**THE TONGUE - 2**

**The Sin of Gossip**

**INTRODUCTION** - Last week we began a study of the tongue.  We identified what it is, noting that it is a gift of God that sets us apart from animals.  We noted how powerful it is, according to **JAMES 3:1-12** last Sunday evening.  We spoke of our need to learn to control it.  And we noted some general passages addressing the tongue.  Today, we begin studying the sins of the tongue.  For the next few weeks we will examine various ***categories*** of sins involving the tongue.  Today we begin with the sin of gossip.  I chose this category first because it is one we all need and many of the others categories we will study can include this sin.

**I.** **WHAT IS GOSSIP?**

a.   Defined.  AHD, “*Rumor or talk of a personal, sensational or intimate nature.  2. A person who habitually speaks intimate or private rumors as fact*.”
**Wordnet dictionary** (Princeton) defines the word, “*2.  a report, (often malicious) about the behavior of other people;…3) a person given to gossiping and divulging personal information about others.  Verb. 1. wag one’s tongue; speak about others and reveal secrets or intimacies,…*”  It does NOT have to be false to be gossip.
Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible dictionary defines the word as, “a person who spread rumors or idle, fruitless tales.”
*“To set the record straight: Gossip is talking about other people behind their backs. It usually involves negative or private details that put the individual in a bad light. While the* content *of the discussion might not be that scandalous, our careless words nevertheless can cause hurt.”* (Mark D. Roberts, In Touch Ministries, ww2.intouch.org)

b.  It is one of those sins that we seem to overlook.  While we condemn others for their terrible sins and the way they live their lives, we don’t realize that in gossiping we are engaged in a terrible sin ourselves.  Gossip is a sin that often destroys the lives of those being talked about (often without their knowledge until it is too late) AND the reputation of the one telling you this “juicy tidbit” because he becomes known for his or her tongue.

c.        The problem of gossip

                           i. In society gossip is considered acceptable.  In fact, one of the definitions given for *gossip*” is “*light, informal conversation for social occasions.*” (Wordnet dictionary).  We know deep down it is not a good thing, but we want to hear it anyway, especially about celebrities. Shows BOAST about the gossip they are going to tell.  The tabloids so openly displayed are nothing but gossip sheets (I call them *RAGS*).  Continually we hear about the lawsuits filed because of gossip in these magazines.

                          ii. Among brethren it is even more shameful.  It has separated families, damaged marriages; hurt the leadership of congregations and in some instances even led to division.  It is a HATEFUL sin and God despises.

                        iii.  Gossip does irreparable damage.  One author noted concerning gossip that it is a means of “rejoicing in iniquity” – **1 COR 13:5**.  He notes that the “*essence of gossip…is gloating in over the sins and shortcomings of others.”*  He proceeds with an illustration, *“Have you ever had anybody come up and whisper in your ear, “Have you heard? Let me tell you something good!” It hardly ever happens. When somebody says to me, “Have you heard?” I know I’m in for some bad news. Bad news travels quickly. If we could ever get the Good News to travel as fast as the bad news, we’d have an evangelistic revolution. Gossip is the epitome of delighting in evil*.[[1]](http://www.roseavenue.org/sermons/The%20Tongue/Study%20of%20Tongue%203%20-%20Gossip.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1%22%20%5Co%20%22)”

                        iv. **PROV. 1:27** - It is a product of idleness.  If we as brethren were busy doing good things for the cause of Christ, we wouldn’t have time to talk about others.

**II.** **WHAT DOES GOD’S WORD SAY ABOUT GOSSIP?**

a. The word is not used in the KJV, but it is in other versions.  Beyond this, there are several other words that define this idea

                           i. Gossips – **1 TIM. 5:13** - a warning concerning younger widows remarrying rather than letting the church support them.  The reason is that such become idle with their time which leads to their gossip.  The KJV uses the word “tattlers” which describes what they do.  We know about the little child who is a “tattler” always looking to get someone else in trouble.  IT is disturbing with little children, and hopefully we break them of the habit: But what do you do when it is an adult that knows better?

                          ii. Busybodies – another term used in **1 TIM. 5:13**.  The WS Dictionary defines this word as, “*people who scurry about fussing over, and meddling in, other people’s affairs being overwrought with unnecessary cares*.”  NOTE: This word is found also in **ACTS 19:19** where it is used to describe the “magical arts” of witchcraft.  The idea was that they were tinkering with the magic of witchcraft MUCH THE same way gossips tinker with the affairs of others.
It is also found in –

**2 THESS. 3:11**

**1 PET. 4:15** – don’t suffer as a busybody

**PROV. 26:17**

                        iii. Talebearers, - **LEV.. 19:16, PROV.. 11:13, 20:19, 18:8, 26:22** – this describes one who is spreading rumors or falsities about someone (WS Dictionary OT).  It is one going around looking for scandals.

                        iv. Whisperers – **PROV. 16:28, ROM. 1:29-30** (also, inventors of evil things).  This describes one who slander in secret.  When someone comes to you and says, “I’ve got something to tell you about …” there is a good chance this word applies.

                         v. Repeating a matter – **PROV. 17:9.**  The idea is useless repetitions.

                        vi. Slander – **PROV.10:18, 1 TIM. 3:11, TITUS 2:3.**  Gossip, WHEN IT IS UNTRUE, can involve slander which is a VERY SERIOUS sin.  We will deal more with this one under sins of hate.  It is mentioned here to get your ATTENTION.

b. Passages that condemn gossip.  In addition to the above descriptive words that are condemned, consider these:

                           i. **JAMES 3** – the destroying fire fits very aptly here.

                          ii. **PROV. 6:12-14** – a worthless man – walks with a perverse mouth

                        iii.  **PROV. 25:9** – keep your conversation with your neighbor ONLY.  Don’t tell secrets!

                        iv.  **PROV. 26:28** – it is a sign that you HATE your neighbor

**III.**  **DEALING WITH GOSSIP =**

a.  Where do we start?  There are SO MANY passages that deal with this sin.

b.  Think about how much damage gossip actually does.
I heard of a young man who went to his preacher for advice because he realized he had spread gossip and wanted to make it right.  The preacher took a feather pillow and told him to put a single feather on each doorstep in the neighborhood.  When the boy returned, the preacher told him to retrieve each feather.  Obviously, the young man realized the point was that once gossip is spread, you CANNOT reverse ALL the damage it can cause.
Do you REALLY want to hurt someone that way?

c.   IF you are guilty of Gossip – REPENT!  Like any other sin – if it is NOT repented of will lead to your condemnation.

d.   Learn to bridle your tongue **- JAMES 1:19-20, 1:26**.  The best way to do this is LEARN to be quiet!

e.   Remember **TITUS 3:2** – speak evil of NO man, **JAMES 4:11-12**

f.   Before you repeat a matter ask yourself these three questions:  Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?  Also try **PHIL. 4:8** – will your words pass that test?
**JN. 7:24** – judge with a righteous judgment.  THINK before you talk about someone else.
**EPH. 4:29** - “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification.”

g.   **MATT. 18:15-17** – IF YOU HAVE got a problem, GO TO YOUR BROTHER**!**  Often times, gossip violates this passage.  As such it shows that you DON’T love your brother the way you ought to.

h.   **ECCL. 10:20 - don’t be so sure it will not get back to the one involved**.  Understand that if it does NOT get back to them – they are hurt in a way that they cannot respond to because they don’t know what is going on.  IF it DOES get back to them, the damage is still there and it may take years to repair that damage.

i.    ***Don’t listen to gossip*** – **PROV. 17:4, 26:20.**  FOR a gossip to thrive, they need someone to listen.  CAN you listen to such garbage and NOT be guilty of sin?  You KNOW the answer.

j.   **MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!**  NOTE **1 THESS. 4:11** –Keep busy with your OWN affairs and you won’t have time to gossip.

k.   **MATT. 12:36** - **for every idle word men may speak,** the WILL give an account.

l.    NOTE: Having said all this: Can we ever go to someone else seeking advice about another person?  Yes!  I believe that if we have a concern we should be able to go to the elders (or MAYBE some older, mature brother or sister) if you need advice dealing with a given situation.   But even in this remember:

                     i.    You have a duty to go to the one you have concerns about!  Go with the intent of finding an answer so that you CAN deal with the issue.

                    ii.    Often the first question they will ask you is, “Have you gone to him/her about this”?  IF not, “Why?”

                   iii.    Examine why you are going to another.  Make sure you are NOT going simply to make yourself look good while the other person is looked down upon.
Sometimes, people go to others with a FALSE HUMILITY.  They JUSTIFY what they say in the name of “concern.”  For example: One might say, “Please pray for …. Because (insert the juicy tidbit about someone else).

**CONCLUSION** –

The Bible has much to say about the tongue.

The tongue is difficult to control but we can do it with God’s help.

If we could simply learn to NOT talk about others more than we need to, we could stop gossip.  The church will thrive as a result of this.  AND you will be that much closer to being able to bridle your whole body.

Is gossip a part of your vocabulary?  If so, STOP IT RIGHT NOW!

REPENT - For your sake, for the sake of others, for the sake of the Lord’s church and ultimately for the Lord Himself.  Think about it!