecute you (Matthew 5:44, emphasis added)

¹ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (1 Pe 3:16). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (1 Pe 3:16). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which **despitefully use you** (Luke 6:28, emphasis added).

Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that **falsely accuse** your good conversation in Christ (1 Peter 3:16).³

Other translations of the Bible use words such as revile (ASV, NKJV, ESV), falsely accuse (KJV), slander (NIV).

The Greek Grammar

The grammar of this verb is found in the present, active participle, which denotes a continuous action. These Christians were being slandered, and falsely accused continually by their adversaries.

How to Respond to Slander

How can faithful Christians respond when they are being slandered all the time? Does the Bible provide any helpful assistance on what we can do? Let me suggest that you prayerfully consider the following ways on how you and I can respond when we are falsely accused.

Keep in Mind that Faithful Christians Will Suffer

The Apostle Peter in this first letter emphasizes the truth that faithful Christian will suffer in this world considerably. If we study this first letter carefully, we will arrive at the conclusion that the central theme of this letter is suffering which faithful Christians will experience, and how they should respond to it.

There is no doubt that all faithful Christians around the world will experience suffering during our time on earth. The Apostle Peter tells Christians that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). This enemy of ours will try his best to discourage us from living the Christian life, and from entering heaven some day. Remember that he will hinder our way to heaven (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:18).

³ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. 2009 (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The Apostle Paul also warned Christians that if they lived a faithful life in Christ, they were going to suffer tribulations (2 Timothy 3:12; cf. Philippians 1:29; Acts 14:22; James 1:2). Jesus also warned His disciples about the reality of suffering for His cause (John 16:33). Most of us have experienced difficult times just for trying to live a faithful life in Christ. Personally, several false teachers with regards to the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage have falsely accused me of teaching false doctrine. These people argue in this way because I do not teach what they believe. The Brown Trail School of Preaching has been falsely accused of using instrumental music in our building. I, also, was falsely accused of having divorced my wife; something obviously not true!

It is imperative that we as Christians continue steadfast in the Lord so *that we may not cast away our boldness, which hath great recompense of reward* (Hebrews 10:35). We need to keep in mind that a Crown of life awaits those who remain faithful to the Lord, even in the midst of trials (cf. James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Follow the Advices the Inspired Apostle Peter Provided

In his first letter, the Apostle Peter provides several advices that can help us to have a positive response when we are being slandered. Therefore, I will allow Peter to instruct us on how we can respond to slander. Once again, let me encourage you to please consider each of these advices:

1. Remember that you are not alone (1 Peter 1:3-5).

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵**who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time (Emphasis added).

2. **Remember that being slandered is part of the proving of your faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).**

⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials,** ⁷that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

3. **Remember to continue living a holy life in Christ, even when you are being slandered or persecuted (1 Peter 1:14-15).**

¹⁴As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in *the time of* your ignorance: ¹⁵but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; ¹⁶because it is written, ye shall be holy; for I am holy.

4. **Remember to put away sin from your life; otherwise, you will provide an opportunity for the adversary to accuse you falsely (1 Peter 2:1-2).**

Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ²as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.

5. **Remember to live a faithful life before those who may falsely accuse you (1 Peter 2:11-12, 15).**

¹¹Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹²having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, **wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.** ¹⁵For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

6. Remember that God is pleased when we suffer with patience, and by so doing, we follow the steps of Jesus (1 Peter 1:20-23).

²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted *for it*, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²²who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.

7. Remember not to render evil for evil (1 Peter 3:8-13).

⁸Finally, *be* ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded: **⁹not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling;** but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil. ¹³And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?

8. Remember to do your best to have a good conscience at all times (1 Peter 3:16).

¹⁶having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.

9. Remember to rejoice when you suffer for the Lord (1 Peter 4:12-14).

¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: ¹³but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If ye are reproached for the name of

Christ, blessed *are ye*; because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.

10. Remember not to suffer as an evil doer, since by doing this, you will provide an opportunity for your enemies to falsely accuse you (1 Peter 4:15-16).

¹⁵For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: ¹⁶but if *a man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.

11. Remember to continue practicing that which is good, even when you are falsely accused or persecuted (1 Peter 4:19).

¹⁹Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator.

12. Remember that you are not the only one that suffers in this world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

⁸Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, ⁹whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

13. Remember to give God the glory even when you are experiencing difficult times in your life (1 Peter 5:11).

¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. ¹¹To him *be* the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Examples of those in the Bible who were slandered and how they responded to it

The Bible provides several examples of faithful people of God who were accused falsely. Let us consider only three examples. At the same time, let us carefully consider how they responded to those who slandered them.

Joseph (Genesis 39:1-40).

Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of sexually harassing her. Let us read the entire story to see how things happened:

Joseph's Prosperity

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, that had brought him down thither. ²And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. ³And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered unto him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. ⁵And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field. ⁶And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught *that was* with him, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was comely, and well-favored.

Joseph's Temptation

⁷And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. ⁸But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my hand: ⁹he is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ¹⁰And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her. ¹¹And it came to pass about this time, that he went into the house to do his work; and there was none of the men of the house there within. ¹²And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Joseph is Falsely Accused

¹³And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, ¹⁴that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: ¹⁵and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled, and got him out. ¹⁶And she laid up his garment by her, until his master came home. ¹⁷And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: ¹⁸and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out.

Joseph is Punished Unjustly

¹⁹And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. ²¹But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²²And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. ²³The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and that which he did, Jehovah made it prosper. ⁴

Throughout the development of this story we see how Joseph remained faithful to his God. This faithfulness brought him suffering since Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of trying to force her to have sexual activity with her. It is interesting to see how God will always bless His people when they diligently strive to serve Him faithfully. Notice what the text reveals concerning God's mercy towards the faithful Joseph: "But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison"

⁴ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Ge 39:1–23). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

(Genesis 39:21). People may accuse us falsely, but God will always be there for us (cf. Hebrews 13:5).

Daniel (Daniel 6:1-28).

In this chapter we learned how Daniel lived a faithful life before God that even his enemies were not able to find fault in him. His enemies, therefore, sought a way to accuse him, but were not successful. Why? The text reveals the answer: "...but they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."

These adversaries devised a plan to falsely accused Daniel. Let us read the rest of the story to see what these men did, and what God did.

The Accusers and their Wicked Plan Against Daniel

⁵Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

⁶Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. ⁷All the presidents of the kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a strong interdict, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸Now, O king, establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ⁹Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the interdict.

Daniel's Courage and Faithfulness

¹⁰And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

The Accusation Against Daniel

¹¹Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹²Then they came near,

and spake before the king concerning the king's interdict: Hast thou not signed an interdict, that every man that shall make petition unto any god or man within thirty days, save unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ¹³Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. ¹⁴Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. ¹⁵Then these men assembled together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

Daniel's Unjust Tribulation and the King's Confidence

¹⁶Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. ¹⁷And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

¹⁸Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him.

Daniel's Deliverance Due to His Faithfulness

¹⁹Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. ²⁰And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? ²¹Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. ²²My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. ²³Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up

out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.

The Accusers Punishment

²⁴And the king commanded, and they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the den.

The King's Noble Decree

²⁵Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. ²⁶I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, And his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and his dominion shall be even unto the end. ²⁷He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. ²⁸So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. ⁵

This story has the purpose of revealing 7 great lessons:

1. It is possible to live a faithful life according to God's commandments
2. Evil people will try to accuse you falsely
3. Evil people will not be able to find anything credible by which to falsely accuse you
4. If you live a faithful life before God, He will never leave you
5. Those who falsely accuse you will be punished by God
6. Man's faithfulness can provide a way for God to be glorified
7. Faithfulness will always prevail

⁵ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Da 6:5–28). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Jesus Christ (Mark 14:53-65).

In this passage of Scripture we read about how the Jews were trying to falsely accuse Jesus of wrong doing, but were not able to do so. Let us read the story to see how things happened:

⁵³And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. ⁵⁴And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light *of the fire*. ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not. ⁵⁶For many bare false witness against him, and their witness agreed not together. ⁵⁷And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. ⁵⁹And not even so did their witness agree together. ⁶⁰And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? ⁶¹But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? ⁶²And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. ⁶³And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? ⁶⁴Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. ⁶⁵And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the officers received him with blows of their hands. ⁶

The chief priests and the whole council were looking for ways to falsely accuse Jesus, but were not successful. If you live a faithful life, people will not be able to find something credible by which to accuse you legally.

In the three stories we have examined we see how the attitude of these men of God always reflected their faithfulness to God. There is a lot we can learn from these men! May the Lord help us to imitate their great example.

⁶ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Mk 14:53–65). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Conclusion

In this brief lesson we have examined the topic, "The Christian's Response to Slander." We have learned about the reality of suffering and slandering. We can safely conclude that slander is part of the Christian's suffering. Therefore, it is imperative that we prayerfully consider how we can respond to this type of persecution from our adversaries. If you have not experienced false accusations, sooner or later you will. When the time comes, let me encourage you to carefully practice the wise principles we have examined in this lesson.

May we never allow those who slander us to discourage us from living the kind of life God would have us to live. Remember that if we remain faithful unto death, a beautiful crown of life awaits us (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

May the Lord give us the wisdom and encouragement to continue serving Him faithfully!

Additional Passages on the Subject at Hand

With his mouth the godless man destroyeth his neighbor; But through knowledge shall the righteous be delivered (Proverbs 11:9).

He that hideth hatred is of lying lips; And he that uttereth a slander is a fool (Proverbs 10:18).

And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matthew 12:36-37).

Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge (James 4:11).

Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I destroy: Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer (Psalm 101:5).

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