

# Ruined Reputations

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Matthew 11:19 (NIV)

**F**or the Christian, the loss of reputation is often the most difficult loss to handle. Money can be earned to replace what we lose, health can usually be regained through the marvels of modern science—but our reputation, it seems, can never be reestablished once the evil speech has gone out of the critic’s mouth.

The filth of gossip can leave a stain that might only be removed in the day of judgment. Then the Lord will give the slandered person their just praise. In that day no one will object to God’s commendation.

Losing our reputation can be so very painful for the above reasons. If we cry, “Foul!” people will often not listen. Somehow our sinful natures enjoy the lies spoken against a person more than words of praise. It is almost hopeless to seek to correct the evil speech spoken against our reputation. This often makes the loss of a good name final.

Perhaps you suffer in this manner today. You did not do the evil things you are accused of doing. Perhaps you have never even been tempted to do such things. But sometimes people make unfounded assumptions and share them with anyone who will listen. Your good reputation is then lost.

Jesus knows what that is all about. He was wrongly accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. Certainly He went to parties and celebrations. Once He even created wine when the host of a wedding party suffered the embarrassment of not having enough provision (John 2:1-11). Jesus did feast with those who celebrated, but there was no evidence He was ever drunk.

The last half of the criticism in today’s verse is right on the mark. Jesus was indeed the friend of sinners. This criticism was worn as a badge of honour by the Saviour. His entire mission was to come to seek and save the lost sin-

ners of the world. He did not come to help self righteous people. Instead He called the lost, the defiled, the dregs of humanity to come to Him and be made morally clean. Jesus came to recreate those deformed by sin into perfectly whole individuals who learned to love purity of life.

The last statement in our verse is where we who have been slandered find hope. Jesus is saying that the life lived will prove—or else contradict—the gossip. Here is where we find hope in times when evil speech has stolen our good reputation. Live the Christlike life and it will be the most effective means of stopping the slanderers. As long as the Lord knows the truth, we need to learn to be content. In His time the Lord will stop the mouths of your critics. Be patient and wait on the Lord. Your reputation in heaven is unmarred.

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