



# CENTRAL SHELBY CHURCH OF CHRIST

working and worshipping together to serve the Lord



*"Jesus answered and said to her,  
'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst  
again, but whoever drinks of the water that I  
shall give him will become in him a fountain of  
of water springing up into everlasting life.'" (John 4:13,14)*

## DEADLY POISON

A few of us found ourselves standing around after services a few nights ago, profitably discussing various and specific Bible matters. One of the things we chatted about for a while was the subject described by such Biblical words as *"whispering," "backbiting," "slander,"* and *"gossip."* Here lies a dangerous activity, one (more often than not) practiced due to pride, envy and *"selfish ambition"* (Gal. 5:20). Here is a sin whose practice in this country became widespread with the regular delivery of postal mail and then even further with the invention of the telephone, but now infinitely more so with the age of computers, websites and email. The menace of this evil is further multiplied due to the fact that the majority of its practitioners see themselves as nothing more than *"truth-spreaders."* Somehow this sin has a way of ridding many of all objectivity.

However, in the hope that the readers of this article are still able to engage in a regularly scheduled, objective self-exam (2 Cor. 13:5), we offer the following points for consideration. If any of us find ourselves blameworthy of this heinous crime, may the Lord provide us the strength to quit it. If we are not guilty, then surely *"an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."*

The slanderer/gossip needs to know that:

**[1] HIS ACTIVITY CERTAINLY HURTS THE ONE HE SLANDERS.** Slander is *"the act of saying something false or malicious that damages somebody's reputation"* (Encarta Dictionary). The slanderer seeks, by misleading words, to irreparably injure another's standing among his peers. *"A good name is better than precious ointment"* -- yes, but it can be torn down in an instant by the loose tongued (Prov. 11:9). By gossip friends and even brethren can come to be separated, a thing which the Lord hates (Prov. 16:28; 17:9; 6:19). The Bible says that the one who engages in such is a *"fool"* (Proverbs 10:18).

**[2] HIS WORDS HURT THE ONE TO WHOM HE SPEAKS.** By his speech the gossip encourages his listener(s) to make a judgment based on *"his side of the story."* As he politicizes matters in the mold of Absalom, he drags his listeners down to his level. Many times he seeks to instill within them the comparative spirit, pointing the finger of castigation at others while with flattering

speech he compliments his audience (see Luke 18:9-14). In all of this the slanderer makes willful listeners accessories to his crime.

**[3] HIS SLANDERING OF BRETHREN HURTS THE LORD.** The Bible teaches that whatever we do to Jesus' brethren, we do so to Him (Matt. 25:37-40; Acts 9:4-5). When one hurtfully defames his brother, he in essence is doing such to Jesus.

We need to remember that our brethren are *"the work of God,"* and therefore *"pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another"* (Romans 14:19,20). None of that, however, is going on when one brother backbites and whispers about another. Paul said, *"Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food."* In such a text (Romans 14) he speaks about matters good and right in and of themselves. In other words, *"Don't destroy a brother over a God-given liberty."* God forbid that we would be guilty of destroying a fellow-disciple, whether they be a brother, sister, elder, preacher -- or entire congregation of disciples -- with our evil speaking and slander! They all are *"the work of God."*

**[4] HIS BEHAVIOR HURTS HIMSELF.** Whispering and gossiping takes up time (Man, does it ever!) which could otherwise be used in service to God, rather than in service to Satan. It further makes its user like that Pharisee of Luke 18, taking his mind off his own faults and placing it on the other person's. It makes him guilty of a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). It places him in the same category of reprobates with the homosexual and the murderer (Romans 1:29-32). It *"consumes"* his energy and will eventually *"consume"* him (Galatians 5:14-15). Gossips and slanderers should know that those who favor them with an audience will likely in time slander them.

The Scriptures state that the devil is a slanderer, *"the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night"* (Revelation 12:10). The thought of having a Satanic trait ought to be enough to cause every right-thinking brother to steer wide and clear of this activity. The bottom line, however, is that such behavior is sin and will cause the losing of one's soul. It is serious.

*"But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so"* (James 3:8-10).

--Mike Noble