

THE

# HARVESTER

*"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)*

**DECEMBER 1997**

**No. 144**

## GOD'S VIEW OF GOSSIP

The ant is a very small insect, yet it is recognized for its strength. Can you think of something else that is small and yet very powerful? It can destroy friends, enemies, neighbors, even our own selves. The answer to this riddle can be found in the Bible. In James 3:3-12 we are told that "the tongue is a little member." However, it can cause a lot of damage. It is full of deadly poison and can defile our whole body. Wilder than the meanest animal in the world, the tongue cannot be tamed by mankind. Also,

THE HARVESTER  
1120 Sun Hill Road  
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Birmingham AL  
PERMIT No. 4624

FORWARD & ADDRESS  
CORRECTION REQUESTED

it has been said that pound for pound man's tongue is the strongest muscle in his body. (It can break a heart in two!) So considering the power of the tongue, it is important that we avoid using it for evil. In particular, let us examine the act of gossiping.

Gossip is a very common occurrence in today's world. There is office gossip, town gossip, school gossip, and family gossip. It seems that everyday we either hear gossip or we help to spread it. It affects everybody, doesn't it? Gossip has become so widely spread that we really do not take it that seriously in light of God's view. What did the wise man Solomon say? "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21). Certainly then we need to be very careful how we use our tongue.

The Bible does not give us a direct definition of gossip, like a dictionary would. It does give us some synonyms for gossipers: talebearers, whisperers, busybodies, tattlers, and backbiters. None of these sound very good, do they? The scriptures also provide us with a common characteristic of a gossip: they can't keep a secret! "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." (Prov. 11:13) We are also informed that gossiping is usually the result of having too much idle time on one's hands. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." (1 Tim. 5:13)

We know that gossiping cannot be viewed by God as a good thing because he tells us about some of its destructive results. For one thing, gossiping creates trouble and strife. *"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."* (Prov. 26:20) Just as we can kill a fire by removing its source of fuel, likewise we can cut down a lot of strife in this world by properly controlling our tongue. One way to do this is to stop "bearing tales", as in gossiping! Second, gossiping can cause a rift between the best of friends. *"A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."* (Prov. 16:28) There is no telling how many friendships have been disintegrated due to a gossiper's "loose" tongue! Finally, gossiping can destroy our neighbor. *"A hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered."* (Prov. 11:9) Did not God command us to love our neighbor? So why do so many of us like to hear and spread the "latest rumors" about our neighbor? Can any good come from all that?

It is particularly interesting to see how gossiping fits into the list of things that God hates. (Yes, friends, there are some things that God hates!) This passage is found in Proverbs 6:16-19. Let's look at each item individually.

1. "A proud look": Have you ever noticed the face of someone who knows a big secret about someone else and they are just "dying" to tell you? Then after the "cat is out of the bag", they have such a big, proud smirk on their face

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus  
301 Varden Hill Road  
Birmingham, AL 35214-1947  
Phone: (205) 791-1399

because, "remember, you heard it first from me"? That is a proud look!

2. *"A lying tongue"*: No doubt half of the time the gossip is not telling a true story. He is usually spreading rumors and hearsay.

3. *"Hands that shed innocent blood"*: Certainly this applies to acts of murder, but I wonder how frequently we have "killed" others with our piercing words.

4. *"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations"*: How often have the stories grown due to our imaginations? Remember the child's game called "Gossip" and how quickly a single phrase can change as it is passed from person to person? Imagination played a big part in that, along with miscommunication.

5. *"Feet that be swift in running to mischief"*: It is well known that gossip spreads faster than a wildfire. When it comes to telling the latest "news", gossipers somehow develop a remarkable running ability.

6. *"A false witness that speaketh lies"*: Again, most gossipers are guilty of spreading fictitious tales and falsehoods.

7. *"He that soweth discord among brethren"*: This is usually what results from gossiping-- hurt feelings, distrust,

anger and/or animosity. And usually among our own brethren! In short, a gossip sows nothing but total chaos by the time everything is said and done.

Therefore, does it not seem obvious that God would highly disapprove of gossiping? Surely it cannot be acceptable to our Father when we are told that those who participate in gossiping will not abide in heaven. *"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor."* (Psa. 15:1-3)

Throughout the New Testament we are commanded to *"speak evil of no man"* (Tit. 3:2). This includes gossiping! The apostle Paul offers this advice: *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."* (Col. 4:6) Furthermore, Peter gives a unique warning in 1 Pet. 4:15 concerning gossiping when he mentions a *"busybody"* in the same breath as a murderer, a thief, and an evil doer! That should prove exactly how God views one who engages in gossiping.

The next time we get that urge to gossip, let us consider the words of Jesus: *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."* (Matt. 12:36) Friends, how have we used our tongue lately? For good or for evil?

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Samson belonged to a special group dedicated to God. What was this group?
2. Where did Jesus spend the night of the day He entered Jerusalem triumphantly?
3. What is like a proverbial kiss on the lips?
4. What chapter is commonly known as the "faith" chapter?
5. To whom did a donkey speak in the book of Numbers?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who did Moses commission as his replacement? JOSHUA (Num. 27:22,23)
2. When twelve thousand Israelite soldiers attacked and killed all the Midianites, how many Israelites were killed? NONE (Num. 31:49)
3. When Peter was asked if he loved Jesus and he answered yes, what did Jesus tell him to do? "FEED MY LAMBS" (Jn. 21:15)
4. Paul said that he could not boast about preaching because he was under what to preach? NECESSITY (1 Cor. 9:16)
5. What was Ezekiel to do with the scroll that the Lord gave him? EAT IT (Ezek. 3:1)

## "SHE SHALL BE SAVED IN CHILDBEARING"

*"Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."*  
(1 Timothy 2:15)

The word *"notwithstanding"* is used to indicate an intended conclusion contrary to what might have otherwise been reached. The woman's transgression and its consequence has been the subject under consideration, but now Paul expands our understanding.

*"She shall be saved in childbearing"* is not meant to assure a woman that she will live through childbirth, for obviously some do not. It does state God's intended purpose unique to women -- that of bearing children. In the beginning God said to Adam and Eve, *"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"* (Gen. 1:28). Paul exhorts in 1 Tim. 5:14, *"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house."* Childbearing has been God's intent for the woman throughout the ages, and in this role the woman has found fulfillment and satisfaction.

But will a woman be lost if she does not bear children? While it is unusual for either a man or a woman to remain single, Paul wrote of this as an even higher calling than marriage (1 Cor. 7:1, 7-9, 40). An unmarried woman would understandably not be expected to bear

(continued next page)

# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE &amp; TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Dec. 5 - 7	Lake City Church near Atlanta, GA 7:30pm E.S.T.	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)



(continued from page 7)

children. Another consideration is raised in Paul's comments in verses 26 - 35. Due to extreme conditions such as Paul describes in these verses, one is cautioned under such circumstances to think soberly before getting married. The same principle would also apply to having children.

Childbearing in itself, however, will not assure salvation for the woman. The mother must "continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (v. 15).

HARRY COBB  
Box 75  
Wedowee, AL 36278

Jesus did not come to this  
earth to save people IN their  
sins. He came to save  
people FROM their sins.