

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon – October 25, 2020
Ephesians 4:15 “Gossip: Deadly Poison”

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

I. Introduction

- a. Q76: What is the Ninth Commandment?
 - i. A76: The Ninth Commandment is, “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”
- b. Q77: What is required in the Ninth Commandment?
 - i. A77: The Ninth Commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour’s good name, especially in witness- bearing.
- c. Q78: What is forbidden in the Ninth Commandment?
 - i. A78: The Ninth Commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour’s good name.
- d. Consecration: chopped up and put back together again by the Lord
 - i. Searching for opportunities to repent and be made more like Jesus
 - ii. Hear the Word like Bereans (Acts 17)
- e. Regularly occurring sermon on gossip will be a way we try to protect ourselves from this dangerous poison, this corrupt word, that can destroy relationships, families and churches
 - i. But the poison can taste so good
 - ii. Vigilant: what is it, how do we avoid it, what happens if we give in to it, how are we supposed to respond to it, how do we understand what gossip is?
- f. But, first, what is the beautiful vision for our speech?
 - i. Proverbs 31:6 “law of kindness is on her tongue”
 1. Matthew Henry “She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, nor peevish, as some are, that know how to take pains; no, she opens her mouth with wisdom; when she does speak, it is with a great deal of prudence and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she says how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but

with the affection of a friend and an obliging air: In her tongue is the law of kindness; all she says is under the government of that law. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shows itself in the tongue; if we are kindly affectioned one to another, it will appear by affectionate expression. It is called a law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all she converses with. Her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she says; they command respect, they command compliance. How forcible are right words! In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy (so some read it), understanding it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious religious discourse, and manages it prudently, which shows how full her heart is of another world even when her hands are most busy about this world.”

- ii. Ephesians 4:29 “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”
 1. Good for necessary edification
 2. To impart grace to the hearers
- iii. Let this be our vision for richness of speech- wisdom and affection woven together in order to build up and impart grace
 1. Identifying unrighteousness is not usually that difficult
 - a. But learning how to express, and disciple and lead like Christ has led us, by dying on the cross- this is how He showed us our need
 - i. Jesus could have delivered a message to us from a distance, by the stars, from the birds, written it in the sky, but instead He came in person to come alongside us, join with us, and die for us – He shows us what the law of kindness on the tongue is all about
 - ii. We clang like noisy gongs when we blast people from a distance, having some sort of cold, sharp law on our tongues, but not the law of kindness
 - iii. Let’s avoid hasty, simplemindedness in how we approach speaking the truth in love
- iv. This beautiful model life of speaking the law of kindness is not something that one can fake, not something one can conjure up on their own
 1. It can only come from being born again from above, only from having the law of kindness written on your heart first
 2. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth will speak
 - a. Our speech reveals what we hold dear in our hearts
 3. We must be born again, and then continue in the life of repentance and faith toward Christ, or we will not consistently

speaking the truth in love, not consistently having the law of kindness on our tongues

4. Matthew 12:33-35 ““Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”
 - a. So, if you are here today, and you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you are enslaved to a tongue that will control you and be a deadly poison. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and then there is hope for your tongue to carry forth the law of kindness.
5. Also, if you are consistently grieving and quenching the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, not walking in close communion with God as a believer, then your sanctification will be slow and grievous to those around you, and your speech will contain corrupt words that tear down, instead of words that build up and impart grace.
6. Luke 7:37-48 “37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is

forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

- g. Some questions to ponder before moving into the teaching about gossip
 - i. Do you have this beautiful model as the vision for your speech?
 - ii. Do you see the law of kindness on your tongue? Do you see your words building up and imparting grace?
 - iii. Do you speak the truth in love as a fruit of God's Word spoken into your soul, giving you new life in Jesus Christ? Do you find tenderheartedness and affection seasoning your words because of the affection, mercy and kindness of God to you? Does gratitude toward God flow out in your speech toward others?
 - iv. Do you see areas where you need to improve, learning to speak from the Spirit in you, and not the flesh in you?
 - v. What is it that motivates you in how you choose to communicate with others? Is it to glorify God and build up others and impart grace? Or, is it self-focused, designed to advance yourself, gain advantage, glorify yourself, "fit in" or maybe to protect yourself, or maybe to punish others?
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 10:31 "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
 - vi. As we go on now to describe gossip, let us all examine ourselves in light of God's Word, looking for those wonderful (yet painful) opportunities to repent, be transformed, and grow up in every way into Jesus Christ.
- II. About the tongue
 - a. The tongue is a restless evil, full of deadly poison
 - i. Male 70 gram average, female 60 gram average (comparison: average weight of 1 plum = 65g)
 - ii. Pretty small in comparison to the rest of the body, like a bit controlling a horse, like a rudder controlling a ship, like a small fire consumes a whole forest
 - iii. Don't underestimate the importance of your tongue- Oh, it will boast and boast of great things and cannot be tamed by any human power
 - 1. James 3:1-12 "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by

hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”

2. The tongue is a restless evil full of deadly poison- receive this powerful warning from the Word of God - WATCH OUT, the text is saying, the out of control tongue is a raging destroyer, blazing, burning, and no man (apart from Christ) can tame this restless evil full of deadly poison.
 - a. Apart from Christ, you will have more success taming grizzly bears, lions, wolves, coyotes, vultures, cobras, rattlesnakes, sharks, and killer whales than you will have trying to tame your own tongue.
 - b. Full of deadly poison: have you ever studied about “deadly poisonous” creatures that strike? Spiders, scorpions, snakes. The untamed tongue is compared to these creatures.
 - i. Once the tongue-strike occurs, the poison is delivered, and even though forgiveness may be granted and received, the poison is still at work. Forgiveness itself does not immediately neutralize all the destruction.
 - c. Like a fire – similarly, while the initial spark of destructive words may be forgiven, a blaze of pain and suffering may still ensue
 - d. Have you ever asked yourself if your tongue has been tamed by Christ? Have you ever pondered the lingering impact on your relationships, your family, and your church of an untamed tongue? Have you ever imagined the glorious impact of a tongue controlled by Christ?
 - i. Proverbs 15: 1 – 4 “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. 2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. 3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good. 4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”

- iv. And, we live in a culture full of words upon words upon words, so we can easily forget the power of our speech (for good or for evil), and we will be judged for all of our words
 - 1. Matthew 12:36, 37 “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
- v. Deuteronomy 8:3 “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”
 - 1. Aren’t we supposed to become like Jesus Christ?
 - 2. So, what is proceeding out of our mouths? Will we be like our Maker? Will our words be a source of life and strengthening and encouragement?
 - a. Or will we deal out poison and death with our words, those tasty morsels that seem so attractive, but go down to death.
 - b. Will our speech build up or tear down? Killing or healing speech? No in-between. Speaking unconsidered words is like firing a machine gun into the air.
- vi. If a church does not identify and reject gossip, it is a church that is drinking poison, a church that is weak and threatened by this poison. So, surely, it is of first order importance to know what it is and how to avoid it.
 - 1. Imagine a rotting carcass in the woods. This is what happens to any relationship, any family, any institution if gossip is allowed in its midst. Gossip rots out the life of the group of people.
 - 2. And, no one will want to be a part of a church like that.
- vii. Matthew 7: 1 – 5 “‘Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.’”
 - 1. Let every word of this sermon land in your own mind and be used by the Holy Spirit to convict your own soul and lead to repentance in your own life. Don’t allow your sinful flesh to cause you to think of everyone except yourself as you learn about the deadly poison - gossip.

- III. What is gossip/slander?
 - a. Concept mentioned ~56 times in the Scriptures.

- b. Proverbs 20:19
 - i. ESV “Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babblers.”
 - ii. NIV “A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.”
 - iii. NASB “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.”
 - iv. KJV “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”
 - v. HCSB “The one who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid someone with a big mouth.”
 - 1. Turns out this is the most exact translation of that Hebrew word- it’s someone with a big, giant, gaping mouth
 - 2. Does anyone here suffer from being a simpler babblers with a big mouth? Having no filter between the brain and the mouth? Saying just about everything that comes to mind without filtering it out?
- c. A gossip:
 - i. Someone whose pattern is to habitually reveal personal or sensational facts about others, sharing rumors or any reports of an intimate nature.
 - ii. Webster’s 1828 “One who runs from house to house, tattling and telling news; an idle tattler.”
 - 1. Tattle “To tell tales; to communicate secrets”
 - iii. Basically, speaking negatively about a person without that person being present
 - 1. Gossips keep the fire going. They start, they kindle and then they fuel the fires of difficulties.
 - 2. And, since we are all sinners, with weaknesses and character flaws, there is always ample fuel for gossips to latch onto and toss around. That’s the tricky thing- gossiping doesn’t necessarily require dishonesty
 - 3. Now, we all struggle with this sin, but that’s different than being an entrenched gossip. The unrepentant gossip will hear this sermon and only be able to think about how everyone else is a gossip. (log stuck firmly in their own eye)
- d. Slander, a specific type of gossip;
 - i. Utterance of a false charge or a misrepresentation that damages another person’s reputation (also called a tale-bearer)
 - ii. Advanced gossip – already exhausted all the obvious character flaws and weaknesses of others, so now you have to make things up in order to make others look bad
 - iii. The devil is the source of all such vile speech

1. Psalm 15:1-3 “O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; 3 who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend”
2. We must all see, each and every one of us, that there is a Judas living inside of us. That is our flesh. Note v3 “against his friend” – this is something that can occur between friends, and it is the devil’s evil satisfaction whenever Christian friends are separated from one another
3. We must not underestimate the depth of the wickedness within each one of us.
 - a. Romans 7:18 “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”
 - b. In order to really benefit from this teaching, you need to rightly embrace the Biblical teaching about the dark, foul monster of flesh within you that always wants to be on top, always wants to put others down, and has the blinding power of self-deception until repentance takes over.
 - c. If we give vent to our flesh, there is no end to the ugliness that can come out of us
4. Kayser on the spiritual aspect of gossip: “Have you had slander in your church? No slanderer can say, “The devil made me do it,” because Matthew 15:19 says that slander comes from our own hearts. But Satan knows how to use unrepentant Christians to continue to engage in their slander. His very name, διάβολος, means slanderer. Revelation 12 says that Satan accuses the brethren day and night (v. 10). Job shows Satan slandering Job. 2 Corinthians 10-13 attributes the irrational slander that had been stirred up against Paul at Corinth to the devil (2 Cor. 11:13-14). In Zechariah 3:1, Satan slanders the high priest, Joshua.”
- e. One of the motives of gossip: Ps 15:3 “take up a reproach against his friend”
 - i. To take up = to grab hold and not let go, to grip tightly, with a permanence
 - ii. Reproach – contempt, disgrace, scorn, shame, disgust
 - iii. Friend – one that was loved and accepted and trusted
 - iv. So, one path to becoming a gossip is to believe something shameful about someone who is really your friend, and to believe it so intensely that it’s like iron bars over a window, such that you cannot accept that this other person is actually your friend

1. Proverbs 18:19 “A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle.”
 2. This sense of betrayal can be a strong motive toward gossip
 3. Thus, shaken Christian friendships must be mended in order to undo this breeding ground for gossip. Answer? The pursuit of peace with all men. Go after peace. Treasure it. Seek it. Protect it.
 4. Hebrews 12:14,15 “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled”
 - a. Pursuing Gospel peace is not the same thing as creating a manmade cease-fire. Peace is relational tranquility established by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of experiencing growth in harmony, trust, and Christian friendship that leads to Kingdom synergy of action together.
- f. Proverbs 6: 16 – 19 “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”
- i. With gladness and celebratory joy, we are about to share the Lord’s Table together as the people of God, united together by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. (God does this: we are passive recipients) And, in our union with God and one another, we can grow in our communion with God and one another, by His grace. This growth in communion with God and one another occurs as we each love God and love one another. This growth in communion and relationship with God and one another is not passive. We are active participants.
 - ii. Unity and enjoyment of one another at the Lord’s Table really is the pinnacle of Christian Worship.
 1. So, what do you think the Lord thinks of one who sows discord among brothers? The Lord God HATES the person who sows discord.
 2. Sowing discord is anti-gospel, it is anti-Christ, it is the opposite of the Gospel. It is hellish from the pit of darkness. It is the devil’s favorite song to sing, and Jesus Christ hates it.
 - iii. God has gone out of His way to list this sin as one that He hates.
 - iv. If we sow discord, or if we allow for the sowing of discord, then we lose the favor of God. He removes the blessing of His Presence from such a

people who cast aside the precious relationships that Jesus Christ shed His blood to establish in peace.

- v. A gossip is one who sows discord.
- g. Proverbs 26: 20-22 “For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. 21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. 22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.”
 - i. Have you ever tasted that yummy morsel? You know, think about that person who has disappointed you, who has somehow made some problems for you. Then, well, you know, you happen to hear that they are having some hard times, some family problems or whatnot, and you like it, you want to hear it, you receive it into your inner parts.
 - ii. To receive the report of a gossip, unchallenged, is to participate in gossip.
 - iii. Gossip is a two-way street.
 - iv. NOTE: Marriage is not a gossip-free zone. The family is not a gossip-free zone. The commands against gossiping have jurisdiction in all of life.
- h. Romans 16:17,18 – very strong words
 - i. “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.”
 1. Paul is pleading with the Roman church, appealing to them in the strongest terms, to be on the lookout.
 2. Vigilant watching for those who cause divisions. There is a type of person who causes divisions amongst people.
 3. And, this divisive person usually seems likable on the surface, with smooth words and crafty use of flattery to gain trust, especially from the naïve.
 - a. So, another way we watch out for a divisive person is to not be naïve. We have to know that such people exist, and understand how they act, and be on the watch for such people, and confront them if they are identified.
 - b. Covenant duty we all have toward one another, as covenant members of Foothills Christian Assembly.
 - i. And, also, especially a duty of church leaders.
 4. Note that the divisive person also creates obstacles contrary to sound doctrine. The divisive person puts up obstacles, hurdles, barriers against good communication.

5. Once such a person is identified, that person is to be avoided because they are dangerous to the flock, especially to the naïve, who can more easily be deceived.
 - a. Titus 3:10,11 “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”
 - b. The avoidance is to begin only after the person has been formally warned twice by the church. Hence, another thing we see about the divisive person is that they refuse to admit their wrongdoing, and will likely resort to their smooth speech to try and deny the truth.
 - c. It’s possible to sin by not avoiding one who should be avoided.
 - d. All this demonstrates the high-level threat of gossip and divisive speech. Jesus Christ loves His Bride.
- ii. Thus, let’s resolve together as an assembly to watch out for those who cause divisions, by sowing discord amongst the brethren in any way, especially by speaking negative things about others in their absence.
- iii. Another form of causing divisions:
 1. Jude 1:16 “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”
 2. “flattering people to gain advantage” – the divisive person will dole out affection and relationship in a measured and differential fashion in order to gain advantage.
 - a. “great swelling words” – we’ve probably all experienced this kind of person before. The “affection” feels awkward, out of place, unexpected, disproportionate to the situation.
 3. This can be very difficult to identify because, of course, naturally, in the course of life, some people spend more time with others. (natural affections based upon similar interests, personality fit, etc) The divisive person takes advantage of this, using favoritism to build a faction for their own advantage.
 4. The divisive person may not actually understand how they are acting and what they are doing. It’s just a terrible habit of interaction guided by their own sinful desires, often justified in their own eyes by the failings and faults of those around them. “I was only trying to help the church watch out for that person’s weaknesses.”

- a. The divisive person will likely believe they are acting righteously until God convicts them of their sin.
 - b. Yet, of course, there are wolves in sheep's clothing who practice intentional, conscious deceit in order to devour the sheep.
- iv. The person "who causes divisions" – the "divisive person"- embraces a pervasive form of interpersonal interaction that leaves a trail of damaged relationships in its wake.
 - 1. But, lest we forget, in our flesh, all of us have this potential ugliness within us. WATCH OUT.
- v. Another text to show how serious this sin is: 1 Corinthians 5: 11 "But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one."
 - 1. Reviler is another name for one who causes divisions by pouring out reproach and contempt amongst the brethren.
 - 2. Note that this sin is listed next to sexual immorality, idolatry, greed, drunkenness and swindling. This is serious stuff.
- vi. James 4:11,12 "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"
 - 1. Speaking evil against a brother, judging a brother, is equivalent to speaking evil against the law, judging the law, which is the same as saying we can judge Jesus Christ, the King and Lawgiver.
 - 2. To judge a sibling in Christ is to make a final determination about them, believing that they won't change. But, if they are a brother in Christ, how could we ever say that they cannot change? Is Christ dwelling in them by the Holy Spirit?? Doesn't the Word of God promise the Lord will complete the good work He has begun in us His children? Then, of course, all in Christ can and will be changed by God, according to His perfect timing and plan.
 - 3. Let us encourage one another, iron sharpening iron, with the law of kindness, always staying away from judging one another, always remaining humble and thoughtful in our interactions with one another.
- vii. I Peter 3:8-12 "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and

see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

1. Note this terrible curse. The face of the Lord will be set against the divisive one. And, the face of the Lord will be set against an assembly that continues to associate with a divisive one.
2. How to respond to the reviler: Bless the divisive one with truth in love. Direct, tender, immediate correction if gossip occurs.

IV. Gossip disguised

a. "seeking counsel"

- i. But, the commands against gossip/slander/divisiveness do NOT prohibit seeking counsel. There is a way to seek counsel that is not gossiping, but this requires great care with our words.
- ii. Proverbs 11:14 "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety."
- iii. Proverbs 15:22 "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established."
- iv. Proverbs 24:6 "For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety."

b. "as a prayer request"

c. "bearing one another's burdens"

d. We are wicked people in our flesh and we can easily gossip.

V. The Law of Kindness is our model, our goal, the way we love our neighbors with our speech. We are to guard our neighbors' reputations. We are to stand up for one another's good names.

a. Exodus 20:16 "'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.'" The WLC Q145 gives an extensive, exhaustive list of the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment. Put on your seatbelts because this is a long list. Please hear it and apply it to your own soul! Don't let your mind wander and start applying these problems to others, and thereby miss out on the opportunity to repent!

- i. "The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calls for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to

others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale-bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering; vain-glorious boasting; thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.”

- b. Every commandment also has a positive side. Not only are we forbidden to tear down our neighbor’s reputation; also, we are called to build them up, to strengthen their reputation, as best as we can within the bounds of honesty and integrity. Listen and see how you can better obey the ninth commandment.
 - i. Q144 WLC “The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocence; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need required; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.”
- c. Serious conversations unto holiness, where we seek Christ-like transformation together, strain our abilities to communicate well, so as we encourage one another and bear one another’s burdens, and even help one another out of sin, let us have the law of kindness on our lips always, speaking the truth in love.

- d. Default setting – if you notice something in a friend that concerns you, talk straight to them, not to anyone else. (of course, this assumes a relationship of trust and affection is established and ongoing)
- VI. Summary of principles discussed
- a. God hates gossip.
 - b. Gossip sows discord among brethren, and the judgment for this is great. Do not associate with a divisive person.
 - c. Gossip kindles and sustains discord.
 - d. Gossip is a tasty trifle that defiles others. To hear gossip is to be defiled.
 - e. Note and avoid gossips.
 - f. Gossip often involves smooth and flattering speech. It will likely be hard to detect, in our own lives and the lives of others.
 - g. Gossip is on the list with other terrible sins
 - h. We are to keep ourselves from being naïve and simpleminded by staying in the Word.
 - i. Gossip is the same as judging the Law of God.
 - j. Gossip is the opposite of love and compassion. God wants us to live in harmony with one another.
 - k. Refraining from gossip is a prerequisite to happiness. Gossip will put the face of the Lord against us. Gossip will hinder your prayers before the Lord. The face of God will be against you.
 - l. Gossip is fueled by arrogance and ends up in brokenness and loneliness.
- VII. How to handle it
- a. It takes two people to gossip
 - i. Proverbs 17:4 “An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.”
 - b. First of all, know what gossip and divisiveness are, and refuse them.
 - c. Listener responses
 - i. “have you gone to speak with that person directly?”
 - ii. May have to even stop the conversation “I’m uncomfortable with this conversation- it seems perhaps divisive to me”
 - d. Maybe you need to go to someone and repent of gossip, or repent of listening to gossip, or repent of divisiveness?
 - e. Is there a trend of an untamed tongue in your life?
- VIII. Great blessing when the tongue is used wisely
- a. Antidote for gossip is confessing our sin, walking in the Gospel
 - b. There is much blessing under God when the tongue is speaking peace and when the tongue is building up
 - i. Prov 15:23 “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”

- c. It's a wonderful thing to be in a community of people who are self-controlled and who speak out of a heart of love for Christ, and the Law of God is controlling their tongue
- d. James 3:17,18 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

IX. Conclusion

- a. Have you considered your plan for your words? How will you seek the Lord so that your words flow from His Spirit dwelling in you, rather than from your flesh?
- b. Young people: have you sought the Lord for sober-minded, joyful and loving speech amongst your peers, or do silliness and thoughtlessness of speech occur regularly in your life? Do you see that unconsidered speech will ultimately lead to gossip and damage to others? Are you speaking in order to glorify God and build up others in the Lord?
- c. Are your words usually helpful and healing words, bringing yourself and others closer to God and His Kingdom? Or, do you have a pattern of unhelpful and damaging words?
- d. Are you prepared to lovingly and directly deal with gossip? Do you know how to spot gossip?
- e. As Christians, we will want our speech to be like what proceeds from God's mouth to us, His children. He speaks life to us!
 - i. Let us all be in prayer for God to grant us tongues of life, always speaking the truth in love, for His glory, and to build one another up in Him and His Kingdom.