

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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Gossip

by Marvin Rickett

“Oh, you’ll never hear one of us repeating gossip, so you’d better be sure and listen close the first time.” This is a humorous by-line of the former television show called “Hee Haw.” But the subject of gossip is really not that funny. It is another sin of the tongue. Jesus warned, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37). We teach our children to sing “Oh, be careful little mouth what you say.”

The word gossip is not found in the Bible. It is a Middle English word which means “indulge in idle talk or rumors about others.” The Bible, however, uses other words which comprehend the sin of gossip. It is included in the “idle words” of which Jesus said “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

The Apostle Paul uses the word “whisperer” to include a gossip. The Greek work *psithuristas* is an onomatopoeic word whose pronunciation sounds like the act of whispering. It is defined as “secret slanderer, speak in one’s ear.” This is one of the sins to which man degenerated when he left God out of his knowledge (Romans 1:29). It was one of the degraded conditions Paul feared he would find in the Corinthian church when he came (2 Corinthians 12:20). The Wise Man noted that “a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 16:28).

Another word used by the Bible that includes gossip is “talebearer.” In the old Testament, Moses forbade a person to be a talebearer (Leviticus 19:16). The Wise Man pointed out the evil wrought by a talebearer (Proverbs 11:13).

The words “tattler” and “busybody” usually involve gossiping. Paul describes to Timothy how idle widows might become “tattlers and busybodies” (1 Timothy 5:13). The word for tattler is from a word which means to “boil up.” It is defined as “indulge in empty and foolish talk, talk idly, bring forward idle accusations, make empty charges.” The word for busybody simply means “busy about other folks’ affairs.” These are things they “ought not” to do.

The evil in gossip is that it causes strife, ruins reputations, assassinates character, and separates chief friends. Proverbs say, “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Proverbs 26:20). In the church, gossipers have caused strife and division among brethren. It ought not to be.

Not all conversation about others is gossip. Some communication, and some kinds of communication, about people is essential and produces good fruit. It deteriorates into gossip when it becomes censorious talk, when it is basically a lie, or when it is an “inflated truth.” Sometimes gossip is an out-and-out lie, with no truth to it whatsoever. More often, though, it is based on an element of truth, then gets blown all out of proportion. The real evil of this kind of gossip is the impuning of motives, the enlargement of the details, the addition of some fiction to enhance the drama in the telling.

Before one repeats something he observes or hears about another, he should stop and ask himself two questions: (1) Is it the truth? Things are not always as they seem. The reality of a situation isn’t always what it appears. One may not have the whole story. Perhaps he needs to

wait a while. (2) What good will it accomplish? Will it bear some good fruit if it is repeated: Will it make someone a better person? Will it bring the offender to repentance? Will it forewarn and forearm the listener against some danger? Will it give the opportunity for someone else to help? If one cannot answer these in the affirmative, then the story should not be repeated. It may even be the truth, but if the telling of it harms rather than helps, then it should be allowed to die right there.

Women have had the reputation of being the worst offenders in gossip, but men can be just as guilty. Yet, perhaps there is an element of truth to this. Men, by nature, tend to talk more about things when they get together in conversation; whereas women have more of a tendency to talk about people. A popular song of a few years back said, “As long as old men sit and talk about the weather and as long as old women talk about old men.” However, gossip is a sin, no matter who engages in it.

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Attitudes Toward Sin

by Joel Wheeler

Our attitude determines our actions toward a thing. The proverb writer said “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,*” (Prov. 4:23). Our attitude toward sin will determine how we will handle it. Jesus said “*But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man*” (Matt. 15:18). We need to realize the improper attitudes so that we can avoid them. Consider several improper attitudes towards sin that we must avoid.

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We must avoid minimizing sin. Too many times we try to lessen sin by changing it's name. We have changed the name of the drunkenness to alcoholism, car theft to joy riding, cursing and obscenity is emphatic speech. When we change the name of sin it becomes less threatening to us, but in reality it is more dangerous. If we change the name of poison to peppermint, it becomes more dangerous. The inspired writer said, "*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD*" (Prov. 17:15).

We must avoid making a joke of sin. Many would make something funny out of sin. To laugh and joke at sin is blasphemous. "*Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour*" (Prov. 14:9). We need to recognize sin for what it is and feel genuine sorrow. What causes individuals to laugh at drunkenness, murder, immoral actions, filthy language and such? Sin is serious business and we need to be concerned rather than making it a joke.

We must avoid denying it. "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). First John 3:4; 5:17 and James 4:17 are inspired definitions of sin. We cannot pretend it does not exist or is not real. God says it's real and tells us what it is. The Christian Scientist says, "the notion that both evil and good are real is a delusion of material sense." What they are saying is that evil and sin are just a figment of the imagination. But Paul wrote "*For the wages of sin is death, . . .*" (Rom. 6:23). If sin and evil are just our imagination, then why would he say that death or eternal separation would be the pay for it? Denying sin or evil does not make it go away.

We must not love it. There are plenty of individuals who love sin and love to be a part of sin. "*He loveth transgression that loveth strife; and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction*" (Prov. 17:19). There are many warnings concerning the love of sin. "*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*" (Rom. 1:32). The warning is very clear, that if we love sin and take pleasure in it, we are worthy of death in the eyes of God!

We must understand that sin is terrible and it is not to be supported. We must realize that sin ends in spiritual death and our eternal destiny is at stake.

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BE THOU FAITHFUL

By Richard England

Bible Lesson Number Thirteen

Revelation 2:10 "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

"Faithful" means "steady," trustworthy, dependable, unmov-

able, standing firm regardless of opposition. The word is even used with reference to the trustworthiness of God, who, of course, does not have "faith" in the sense of acceptance of testimony of another (**1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 11:11; 1 John 1:9**). In the case of **Revelation 2:10**, it is faithfulness to God in the face of persecution and even death. Of course, God wants us to be faithful until the day we die, but, in this verse he is saying that we must be faithful even if it brings about our death.

God requires faithfulness. After having assured the Corinthian brethren of the hope of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul, the inspired apostle Paul said: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that the seed which fell in the stony places represents the word being taught to one who hears and with joy receives it, "*yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*" (**Matthew 13:21**). Such people believe the testimony heard, yet, are not "faithful."

When the Bible addresses the "faithful in Christ Jesus" (**Ephesians 1:1** et al), it is speaking of people whose lives are governed by their faith in "the faith." (Cf. **Galatians 3:23; Jude 3**) Other expressions dealing with the same concept are: "live by faith" (**Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11**), "walk by faith" (**2 Corinthians 5:7**), "walk after the Spirit" (**Romans 8:1,4,5**), "walk in the light" (**1 John 1:7**), and "follow after righteousness" (**1 Timothy 6:11**). Each of these verses speaks of actively, diligently, unrelentingly pursuing a goal. The pursuit is within the sphere of the "light" of the gospel as revealed by the "Spirit." It is a way of life, because of a conviction of heart. Look at the words "live," "walk," and "follow." They are verbs of action.

When one walks after the "Spirit," he is "led by the Spirit," and is thus a child of God (**Romans 8:14**). One leads, the other follows. In the same chapter the writer speaks of walking after the flesh. There is no difficulty in understanding that such an expression describes one who is practicing the things dictated by the desires of the flesh. In like manner, it is not difficult to see that walking after the Spirit is doing the things commanded by the Spirit in the word of God. People who say that there is absolutely nothing for us to **do** in order to appropriate the blessings of God to ourselves are in direct conflict with the Bible.

In view of all the teaching of the Bible that we must **do** something in order to affect our eternal salvation, do not be discouraged by thinking that if you make a mistake along the way you will be eternally lost. The verse which tells us to "*walk in the light*" is immediately followed by a statement that says we sin if we say we do not sin (**1 John 1:8 - 2:3**). The word "*sin*" in this passage is speaking of an event, not a way of life. What, then, does the expression "*walk in the light*" mean? It means to live as best we can, recognizing and confessing the occurrence of sin in our lives. There must be the constant effort to overcome sin rather than giving in to it. To give in to sin is to live in sin (**1 John 3:6,9**). Here the term "*sin*" speaks of a way of life, not just an event. Take special notice of these verses as translated in the NIV:

"No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him . . . No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." (**1 John 3: 6,9**).

The conclusion that must be drawn is that faithfulness to God entails an "unwearied approach to an unreached goal" (GNW), guided by the teaching of the Spirit as revealed in the word of God, the Bible. The journey is constantly marked by confession, not denial

of any shortcomings along the way. Doing so, we are assured that when the judgment day comes we will hear Jesus say:

"Well done, thou good and faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (**Matthew 25:21**).

Questions

1. What is the meaning of "*faithful*"?
2. Is there a difference between being "*faithful*" and "*living by faith*," "*walking by faith*," "*walking after the Spirit*," "*walking in the light*," or "*following after righteousness*"?
3. What is it to be "*led by the Spirit*"?
4. Must one attain absolute sinlessness in life in order to be saved? Explain.
5. Discuss some of the things that have not been mentioned in this particular lesson, but, would be included in the expression of being "*faithful*".

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WHY DID GOD GIVE US THE BIBLE?

By Ed Allard

In the Bible we find phrases such as "God said," "God spoke," and "thus says the Lord." Moses was the first commanded by God to write, and so the Bible was begun. Moses wrote what God said and what God revealed to him. God has given us His word that we might know Him and that we might know His love for us. "The Bible was written to reveal God to mankind as the Creator, to reveal how sin came into the world and separated man from God, to reveal Heaven's redemption and to reveal the eternal destiny of the soul" (Ramm).

The Old Testament was written to tell us of One who was to come and the law of Moses was given to lead the Israelites to Christ (Galatians 3:23-24). The New Testament was written to tell us of the One who had come. Its

purpose is to produce faith in Jesus as the Son of God, to teach the way of salvation, and to identify for us the church which Christ established. All of the books of the New Testament teach us how to live as Christians. Acts through Revelation show us what Christ wants His church to be and what He wants His church to do.

Sadly, it seems futile to try to get those who can influence the minds of people to either teach that which God's word says and follow it or quit posing as God's servants. They are ministers of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), deceived into thinking they are God's servants. Or they do not believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God, and so suppose that they have the authority to change it and modify it to suit themselves as God's servants. This is completely contrary to the Bible of course, but since they don't truly believe in the Bible as God's word, they don't follow it.

But I appeal to honest souls; sincere, truth loving people; those who recognize that they are not following God's word as it is given. To you I plead, "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Follow the words of the prophet Micaiah, "As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak" (2 Chronicles 18:13). Study the word to see if there is any practice God would have you do that you are not engaged in, and begin immediately to do that. Study the word to see if there is any practice you are engaged in that God's word does not teach and immediately cease that practice. Study the word to see if there is any practice that you are involved in because of tradition that makes the word of God void and end that practice. Study the word to see if there is anything that is done that is a contradiction of the word. We have the choice. We can follow God's word or we can follow the word of man. To whose word do you go? The Bible and the Bible alone reveals the words of eternal life and the life that must be attained in Christ as members of

His spiritual body, the church, to receive eternal life. Devote yourself to settling every issue by the oracles of God.

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"LOVE FERVENTLY"

By David Macy
(deceased)

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). If something is fervent it is stretched out tightly like the strings of a guitar. We should love our fellow Christians with this kind of love. When we truly do this we make beautiful music together and please God. When the strings become slack and our love for each other grows cold, or sometimes even ceases to exist, we are out of tune with both our fellow Christians and God. Our music becomes a sad, sad song which brings no joy at all to those who hear it.

Fervent love for our brothers and sisters in Christ should be a daily exercise, because it will happily and joyfully cover a multitude of sins. Because of this beautiful shining love which is deeply imbedded in our hearts, we ignore all the faults of our brothers and sisters which we properly can ignore, and actually leap at opportunities to forgive any trespasses against us. This is never what we are forced grudgingly to do, but what we have a burning desire to do, and nothing could make us happier than complete forgiveness and total restoration of our precious fellowship.

Genuine fervent love makes covering a multitude of sins an easy delightful enjoyable task, but when this love is absent the task is absolutely impossible. The covering is always too short or narrow and is a big misfit from the word go. When we get the head of the sin covered the feet stick out, and when we get the feet covered, the head gets exposed. Nobody can do the job without fervent love.

This Cadillac of loves makes our fellow Christians sins small and easy to cover, but without this love, his or her sins loom bigger than a mountain and though we should search to the ends of the earth, we could not find a covering gigantic enough to cover them. Fervent love makes the difference.

Fervent love is what people inside and outside God's fold need in large doses. Give it freely and joyfully every day, especially to your fellow Christians and you will be, without the shadow of a doubt, giving what everyone around you truly needs. Somewhere along the way you will look down and your footprints will be glowing like the noonday sun because you have truly learned how to walk like Jesus walked and live like He lived. When you look at anyone who really needs your love and compassion, they will be able to say of you what they said about Jesus when He approached the tomb of Lazarus weeping, "Behold how He loved Him!" This is the love that "moves mountains," not any other.

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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