**The Dangerous Untamed Tongue**

 I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives. I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. The more I am quoted, the more I am believed. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name or face. To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become. I am nobody's friend. Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same. I topple governments and wreck marriages. I make innocent people cry in their pillows. My name is gossip. –Author Unknown

 Gossip many times is something that grows and festers over time. It is something that if it is not caught in time can cause damage that cannot be repaired. Sometimes gossip is contagious. One person starts the gossip and over a short period of time it spreads, and then many are doing the same thing. I believe many times the one doing the gossiping is blind to it and they sometimes do not realize what they are doing. It is because of these reasons I believe it is necessary that we look carefully at facts about gossip.

 First of all, “what is gossip?” Gossip is defined as; Idle, often sensational and groundless talk about others. In the Bible it is also known by some other terms like; backbiting, evil speaking, to speak against, talkers (talking idly), foolish talking, idle tales, tale bearer, slander. Gossip many times is repeating something or telling others of something that you do not know is true or that you do not know all the details to. Many times the information being passed on is harmful to another’s reputation.

 The Bible has much to say about gossip. Proverbs 12:17-23 says, *“He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health. The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief. Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.”* What is Gossip? It is an abomination to the Lord.

 The book of Proverbs also states in Proverbs 18:6-8, *“A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”* There is nothing good about gossip. Very simply it is sin.

 Well the next question that comes to mind is, “what if I am not the one doing the gossiping, but I am just listening.” That is similar to saying, “I don’t tell dirty jokes I just listen to them.” Proverbs 20:19 says, *“He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”* Simply put it says do not associate with a gossip. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 Paul tells Timothy to turn away from those who gossip.

 The third question I will ask is, “whether or not I should pass it on?” Some might say, “I’m just telling others what I heard” or “I didn’t start the rumor.” I didn’t start the flu either, but I don’t want to pass it on to everyone I come in contact with. Much like the flu gossip is a virus that continues to spread if we let it. Proverbs 26:20-22 says, *“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”* Where there is no gossip strife ceases. Also Ephesians 4:31 says, *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”* Gossip has no place in a Christian’s life.

 I believe it is also important to realize gossip does not have to be negative. Some say, “Well it isn’t bad so it is okay to tell it” or “I was just stating the facts.” Maybe it isn’t bad, but does it need to be passed on. There maybe things others don’t want passed on, or doesn’t need to be passed on. Maybe that person specifically said that they didn’t want others to know about it. We should control our tongue and keep those things to ourselves.

 Finally, “what are the effects of gossip?” This is probably the most important thing to remember when looking at gossip. Proverbs 25:23 says, *“The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.”* Very simply put, gossip destroys good reputations. In 2 Corinthians 12:20 Paul says, *“For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.”* Paul had a great concern for the Church at Corinth. He knew the destructive power of gossip. Gossip can break apart congregations, it can cause some to fall away from the truth, and it can cause strife between one another. Unfortunately none of us are immune to gossip. It is something we all must watch out for because of the harm that it causes.