

HELL IN YOUR MOUTH



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

HELL IN YOUR MOUTH

Kill gossip and you will live.

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METROPOLITAN

Hell in Your Mouth

(English)

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction	7
1. Gossip: What is it?	11
2. Power of Words	15
3. Who Gossips and Gives Evil Reports?	23
4. What Motivates Gossip?	35
5. How Satan uses Gossip or Evil Reports	47
6. How to Detect the Gossipmonger	55
7. Symptoms of Defilement	61
8. How to Find Cleansing from the Defilement of Gossip	73
9. Proof that your Heart is Cleansed	81
10. Parting Words	85

Introduction

In the early days of my daily radio broadcast (Athmik Yathra), one of the saddest letters I got was from a girl who wrote about her sister's suicide note. Her sister, she wrote, was a post-graduate with her whole life ahead of her. The note she left on the table, behind the closed door of the room where she ended her life, contained only two words—"they said". Nothing more! Who said and what they said about her still remains a mystery. But those two words are eloquent. Somebody—a family member, a friend, a colleague, a neighbour or anybody else—uttered

words that caused her to give up hope and commit suicide. Had somebody she trusted betrayed her by revealing something personal about her? Had idle tongues made up false stories? Who knows!

I wish I could say that this was just one isolated event. But I cannot. This happens to far too many people. They may not all kill themselves, but they all live with pain, sorrow, despair and often suicidal thoughts. Gossip can cause so much suffering for so many.

Maybe you are suffering now because your good name and reputation have been affected, all because someone started gossiping about you or people close to you.

I have received innumerable letters from heartbroken wives because their mothers-in-law sent letters full of poison to their sons working abroad. They plant in these men seeds of doubt about their wives back home, often leading to divorce, broken families and even murders.

We are talking about gossip, talebearing, malicious talk and the horrible destructive power of our words.

This touches all of us. There is no one—including the one writing this—who has been spared the sting of the scorpion that is gossip. Maybe what they said was true, but their intention in saying it was to cause hurt and pain. Maybe they did it innocently, and yet the consequences were devastating.

How terribly careful we must be with the power we wield with words!

CHAPTER ONE

Gossip: What is it?

Gossip is idle or malicious talk about someone, either with the desire or intention to hurt them in some fashion, or uncaring of how it might cause them harm. It can be innocent in intention or it can be deliberate and designed to hurt someone else. It involves distortion of facts or false information. It can be also reporting facts, even the real truth, with the intention to tear down and not build up. Gossip is inspired by meanness. It causes the hearer to come to inaccurate conclusions and to respond in an unscriptural manner. Gossip

or evil reports may be communicated by words, facial expressions, gestures or even by tonal patterns. Sometimes, evil talk is spread under the guise of concern. Sometimes, the malice behind it is obvious.

As I write this page, breaking news all over the world reports the eruption of the most destructive volcano in Hawaii. Hot molten lava flows, destroying everything it touches, may it be rocks, trees or even people. Can you imagine someone stupid enough to say, “I am going to jump right into the mouth of the volcano as it is spitting out millions of gallons of liquid fire!” It is like someone who says, “I am going to walk barefoot on the sun.” It would be actively seeking painful self-destruction and incineration.

Just the thought of it brings fear, as it should.

Think about it! The almighty God, the creator of the billions of galaxies, the sun, the moon, the stars and the earth and all in it, visible and invisible, tells us in absolute terms not to have any part in gossip or talebearing.

“You should not go about being a tale-bearer among your people, nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbour: I am the LORD.”¹

Why we should not gossip? God says the reason is because “I am the LORD.” We should need no other reason than that: He is God and we must fear Him. In other words, when you gossip about someone, you deliberately disobey God. It is as though you are saying, “I don’t care about God and what He says.” You forget that every second of your life is sustained by His mercy. Fear God.

An Arabian proverb says, “A wound caused by words is more powerful than a wound caused by an arrow.”

A Japanese proverb tells us, “A statement once let loose cannot be caught by four horses.”

Corrie Ten Boom said, “Gossip leads to criticisms, and criticism kills love.”

The Bible says, “Life and death is in the power of the tongue.”²

Hell in Your Mouth

Words unwisely, carelessly and maliciously spoken, have caused wars, destroyed millions of homes, caused multitudes to commit suicide, separated best of friends, caused people to commit murder, and created bitterness and anger resulting in massive number of people suffering from sickness in body and mind. Most of all, the gossiper comes under God's curse.³

¹ Leviticus 19:16; ² Proverbs 18:21; ³ Psalm 50

CHAPTER TWO

The Power of Words

Words—they're an integral part of how we communicate with each other. We express what we feel deep inside through words. Granted, there are times when we don't use words, where our silence and body language can communicate many things. Sometimes when emotions run so deep, there are no words to describe them and silence often is louder than the loudest spoken words.

Our words can be delightful. They can offer encouragement, a sense of protection, much-needed motivation to go on with life

no matter what, help build up someone's self-esteem. But they can also be immensely destructive, to the point of causing depression serious enough to make them end their precious lives.

Listen to what God says about our words:

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.¹

The book of Proverbs especially has a lot to say about this. Words like mouth, tongue, lips, speech, words, whisper, gossip, etc. are used 150 times in just Proverbs. This use of our tongue—what we say, how we say it and when we say it—is a big issue in life.

It is said that “life and death are in the power of the tongue.”² When we read that “there are six things the LORD hates, seven

that are detestable to him”³ it adds gravity to this issue. Among those six things, half refer to what we do with our words: a lying tongue, bearing false witness and one who gossips and causes disunity among friends.

How powerful are our words! Think about the words used by an ambassador who speaks on behalf of his country before the United Nations, or a teacher, or a lawyer or judge in the courtroom, or that of a priest behind the pulpit.

The true story of the priest of God, Zacharias, is mentioned in Gospel according to St Luke Chapter 1. For disbelieving the angel of God who told him that his prayers would be answered by God and he would have a son, this priest was punished with dumbness until the little one named John was born.

Every day we say enough words to fill a fifty page book. In one year, your mouth fills 132 books with 400 pages each. At the end of your life you will have produced 3,000 volumes and one million fifty thousand words. Think about that!

Research also reveals that men and women are different in this. Women have greater linguistic ability than men. Women talk more than men. This is because women often express their feelings and thoughts in coloured details. God gave women 50,000 words to speak in a day and men 25,000. When a man comes home, he's already used up his share of words for the day, while his wife is just getting started!

Words that we say and hear can get inside us and influence our whole being.

We are living in the information age. The amount of knowledge that we have in the world, accessible to those who look for it, is said to double every year or so. And in this convergence culture, we are surrounded with words 24 hours.

As the Scripture says, words we say can pierce our hearts like a double-edged sword.⁴ Words are like a deadly weapon that can cut deep and kill. But if used wisely, in godly ways, it can build people up and make life beautiful.

Hell in Your Mouth

When we make cutting or sharp remarks at home or in the classroom, it is almost impossible to bring healing to the wounded spirits.⁵

How often have we said to ourselves, “Oh, I should not have said that!”

But speaking the right words has been scientifically proven to bring healing to the body and mind.⁶

What we say deeply affects our relationships at home, parish, workplace, and wherever we go.

A Japanese proverb says, “Your tongue is only three inches long and it can kill a man who is six feet tall.”

Wrong words (false teaching) can affect your belief systems and eventually, your eternity.

In the book of Acts, St Peter spoke and 3,000 people present who heard him found hope and reason to live without fear.

In Acts Chapter 16, a few words spoken by St Paul kept the jailor from committing suicide.

More times than we can fathom, the words Jesus spoke brought healing to lepers, the blind and even raised the dead to life!⁷

Words are like seeds. They fall on the fertile soil of our hearts and grow, finally producing fruit.⁸ What you say will come back to you fifty, sixty, eighty, one hundred times over.

Adolf Hitler's words sent six million Jews to the gas chamber and to their deaths. Winston Churchill's words spoken during the Second World War saved England from Adolf Hitler.

Words are powerful. Life and death are held in the power of the tongue. Let us never forget this warning from God.

¹ St James 3:2–12; ² Proverbs 18:21; ³ Proverbs 6:16;

⁴ Proverbs 12:18; ⁵ Proverbs 18:14; ⁶ Proverbs 12:18, 12:25, 16:24; ⁷ St John 11; ⁸ Galatians 6:6

CHAPTER THREE

Who Gossips or Gives Evil Reports?

Discernment is one of the most important abilities we must all pray for and pursue. The lack of discernment is often the reason why we're deceived by the enemy. For example, you may be having a casual conversation with someone and suddenly, right in the middle of the conversation they drop it—a negative report about someone you know, or something on Facebook or someone sending an email, or what they gathered while watching TV or listening to the

radio. The proliferation of online news sites makes it difficult to distinguish truth from half-truth and fake news. Don't underestimate how much it can affect your mind, even your character.

Listening to gossip is like suffering the effects of second-hand smoke. Everyone knows that smoking is harmful and that it can cause cancer. But now we know that even second-hand smoke can affect your health negatively. Even though you don't smoke, by being close enough to someone who does, you too are exposed to cancer-causing elements in the cigarette smoke, putting your health at risk as well.

You need to guard your life from gossip and be alert of the many ways the enemy can cause you to fall into this trap. Here in this chapter, we will briefly describe the different kinds of communication that you need to watch for, to save your soul from damnation.

The Whisperer

Such a person never shouts or talks loudly about another person to give a false or evil

report. They will want to maintain a good reputation, but deep inside, their heart is full of deadly poison. The Scripture says, “The whisperer separates the best of friends.”¹

You know you’re in the presence of a whisperer when they lean in close and say, “This is top secret and I don’t want to tell anyone except you.” Then they pull you aside and continue, whispering. Curiosity is a very human trait, so being offered secrets that nobody else knows is a temptation. The trap is set. This is done all the time, over the phone via social media and through every other means of communications. This can make best friends, or a husband and wife, or children and parents become enemies. To these people who once lived in love and peace, whispered gossip is like poison attacking their common sense and clear thinking. Satan is the father of lies and he gives power to spread this poison and kill love and friendship. Watch out for people that want to use your ears to speak evil about others. If you are a godly person of

character, you will want to say, “Friend, I don’t want to hear this,” and run from this poison like you would from a king cobra slithering to you.

The whisperer is one who secretly or privately passes on evil reports to others.

Now, if this sounds familiar and you feel you might, perhaps, be a whisperer, resolve now that you will no longer be one. You will no longer be the whisperer that God hates.

The Talebearer

In the Holy Scripture, God tells, “Do not go about spreading slander among your people.”² Why should one not go around and gossip and spread bad news about others? God says, for “I am the LORD.” That means that we must fear the Lord. We must fear God, who sees and hears all things, and to fall under judgment of God is tragic.

“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”³

This person's character is like that of a man or woman who has a deadly and highly contagious disease. Wherever they go, they cannot resist saying negative things about others. Avoid people like this. They will cause so much damage and pain. The Word of God says, "Just as where there is no wood the fire goes out, so is, when there is the absence of talebearers, the quarrel, strife, disunity, fight ceases. And too, the gossip will sound so pleasant like the most delicious food, but it is the worst of poison you are allowing to enter into your life"⁴

It is ridiculous to consume poison and expect nothing to happen to you! That poison will damage your heart, kidney and all the internal organs. So it is when you listen to gossip. If you love your life and care for the lives of others, you will rebuke the person who wants to use you to spread the evil seed of gossip and shut them down immediately.

The gossipier usually talks about *people* and not ideas that make one think. These

people are far more comfortable criticising others than helping them become better.

Let me ask you something—when do you feel emotionally most comfortable: when criticising and saying negative things about others or when focusing on the positives about others? The answer you know in your heart will tell you where you are in your maturity and knowledge of God. Then again, the question must be asked; are you one who prefers hearing good news about others or are you one who feels happy when you hear about others speaking rumours and evil reports about people?

The Slanderer

This is another form of spreading gossip and evil reports. A slanderer is one who seeks to destroy another's credibility or reputation with damaging words, distortion of facts or evil suspicions.

The dictionary defines slander as defamation, malicious speech or a defamatory statement.

A slanderer (noun) is a person who intentionally uses rumours or facts embellished with their negative imaginations to destroy someone's good name, business or family.

Moses sent out twelve of his top leaders to spy out the land they were going to occupy. After their investigation, all of them except Joshua and Caleb gave evil reports that caused irreparable damage for the people of God. It is not that what they said was untrue. But they projected their own fears and jumped to conclusions, without considering the promise God had already made. The fear of God was not a part of their reports. Read Numbers Chapters 13 and 14 to understand the full story of this earth-shaking event in the history of the people of God.

You need to be very careful about extremely capable people who are also very street-smart. Their ability may be so impressive that they seem to be geniuses, but if they are not humble and submissive, then what they say even as their opinion

needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. What if the twelve spies had come to Moses, their father in faith, and told him privately what they had seen and heard? Maybe Moses would have said, “Wait, let me ask God and listen to what He has to say about this.” You see, God did not deliver the people from Egypt’s bondage to see them die in the desert. Yet, because of their lack of submission and humility, they caused so much pain and eventually, the death of God’s people in the desert.

Avoid people like this in your life, for your sake and for the sake of God’s church’s.

More is said about a slanderer in the Bible: “He who conceals his hatred has lying lips and whoever spreads slander is a fool.”⁵

Please don’t be the one who slanders. Make a covenant with your tongue and heart not to be like that. If you have done it, repent to God and to the people concerned, and find forgiveness. Time never heals sins; only repentance and the blood of Christ does.⁶

The Busybody

This person digs up evil reports and makes it their business to spread them by means of gossip, slander or whispering.

God has a lot to say about this person:

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.⁷

We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies.⁸

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to.⁹

It is very sad that for a lot of people, their business is other people's business. It is like the man Jesus told us about; he has a wooden log stuck in his own eyes (and is literally blind in both eyes) and he tells his friend who has a tiny amount of dirt in his eyes, "Let me take the speck out of your

eyes.”¹⁰ How foolish it is! Yet, this is what they do from morning till night. They dig up problems and spread gossip.

These are usually lazy people without character. They make their living by using their tongue as a weapon to hurt people, and collect money and benefit for it. They are not diligent in working hard to make a living for themselves.

In a parish, this can easily and often does become a major problem. There are often certain ladies who claim to have special spiritual knowledge or gift of prophecy etc., and they go from house to house causing much damage with their false prophecies, spreading ungodly stories and gossip against the priests and the members of the congregation.

Idle Talkers

They are the ones given to continual talking, generally about things that are neither their concern nor responsibility.

“Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.”¹¹

Watch out for people who just can't listen. They talk endlessly, and they are usually very shallow people with hardly any maturity in their life.

A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool.¹²

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk.¹³

For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.¹⁴

All these Scriptures tell us about the nature of character of a person who has no control over their words. They are loose cannons, so to speak. Avoid the company of such people.

Hell in Your Mouth

It is our God-given responsibility to cleanse our parish and fellowship, getting rid of these kinds of people. When they show up, they suddenly take over the conversation and start talking, and gather people who will listen to them. This sows seeds of evil and ungodliness to be used by demons. Their tongue is full of poison.

¹ Proverbs 16:28; ² Leviticus 19:16; ³ Proverbs 11:13

⁴ Proverbs 26:20–22; ⁵ Proverbs 10:18; ⁶ 1 John 1:8–9

⁷ 1 Peter 4:15; ⁸ 2 Thessalonians 3:11; ⁹ 1 Timothy 5:13

¹⁰ St Matthew 7:3–5; ¹¹ Proverbs 10:19; ¹² Ecclesiastes 5:3

¹³ 1 Timothy 1:5–6; ¹⁴ Titus 1:10–11

CHAPTER FOUR

What Motivates Gossip?

One: One of the reasons why people talk ill of others is pride. You hear people say, “I want to tell you something.” You can tell by the look on their faces and their body language that they are so proud of knowing something that you don’t. It makes them feel like they’re better. But God hates pride and arrogance. So, God hates the heart that takes delight in talking evil about others. Of all the kinds of pride, spiritual pride is the worst. This is what caused the glorious angel of God, Lucifer, to fall and become the devil. When

someone starts gossiping, you must know they are lifting themselves above another, feeling that they are better and wiser.

Jesus talked about two people who went into church to pray. One was full of spiritual pride and prayed, “God I am glad that I am not a sinner like this man who is praying with his head down”¹ While the other man who felt so bad for his failures, prayed, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner.” (I personally pray this prayer, the Jesus prayer, a thousand times a day.)

Jesus said that the Pharisee with his superiour sense of self left the church just as he had come—his sins not forgiven and having had no communion with God or others in the church. On the other hand, the man with his heart heavy because of sin and guilt, went home forgiven and in fellowship with God. Why? He had no pride in him. He humbled himself before God and others.

Pride causes people to be harsh and condemning, often criticising and putting

down others. When someone talks ill of others, even as a joke, please be aware that you are in the presence of a man who is not only proud, but also someone whom God resists. You don't want to be influenced by that person.

Two: Another reason why people gossip or spread evil reports is bitterness. Gossip is a way for them to express their anger, bitterness and hostility to someone without confronting them personally. The Scripture says, if you have something against another person, or you feel they have something against you, then you must not go and tell others about it, but go alone and to that person only and share your thoughts with them and be reconciled.²

Because gossipmongers are ungodly and cowardly, they take revenge by spreading gossip, with the intention of destroying others' character, honesty, influence and testimony. Often this ends in broken homes, loss of a job and even destruction of their future!

Keep this in mind when you tell anybody something about somebody else, even to someone whom you think you can absolutely trust. Please believe me, there is perhaps one in a million who truly can keep secrets. Before you know it, especially in this information culture, what you said will be everywhere.

Do not disobey God's Word. You will be destroyed by it.³

Three: The third reason why people gossip is to pull others down to their level. There are people who live their lives at a very low level. They don't like themselves or their circumstances. They don't like people getting ahead of them in life and prospering. They hate it when others get promotions. They start criticising the people who are doing better, which eventually becomes gossip.

The truth is, by gossiping and tearing down others, they don't get any better; they only become poorer in the eyes of God and society.

Four: Envy or jealousy is another major factor behind gossip. There are people who think to themselves, “I don’t want what he or she has, but why he should have it? He is no better than me!” The bottom line is jealousy.

We read this in the story of David and King Saul. David, as a young man, got a lot of attention after he defeated the giant and the Philistine army. But the king of the nation, Saul, became jealous and started to speak ill about David.⁴

Gossip has its fangs that drip poison. It has tentacles that reach out to the multitudes, especially now with social media like Facebook and WhatsApp.

Sometimes people don’t know why they are gossiping. If they look deep into their minds, they will realise that it is all because of jealousy.

In Gospel according to St Luke Chapter 15, we read about the older son saying evil things about his younger brother. The fact is that he had no knowledge of any of

those evil deeds that he claimed his younger brother had done. Then what motivated him to say all those terrible things? He was jealous and angry. All because the younger son had come home.

Critical people are always gossipers.

Five: Deception is another reason why people gossip. They are simply deceived by demons. Often, it is to cover up their own sins. They imagine how they would act if they were in the other person's place. In reality, what they are doing is projecting their own evil heart onto that person and coming to ungodly conclusions. They then say the worst things possible about others, which is a way to make themselves feel better. This is a very dangerous thing. God hates it. To interpret someone's motive, which only God may know, and be judgmental, is like taking God's place, trying to sit on His throne and pass judgment.⁵

Six: Rebellion is another major factor that causes people to speak evil things about others. Read Chapters 13–16 of the

book of Numbers in the Old Testament. You will read the terrible story of an extremely smart and able leader named Korah, who because of his disloyal heart, began to gather a large group of people to rebel against Moses. God stepped in and destroyed Korah and all those that joined him in speaking against Moses.

I have written a whole book on this subject, called *Touching Godliness*. Please download this book for free from our website and go through it.

Seven: Another reason for gossip is the influence of other people. The Bible has a lot to say about the friendships we maintain. God warns us not to keep company with angry people, people who are ungodly, critical people and so on.⁶

Why? Because we are deeply influenced by the friendships we maintain. Peer pressure is not only a problem among school children; it is true all our lives, even as adults.

We read about King Solomon and how his wives influenced him to walk away from God.⁷

Again, we can look to the case of King David's own son Absalom, who was influenced by a bitter and angry man named Ahitophel. Ahitophel, whose granddaughter was Bathsheba, was angry at David for hurting him. Yet, Absalom, who was the son of King David, was influenced by Ahitophel and his life was snuffed out, with Ahitophel finally committing suicide.⁸

The Bible says that "evil company corrupts morals."⁹

A lot of people gossip by saying, "My best friend whom I trust with my life told me this, he saw it, he heard it, he was there" and so on and so forth. But if one cares to investigate, it will probably be discovered that the best friend heard it from somebody else whom the friend considered reliable, who might have heard it from somebody else who saw a part of something that happened and interpreted it subjectively.

There is a reason why *hearsay* is not considered evidence in court.

I personally once did this type of interview when I was doing a series of talks on gossip. When I finally got to the person who had started the gossip (I had to talk to nineteen other people before getting to the original person who started this gossip!), this is what exactly he told me —“I didn’t see it or hear it, I was not there. I thought it was like that!” How terrible! How much pain and damage had already been done! The damage was not limited to the twenty people I had talked to, but all those who had been told by each of those twenty, and those they had told, and so on. That number reaches the hundreds and thousands before you know it. Today, it could be millions with social media waiting, ready to deliver gossip to the whole world.

How desperate we must be to be partakers of His divine nature and godliness through silence, which the early orthodox church fathers taught us! Keep away from people who gossip. Have no part in their life. The

Bible instructs us to have no fellowship with such people.¹⁰

Eight: Unfulfilled expectations cause gossip. The first murder recorded in the Bible is of Cain, the older brother, killing his younger brother because his own expectations were not fulfilled.¹¹

How often do we run into people who say terrible things about others, just because they did not get the loan or job or recommendations they wanted from the people they speak about? You may have been a victim of the same thing. You were not in a position to do what they asked of you, and what they did was to go and spread unimaginable rumours about you. How much you must have suffered alone and cried over it! Only you can know.

Blackmailers are well known for this. As a matter of fact, one of my bishops or episcopas told me, blackmailing has become a major multi-million business in our country. But I think it is not just here, but all over the world. If you can't deliver

their demands, then you will face character assassination; that is it.

But it is especially sad when it happens among God's people. Please don't become a part of it. Your God is able to take care of your needs. Don't go after people and hurt them.

Nine: Another reason for personal attack and gossip is an improper response to correction. This is true in the life of many priests and God's workers. Because someone did not like the sermon they preached, they think the priest was talking about them! Or during confession, the priest tells them to retrospect, repent and show the fruit of it, instead of which they go out and start a campaign against the priest who advised them to walk in godliness.

¹ St Luke 18: 9–14; ² St Matthew 18:15–17; ³ St Matthew 7:1

⁴ 1 Samuel 18; ⁵ Psalm 50:16; ⁶ Proverbs 22:24;

⁷ 1 Kings 11–12; ⁸ 2 Samuel 17; ⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:33;

¹⁰ 2 Thessalonians 3:11–14; ¹¹ Genesis 4

CHAPTER FIVE

How Satan uses Gossip or Evil Reports

Jesus had three and half years to train and prepare His disciples to carry the message of the cross and the redemption it offered to all men. The Great Commission, humanly speaking, was an impossible task for these feeble men to take up—the challenge to go throughout the whole world and preach the Gospel. And one would naturally expect Christ to spend His last few days on earth to at least give them the blueprint or a strategy to accomplish the Great Commission.

But you start reading the Gospel according to St John Chapter 13 and are surprised to find that during the final few hours of His earthly life, Jesus talks about how these disciples should love one another and how that is the key for the world to know Jesus and find hope in Him! Then in Gospel according to St John Chapter 17, Jesus prayed for them to be one in love and unity as He is one with the Father.

This ought to tell us how important it is for us to live in love and unity. No wonder Satan hates it when God's people live in unity as the family of God.

One of the most powerful weapons Satan uses to hinder love and unity is our own loose tongues; he uses our tongue to spread gossip and evil reports about others in the Holy Church.

Damaging the Leaders

It is important to note the words of Christ: "The shepherd is smitten and the flock will scatter."¹

This gives us a hint Satan always aims to damage the leaders in God's church.

Satan uses gossip and evil reports to discredit the spiritual leadership in the Holy Church. We see this in the life of Moses. Moses' only sister, Miriam, started to verbally attack Moses, trying to discredit his leadership. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?' they asked. 'Hasn't he also spoken through us?' And the LORD heard this."²

Then we read of Korah, one who was in a significant leadership position among the people of God, launching an attack on Moses.³

The very people Moses gave up all for to save and deliver from slavery in Egypt, turned against him and used their tongue to hurt him.⁴ They wanted to remove Moses from leadership—all as a result of evil reports and Satan's deception. Of course, God stepped in every time and brought severe judgment on those people who spoke ill about Moses.

But please, if you are one that gossips about your clergy, his family or any church leadership such as our episcopas, please be aware, you are opposing God Himself—for it is God who appointed His servants to lead His church.⁵

Cause Disunity

How many churches have been split because of someone like Korah, who starts spreading gossip! Satan takes advantage of every unkind word we utter. It causes Christians to close their spirit toward each other.

That is why it says in Gospel according to St Matthew 12:36, “Man should give account for every word he speaks.”

The rifts that take place in parishes are often the result of one or more people spreading rumours and evil reports. When you say “evil news,” don’t misunderstand—speaking truth can often be an evil report or gossip too.

We are told to do unto others what we want others to do for us.⁶ Think of it the other

way—we should not do to others what we would not want them to do to us, either. So we should not say anything unkind about others. The biggest single hindrance that keeps the world from knowing the love of Christ is the unloving attitude that prevails in the Holy Church.

Let me ask you, do you wish for your neighbours or others who may know about your problems, to tell the world about it? It may be true that your daughter or son had some bad habits; maybe they were on drugs for a season. But by God's grace, that's now all in the past. Later on, when a marriage proposal comes for this child of yours, someone who knows of your child's past brings it all out and the marriage proposal falls through. You feel betrayed and deeply hurt. Bible says, "Love covers the multitude of sins."⁷

More than anything else, it is gossip and evil talk that kills love and peace in the church. Are you one that the devil uses to cause disturbance in the body of Christ?

Saul was not a friend of Christians. The negative news about him, how mean and bad he was to Christians, was known to all. And because of that, when he became a follower of Christ, no one wanted to have anything to do with him. Yet in this crisis a man named St Barnabas took Saul under his wing and pleaded on his behalf, and helped to establish Saul. That led to Saul achieving good standing with the church.⁸

Anyone who says he or she is follower of Christ is our brother and sister. We are also told by Christ to “love our enemies.”⁹ If that be so, why is it that we can’t treat our brothers and sisters in our parishes more kindly and love them in spite of their faults?

How come there are over forty thousand Christian denominations in the world and all of them claim to worship one God, the Holy Trinity? Where do all these divisions come from? Are they not caused by small disagreements and fights over minor issues which don’t matter much at all?

More than one person has pointed out that social media is filled with Christians fighting with each other. Words, words, words—destructive and killing words.

Gossip and evil talk multiplies conflict and produces more ungodliness. “Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”¹⁰

Recently, I heard that tens of thousands of people all around the world have been getting rid of their social media pages and quitting many of these different platforms. It may be due to the tremendous negative impact it has on those hooked on it, caused by all this gossip and evil, biased reporting.

Let me ask you, have you been not hurt, stung by the poisonous bite of the cobra called gossip?

¹ Zechariah 13:7–9; ² Numbers 12:2; ³ Numbers 16:3;

⁴ Numbers 14:4; ⁵ Romans 13:1; ⁶ St Matthew 7:12;

⁷ 1 Peter 4:8; ⁸ Acts 9:27; ⁹ St Matthew 5:44; ¹⁰ 2 Timothy 2:16

CHAPTER SIX

How to Detect the Gossipmonger

First, he or she will test your curiosity and eagerness to hear what they want to say. In other words, your compatibility with their way of speaking will be sounded out. The gossipier will do this by asking questions such as “Did you hear?” or “Didn’t you know?” or “What do you think about what he or she is doing?” or “Do you think he or she is telling the truth?” And once he or she feels you are curious and your guard is down, then the evil report comes pouring out.

The gossip could approach you with the pretence that they need your advice on a very important matter and may say, “I need your prayer for understanding” or something similar.

They will flatter you, making you feel like a great person with discernment and wisdom, and then start to tell you these dirty stories, with this deceptive approach to get you to listen to their gossip or evil reports. They will attempt to make you feel pride, as if you are higher than the people they gossip about, as well.

If the person is known for spreading bad news about others, one needs to be alert even when their intention seems good.

How to Detect an Evil Report

I suggest that you ask a few questions before listening to negative news or an evil report from someone who seeks your attention.

One: Ask, “Why are you telling me this? What am I going to do about it?”. Protect

yourself from opening your life to negative and destructive talks that have nothing do with you.

Two: Before they can get started, ask them from where they got their information. If they admit that it's second or third-hand information, you will know that it's gossip. They should have the courage to deal with that person or persons in obedience to the Word.

You may draw from the Bible and say, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."¹

Three: Ask if they have gone directly to the person involved to try and help them by correcting them so that they may stay in obedience to God's Word.

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted."²

Four: Even if they have personally verified all the facts, most times, may I say ninety-nine percent of the time, they have become the victim of gossip and are now carrying on this illness that will hurt so many innocent lives.

Five: Another thing to ask that person is, “May I quote what you have said to me to find out if it’s true?” I know people that have made a covenant with each other when they encounter gossip mongers; they say, “Please know that I will tell everything you tell me to the person concerned.”

Six: Finally, you can say, “Since you don’t have the courage to confront them, I will go with you.” The gossipier usually never agrees to that. They will make some excuse and leave.

The Bible says we must ‘Prove all things and hold firmly only to what is good.’³ Also it is of utmost importance that you protect your heart, not be poisoned and defiled by listening to evil talk.⁴

“The highway of the upright avoids evil;
those who guard their ways preserve their
lives.”⁵

¹ St Matthew 18:15; ² Galatians 6:1; ³ 1 Thessalonians 5:21;
⁴ Ephesians 5:11–12; ⁵ Proverbs 16:17

CHAPTER SEVEN

Symptoms of Defilement

If you open your ears and heart to listen to gossip, chances are that you will be defiled on the inside. Sooner or later your attitude and actions will reveal that change. The enemy has sown bad seeds in your heart and you were unaware of it. Now you live under God's judgment.

Often we hear horror stories of people being poisoned to death by mixing certain potent poisons in their food. Some poisons like cyanide work instantly while others like arsenic work very slowly, taking its toll

on the person over many days or months. They are slow-acting poisons and they go unnoticed; the victim dies without even becoming aware of what actually happened.

This is exactly what happens to millions of people who listen to gossip and evil talk. Gossip is like slow poison working in our system, slowly killing us.

The question is how do we get defiled or poisoned on the inside through this most deceptive work of Satan?

Think about it. If your archenemy gives you something to eat, you will be very careful and not just consume that product. But if someone you trust, like your best friend gave you some tea and it had a drop of deadly poison, you would not think twice or wonder if there is anything wrong.

This is how gossip works. You will listen to your audience, read their email, and be on their Facebook page to learn about what they say or look at photos and so on.

But all this time, negative feedback is going into your subconscious mind and

your thinking, emotions and decisions are changing, as if in response to subliminal messaging.

For example, someone you know tells you about the horrible experience he had with someone that you do not know. You have never known the person your friend is talking about. Yet, here you are listening to the hurt, pain and agony of your friend. The story is told with tears and emotions, and all of a sudden you feel the pain, you empathise, you feel angry, feel upset with that unknown person who hurt your friend. Your emotions are stirred up! You even think of taking revenge on your friend's behalf. If you are a spiritual person, you may pray and fast for your friend to have justice. But then, you don't realise that you have got this whole story wrong; it is upside down. It is your friend who actually created this mess for himself. He might have taken a bribe or spoken against his boss at work, or borrowed money and didn't pay back or any of the thousand things like that could have happened. And look at you—full of

Hell in Your Mouth

pain and sorrow, your heart is troubled, and your peace is gone! You have been defiled on the inside.

It has been proven through many means that our physical well-being is intrinsically connected to our emotional and mental condition. Bitterness is one major factor that can cause serious physical disorders. One cannot imagine the horrible amount of pain, damage and even untimely death that has been caused by gossip and evil talk. When you listen to gossip, you allow evil talk to fall into your heart. Those seeds are sown, they will sprout, and eventually it will choke you to death. All the good and wholesome things like love, kindness, peace, courage and joy, are all killed.

You have become a victim; and your friends who told you all the negative things—they go on with their lives unaware that they are sick and dying too!

When you feel sick, you go to your doctor for a check up to see what is causing the sickness. They put you through various

tests, such as blood test, X-ray, etc. Why do they do these tests? It is so that they can determine the cause of your sickness. When the results of the different tests come, you see the symptoms that you experienced, and everything points to that one particular sickness you have.

In the same way, there are some indications that you can look for to see if you are defiled, poisoned by gossip and evil reports that you allowed into your heart. Only then can you know how to treat the problem.

One: One of the first signs that you are already influenced by the poison of gossip is that, without even thinking, you simply *believe* that the report you heard is true. Imagine if someone told you that another person has been saying a lot of negative things about you. You now simply believe that it is true and your attitude to those people (who supposedly talked against you) is one of pain, anger, self-pity and revenge.

The truth is, such a thing might never have happened! What you heard was not

true at all. It was all made up gossip or partial information. They added a generous spoonful of masala (spices) into it and gave you a horrible tale. Do you see what I'm talking about now?

On the other hand, you can say to yourself, I don't receive these thoughts; I never heard it and in Jesus' name, I don't let it fall on my heart.

Or you tell your friend that you don't want to hear this gossip and if anybody has something against you, they should talk to you.

Later on I will explain how you can handle these kinds of evil reports so that they will not damage you.

Two: The other way for you to know that you are defiled is by seeing how your mind and emotions have formed a negative opinion based on the report you heard. You didn't even take the time to check it out and to find out if it is true. Your mind is made up that what you heard is true and your

heart has turned bitter about it. You are defiled already.

Three: Another sign you are defiled on the inside is if you are now thinking of ways to take revenge or at least how to counter this situation, looking for any evidence to support what you believe to be true. Sure enough, the devil will happily oblige by giving you plenty of ‘facts’ that you now interpret as evidence, which otherwise you never would have thought about. This becomes a part of the way you see and think. You are defiled without doubt.

Four: Another serious and destructive attitude change you will notice in you is that you are now judging others’ motives and coming to negative conclusions. Only God is able to or has the right to judge people. We as humans have no way to know the real motivation behind someone’s actions and we can interpret it only by our own subjective responses and experiences. When you see someone giving Rs. 10,000 to a poor family, you can say they did it to be

praised or to gain good will and reputation from people. That is your judgment. But God might see it in a completely different light. It may have been the previous night that God sent an angel and told them to do it. We have no clue.

But now, since you have opened a door to gossip and evil talk, your subconscious is changing, and now you ascribe negativity and suspicious motives to everything you observe. No matter what, you will always find the dark side in anything and your attitude is no longer one of trust, but of suspicion.

In Philippians 4:8–9, we are told to think about things that are pure.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”¹

Judging others' motives and condemning them is a serious sin. God is one who works without our limitations in time and space, and only He knows the reason and the motivation behind people's actions. But ears that hear gossip will lose godly perspective.

Five: Another obvious symptom that one is defiled by gossip and evil talk on the inside is that they withdraw their spirit from the person who has slandered them. Now, I am not talking about some rumour you heard. It is the hard truth—this person has spread evil reports about you and your family and it's not a made-up story; but entirely true.

But, when you respond to this with an ungodly response instead of repentance, restitution or seeking forgiveness and going to the person directly, as you must do according to St Matthew 18; instead you close your heart with anger and self-pity. Your response now is, "I don't want to work with him or them. I don't want to have anything to do with them anymore. I don't want to talk to them."

People even change their workplace or go to some other church so that they don't have to deal with those people on a personal basis any more. You distance yourself from people and become more and more like a lone ranger.

It is a proven fact that most of the time, we make our decisions based on subconscious instincts and feelings. Listening to evil reports regularly and listening to gossip and indulging in gossiping will damage the unseen link we maintain with others. We are part of the whole. We are social beings. I know people who closed their heart to others. They say, "I don't want to get hurt anymore." This kind of response shows that this person is defiled on the inside. Healing is urgently needed.

Six: Finally another piece of proof that you are defiled by evil talk is that you now start giving evil reports to others. You now become the carrier of the gossip. Like a man who is spreading a highly contagious sickness, you are now being caught in the

world of gossip and are an agent of it. There is an enjoyment while spreading evil reports about others. The devil, the Bible says, is the accuser of the brethren. And now he has one more person to do his job and fulfil the verse in Gospel according to St John 10:10, about Satan's purpose to destroy the lives of people and kill all that is good and wholesome. It is worth to notice this scripture.

“Whoever would foster love covers over an offence, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.”²

¹ Philippians 4:8–9; ² Proverbs 17:9

CHAPTER EIGHT

How to Find Cleansing from the Defilement of Gossip

One: Be aware of consequences. Children often get into dangerous situations simply because they are innocent and are not aware of the consequences of their actions. Think about a child playing with a sharp knife, or trying to treat a king cobra as a toy or putting some metal piece into a live 220 volt electric socket.

We hear stories of thousands of acres of forest being burned down by someone

Hell in Your Mouth

carelessly throwing a lit cigarette from their car to the roadside, which ignites a fire that spreads through the forest. It only takes a spark to burn down an entire forest!

So it is with gossip. We underestimate the uncontrollable danger that is hidden in a few words of gossip. Being aware of the consequences will make us careful and inspire us to guard our tongue and ears from impending danger, but our ignorance prevents that.

Think about the atom bomb, created just by splitting an atom, so tiny, so invisible and yet carrying in it the potential to kill millions of people. Are you aware of the potential damage and disunity you can cause by negative talk, gossip and evil reports? This will destroy others and you at the same time.

To know the problem is half the solution. Unless you know the problem, how can you solve it?

It may sound like I am repeating what I already said, but it is important that we

understand the seriousness of this problem so we will have the fear of God in us and the motivation for protecting ourselves from this danger.

Gossip, either doing it or participating in it by listening, is not a joke. It will kill you. It will.

Psalm 19:14, Proverbs 6:16–19 and Psalm 15, are all scripture passages where God tells us how He sees gossip. He warns us to flee from it.

Two: The next advice I have is that you truly repent of the sin of gossip. If you have been used by the enemy, or even inadvertently by habit have been part of any form of gossip, speaking or hearing—you need to ask God for forgiveness. You must then contact everyone that you told this evil report to and people that you listened to and got defiled, and seek forgiveness for hearing it or saying it.

Please never forget, time and space never heals sin; only repentance can cleanse us from all sin.¹

Confession is a jewel which has been missing from much of the church. We are told in the book of St James to confess our sin to one another.²

When you hear the words “your sins are forgiven” from a brother or sister or your priest, those are sacred words spoken on behalf of Christ Himself. King David made terrible mistakes and committed sins. But in the end when he was willing to admit it, God had a man named Nathan say to King David, “Your sins are forgiven.” So it is with any sin. If we have sinned against others, it is important that we be willing to humble ourselves and ask for and receive forgiveness from God, as they speak the words of forgiveness to us.

Let’s consider my own journey. There have been so many, even hundreds of incidents where I have asked forgiveness from others, both privately and publicly. How often have I had to say, “I am sorry for what I said, please forgive me,” sometimes even to strangers!

My point is, don't ever take gossiping and talking negatively about others to be a minor simple matter. We are dealing with life and death.³

Three: The third thing to do so that you may find freedom from the bondage of gossip and judgment of God is to break the ongoing relationship with those that gossip. They may be your family members, best friends, but you need to break this chain of gossip and evil talk about others.

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.”⁴

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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.”⁵

Imagine you have a water pipe that comes into your kitchen, and every time you open the tap, contaminated, polluted, dirty water

comes out. You know well that this will eventually kill you and your family. So what do you do? You cut off the connection. This is exactly what you should do with gossip. Stop your fellowship with those who gossip. I am not the one that says this; God is telling you to do so for the sake of your own life. We must fear God.

Your connection with them on social media, over the phone and in person, all of it should be cut off if you are to save your life. Kill it and you shall live.

Four: Make restitution. If you have gossiped or talked ill about someone, whatever that may be, please be willing to make restitution the best you can and pray that it pleases God.

The story of Zacchaeus is a good example for us. He said, “If I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”⁶

With something like gossip, we may never ever be able to repay or make up for the

damage that was caused due to our evil talk. Maybe they killed themselves; the divorce already took place; they lost their job, home and all income. God knows all that. Be sincere in your intention to do all you can to help. That is all you can do. Leave the rest with God, who is able to do things beyond our imagination.

Five: Another important thing to do when you deal with gossip is to do as the Scripture says, “Test all things.”⁷ Do not just believe what you hear; test what you hear is true or not. Then if it doesn’t concern you or the Lord’s name, you leave it alone. The truth is that ninety-nine percent of the time, rumour is just that—a rumour! And you don’t want to be part of it.

Six: Finally, I recommend that you honestly pray for deliverance and the cleansing of your heart. Be specific with details when telling God about what you did and ask Him to forgive you or cleanse you from all sins.⁸

Hell in Your Mouth

Ask God to cleanse your mind from the defilement of an evil report. Pray to God that He will give you genuine love for all who are involved in gossip and evil reports.

Cleanse your mind with appropriate Holy Scriptures.

¹ 1 John 1:8–9; ² St James 5:16; ³ Proverbs 18:21;
⁴ Ephesians 5:11–12; ⁵ Romans 16:17; ⁶ St Luke 18:8;
⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:21; ⁸ 1 John 1:8–9

CHAPTER NINE

Proof that your Heart is Cleansed

One: One of the main proofs that your heart is cleansed of the poison of gossip and evil reports is when you lose your urge to tell someone else the evil report you heard or imagined.

As a matter of fact, now your heart feels grief over the fact that you were involved in spreading the gossip.

And now, you feel genuine love towards the people involved and especially to those who were hurt and damaged in the process.

Two: You know your heart is cleansed when you regain the lost confidence in the one who was slandered. It may take a little time, but your change of attitude will be seen in your words and actions.

Three: Finally, you know you are cleansed when you honestly feel that you are a great sinner, always in need of God's mercy.

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.¹

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.²

For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.³

In closing, I want to share a poem that I wrote after counselling someone who was deeply wounded by evil gossip and lies people spread about them. That too happened in a church by the people of God. How sad!

Tongue (based on the life of Job)

I fold my hands
And beg of you
On bended knee,
Have mercy on me
Don't hurt me anymore
With words
So sharp
Sharper than double-edged sword
I ask of you now
To sit in my place
And feel my pain
Before you speak
How can you be so numb?
Not to care if I hurt
If you are in my place
What would you wish?

Hell in Your Mouth

I cry all night long
All alone
My children all died, all wealth gone
 my wife curses me
Innocent though I am
My relatives failed me
Forsaken by friends
My servants don't answer
Street boys mock me
I am skin and bones
My flesh rots.

When will this all end?
Or end of me
Until then
Tell me a few words
Of hope and comfort
Please
I beg you on bended knees.

¹ Galatians 6:1; ² 1 Peter 2:1–2; ³ 1 Peter 3:10

CHAPTER TEN

Parting Words

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. I assure you, if you follow the instructions that God has given us regarding how we must use our words, you will be blessed. As we come to the end of this journey with this subject, I want to leave you with a few practical applications that I think will be helpful.

One: What you say, your *words*, have life. Your words have power beyond your logic and reason to give life and well-being (healing) or to bring sorrow and death to

others. Therefore, think deeply and become aware of it.

Two: Satan is the authour of words that bring destruction and death; therefore think before you speak. Ask yourself before you speak, who is the source of what you are about to say? If you sense it is not from a godly source, respond by saying, “Get behind me Satan.” This is what Jesus did, when He understood that what Peter spoke originated from demonic influences.¹

Three: You surely don’t want to get on the wrong side of God Almighty who hates gossip and evil talk. Therefore, avoid it as you would a king cobra.

Four: Be the agent of hope and life, and determine to speak words that represent Christ’s nature. Read the four gospels to learn of it.

Five: What you listen to and who you listen to have serious consequences. Therefore, be diligent and protect your heart by making godly choices as to what and whom you lend your ears to.

Six: Listening to gossip and evil reports will bring damnation to your life. Therefore, develop the habit of asking the question, “Why are you telling me this?”. This will prevent evil seeds from falling on the soil of your heart.

Seven: Time will not bring healing and forgiveness to the grievous sin of the tongue. Therefore, choose to repent and seek cleansing from God, which is the only way to find freedom from curse and judgment. Read the book of Proverbs to learn more about how to use your words wisely.

Here is a prayer of David that can be ours too: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”²

¹ St Matthew 16:23; ² Psalm 19:14

