**GOSSIP**

_Reloicing in Sin_

**Gossip Means**

Whisperer, slanderer, backbiter, tale bearer  
Strong’s #5588 _psithuristēs_  
Pronunciation: [psith-u-ris-tahs’]

**Practical Application**

A gossip is a person...  
who whispers, slanders, backbites, murmurs and tells tales behind another person’s back  
who passes on tales about others, whether true or not.  
who destroys the reputation of others.

One of the most common forms of rejoicing in sin is gossip. Gossips would do little harm if they did not have so many eager listeners. This sin, which many Christians treat lightly, is wicked not only because it uncaringly reveals the weaknesses and sins of others, and therefore hurts rather than helps them, but because the heart of gossip is rejoicing in evil. Gossip that is true is still gossip. It is the way unfavorable truth is passed on, and often simply the fact that it is passed on, that makes gossip, gossip. It has been defined as vice enjoyed vicariously. The essence of gossip is gloating over the shortcomings and sins of others, which makes gossip a great sin itself. A person is never helped by spreading the news of his sin.

Granville Walker said,

> There are times when silence is yellow times when we ought to stand on our feet and regardless of the consequences challenge the gross evils of the time, times when not to do so is the most blatant form of cowardice. But there are other times when silence is golden, when to tell the truth is to make many hearts bleed needlessly and when nothing is accomplished and everything is hurt by a loose tongue.

---

**Genuine Love – Does Not Gossip**

1 Corinthians 13:4,7 (NASB95)  
‘Love … bears all things

_Stegō_ (to _bear_) basically means to cover or to support and therefore to protect. Love _bears all things_ by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm. Genuine love does not gossip or listen to gossip. Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person. Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner.

Fallen human nature has the opposite inclination. There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone's faults and failures. That is what makes gossip appealing. The Corinthians cared little for the feelings or welfare of fellow believers. It was every person for himself. Like the Pharisees, they paid little attention to others, except when those others were failing or sinning. Man's depravity causes him to rejoice in the depravity of others. It is that depraved pleasure that sells magazines and newspapers that cater to exposés, "true confessions," and the like. It is the same sort of pleasure that makes children tattle on brothers and sisters. Whether to feel self-righteous by exposing another's sin or to enjoy that sin vicariously, we all are tempted to take a certain kind of pleasure in the sins of others. Love has no part in that. It does not expose or exploit, gloat or condemn. It _bears_; it does not bare.
Slanderers and Gossips

2 Corinthians 12:20 (NASB95)
20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

Slanders translates the word katalalia (“insults,” “evil reports”), which appears only here and in 1 Peter 2:1. The related verb katalaleō is translated “speak against” in James 4:11. Using a different Greek word, Paul had warned the Corinthians not to associate with a “reviler” (1 Cor. 5:11; cf. 6:10). In contrast to gossip, which is quiet, subtle, behind-the-back whisper of defamation, slander is open, public vilification. Both stem from arrogance (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1) and result in disturbances. The net result was the divisions that plagued the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11:18).

Gossips speak nonsense, talk idly, make empty charges, or accuse with malicious words.

Malicious Gossips

2 Timothy 3:1-3 (NASB95)
1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

Gossip is often thought of as being relatively harmless, but at best it is unkind, harmful, and ungodly. A self-centered person derives perverse pleasure from malicious gossip, brutality, and treachery. His satisfaction comes, in part, from the pain and misery he sadistically inflicts on others, including parents and supposed friends.

Malicious gossip is a sin of an even more evil and destructive sort. Whereas the irreconcilable person tends to disregard and neglect others, malicious gossips make a point of harming others. Whether to promote their own interests, to express jealousy or hatred, or simply to vent their anger, they take perverse pleasure in damaging reputations and destroying lives.

The term “malicious gossips” translates diabolos, which, even to the person unacquainted with Greek, suggests the severity of this evil, with our English derivative “diabolical.” Diabolos means “accuser” and is used thirty-four times in the New Testament as a title for Satan. Engulfed and blinded by self-love, malicious gossips do the very work of Satan.

The Devil – a Slanderer and Malicious Gossip

Diabolos (devil) means "slanderer," or "malicious gossip" (1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3)—an appropriate title for the “accuser of our brethren” (12:10). Satan is a malignant liar; in fact, he is "the father of lies" (John 8:44). Satanas (Satan) and its Hebrew root satan are used fifty-three times in Scripture. Both words mean "adversary," since Satan opposes God, Christ, and all believers.
Gossip and Slander – Sins Set on Fire by Hell

James 3:6 (NASB95)

6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

To a large extent, we are known by the way we talk. Over the long haul, what we say gives others a pretty good idea of who and what we really are. That principle applies to good things as well as sinful, but James's emphasis here is entirely on the negative aspects of our speaking—such as gossip, slander, false accusations, lying, filthy language and stories, and other sins of the tongue—that can destroy individual lives, families, schools, churches, and communities.

Warren Wiersbe tells the story of a pastor friend who told him of a woman in his congregation who was a terrible gossip.

One day she said to him, "Pastor, the Lord has convicted me of my sin of gossip. My tongue is getting me and others into trouble." When he guardedly asked, "Well, what do you plan to do about it?" she replied, "I want to put my tongue on the altar." Because she had said the same thing so many times and yet never changed, he told her, "There isn't an altar big enough" ([The Bible Exposition Commentary] [Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1989], 2:358).

There is, of course, an altar that is more than big enough, because our Lord assures us that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1 John 1:9]). But the pastor's underlying frustration is understandable. The problem was in the woman's unwillingness to actually lay her tongue on the altar. She knew very well what her sin was and what was required for its remission. She was simply unwilling to pay the price. She loved her gossip more than she loved righteousness. She was unwilling to determine with David, "I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle while the wicked are in my presence" ([Ps. 39:1]).

Some years ago, Morgan Blake, a sportswriter for the Atlanta Journal, wrote the following satire:

I am more deadly than the screaming shell from the howitzer. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, and wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name is Gossip. (Cited in George Sweeting, Faith That Works [Chicago: Moody, 1983], 76-77).

The havoc a slanderous tongue can cause is graphically illustrated by the following tragic story:

They were a happy little family, living in a small town in North Dakota, even though the young mother had not been entirely well since the birth of her second baby.

But each evening the neighbors were aware of a warmth in their hearts when they would see the husband and father being met at the gate by his wife and two small children. There was laughter in the evening too, and when the weather was nice Father and children would romp together on the back lawn while Mother looked on with happy smiles.

Then one day a village gossip started a story, saying that [the father] was being unfaithful to his wife, a story entirely without foundation. But it eventually came to the ears of the young wife, and it was more than she could bear.
Reason left its throne, and that night when her husband came home there was no one to meet him at the gate, no laughter in the house, no fragrant aroma coming from the kitchen—only coldness and something that chilled his heart with fear.

And down in the basement he found the three of them hanging from a beam. Sick and in despair, the young mother had taken the lives of her two children, and then her own.

In the days that followed, the truth of what had happened came out—a gossip's tongue, an untrue story, a terrible tragedy.

What Else Scripture Says About Gossips and Slanderers?

**Proverbs 20:19 (NASB-U)**
He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

**Proverbs 20:19 (NLT)**
A gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much.

**Romans 1:29 (NASB-U)**
Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips.

**Romans 1:29 (NLT)**
Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.

**1 Tim. 3:11 (NASB-U)**
Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

**1 Tim. 3:11 (NLT)**
In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not speak evil of others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.

**1 Tim. 5:13 (NASB-U)**
At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.

**1 Tim. 5:13 (NLT)**
Besides, they are likely to become lazy and spend their time gossiping from house to house, getting into other people's business and saying things they shouldn't.

**Titus 2:3 (NASB-U)**
Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,

**Titus 2:3 (NLT)**
Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that is appropriate for someone serving the Lord. They must not go around speaking evil of others and must not be heavy drinkers. Instead, they should teach others what is good.