

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in homes and in Church Congregations), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

7 14 26 V2n11 GUARD YOURSELVES and ONE ANOTHER!

[This article is developed from a sermon preached at Southside, in 2009 ... Time restraints prohibit reworking this into a better flowing form for a printed article. HOWEVER, the Biblical truth is present. **Let us one and all read and heed!**)

Acts 20:28-30— “So guard yourselves and God’s people. **Feed and shepherd God’s flock** — his church, purchased with his own blood — over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock, even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.” (NLT)

I. Satan has a great ambition to inject disharmony in Bible believing homes, friendships, and churches; and he has a powerful ally in our natural, self-focused carnality!

Consider THE effect OF GOSSIP AND SLANDER in the life of the Apostle Paul. Romans 3:5-8 — “But, ”some might say, “Our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. **Isn’t it unfair, then,** for him to punish us?” (This is merely a human point of view.) Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would He be qualified to judge the world? “But,” someone might still argue, “How can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?” **And some people even slander us by claiming that we say,** “The more we sin, the better it is!” Those who say such

things deserve to be condemned.” **REALITY: Satan set out to discredit Paul through gossip and slander. IN ACTS 20:28-30** ... notice the description of those who will do the devil's work: **GRIEVOUS WOLVES** — WHO? Elders, Pastors, folks in the congregation ... Savage, fierce, merciless, monstrous, ferocious, violent, cruel WOLVES! **SCAN THE NEW TESTAMENT**— this is clear: The greatest destruction and hindrance to Bible believing homes and churches is not from the outside— but from within: Matthew 10:34-36; Matthew 24:9-10; Luke 21:10-19

The Holy Spirit also had PAUL to give Timothy the following necessary WORD TO PRACTICE and TEACH: NAMELY, not to receive an accusation against an Elder, except on the basis of two or three witnesses. (1 Tim. 5:19-20) "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. **Now the Scripture is also clear that,** A local pastor is not above accountability, but one should not receive an accusation against a pastor unless two or more witnesses come forward concerning the matter. THIS IS TRUE FOR OTHERS ALSO; NOT JUST FOR PASTORS: Matthew 18:15-16; vs. (NOTE: VS16 ... is based on the principle of Deut. 19:15-21)

II. SAFEGUARDS ARE NEEDED and GIVEN! Proverbs 18:17- AMPLIFIED- “He who states his case first seems right, until his rival comes and cross-examines him.” **Proverbs 20:6** - AMPLIFIED- “Many a man [OR woman] proclaims his [her] own loving-kindness and goodness, but a faithful man who can find?” **Proverbs 21:2-** AMPLIFIED- “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs and tries the hearts.” **THEREFORE BEWARE: IF or WHEN**

someone has unloaded EVIL about a person, (WHO, OF COURSE, IS not present), and the person sharing this inside information is wanting your support or your agreement — **REMEMBER: YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE FACTS! Beware! You are in danger! Proverbs 18:13** - AMPLIFIED- "He who answers a matter before he hears the facts-- it is folly and shame to him."

SERIOUS DANGER AHEAD: To listen to a charge against one whom Christ has set in a leadership position ... OR A CHARGE AGAINST ANY BROTHER OR SISTER FOR THAT MATTER ... A CHARGE BROUGHT by only one witness is contrary to God's instructions; and IF YOU LISTEN TO SUCH, **YOU open yourself up to receive a deadly dose of the Devil's poison.**

SERIOUS REALITY: — Why did so many thousands fall away from the Apostles... even after THE CONGREGATIONS had heard their defense by letters? IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT the brethren had been so poisoned by gossip and slander that they were unable to believe the Apostles anymore. **They had** let a "root of bitterness" set in towards the Apostles. **Their** mental image of these dedicated servants of God had changed.

Their concept of them was no longer based on the good fruits many of them had witnessed, but on the constant poisonous food of slanderous reports they gave ear to.

THE DEADLY POWER of gossip and slander: Ill John 9-11 ...
 "Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, **unjustly accusing us with wicked words;** and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the

brethren (loyal to John), and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church."

As Jesus had prophesied, even family members in the church betrayed one another, due to an EVIL spirit created by EVIL men unjustly accusing PAUL and JOHN, and FAITHFUL CHURCH MEMBERS with wicked words— even denying the brethren access IN THE CHURCH MEETINGS.

"One of the most effective tools of satan is gossip. With gossip he will poison the minds of the unsuspecting. **He may come to you with the words, "Just between me and you."** Then proceed to poison you mind toward other brothers or sisters that are not present. The gossip or slanderer will say he is telling you because he is **"deeply concerned."** What he tells you may be 100% true or some truth mixed with lies. **BUT HOW CAN YOU KNOW? You only have his side...** *The Bible is clear in its instruction toward helping a brother or sister, If we see him/her practicing sin. WE are to go to him/her directly in a spirit of love and humility, motivated to restore* (Galatians 6:1.

ALSO: There are times when we should, (as did the house of Chloe) go directly to those in spiritual leadership responsibility \ 1 Corinthians 1:11. **SAD REALITY:** The gossip/slanderer will not follow these Biblical procedures, because he is not really motivated by the spirit of restoration of a brother or sister... or motivated to guard the unity of the Holy Spirit in a local church. MOREOVER, **The slanderer, the gossip, the talebearer may offer various excuses, such as,** 1. "I would talk to him/her, but I'm sure he/she won't listen... 2. HE/SHE'S NOT TEACHABLE... 3. JUST PRAY FOR

ME...." 4. He may say, "I'm going to tell you this, but don't tell anyone..." **REALITY: IF YOU give your word to keep it confidential, then you receive POISON into your SOUL— NOW THE DEVIL HAS A STONGHOLD ON YOU.** You won't really know if it is true, and now you won't have a means of finding out. You may never look at the accused brother or sister in the same way again. You will have received "seeds of division."

THIS IS ALL VERY SERIOUS STUFF: Romans 16:17-18, - "Now I URGE YOU, brethren, keep your eye on those who CAUSE DISSENSIONS and HINDRANCES contrary to the teaching which you learned, and TURN AWAY FROM THEM. For such are SLAVES, not of our Lord Jesus Christ but of THEIR OWN APPETITES; and by their SMOOTH and FLATTERING SPEECH they DECEIVE the HEARTS of the unsuspecting."

III. TO respond to those bringing accusations ...

ASK: 1. Why are you telling me this about brother or sister so and so? 2. How do you know what you are telling me is true . . . 3. Have you gone to him (or her) privately as the Scripture says? . . . 4. Can I quote what you are telling me? . . . 5. Let's you and me go to that person and help restore him/her. 6. If you won't go or if you will not go with me... I will go.

IV. MOREOVER: YOU ARE TELLING ME HOW MUCH so and so has WRONGED YOU... AND THAT YOU ARE only GUILTY OF FOLLOWING AND SERVING JESUS— WELL, I AM WONDERING: Why do you not exhibit joy and happiness? You should be overflowing with happiness (1 Peter 3:13-16; 4:14- 16!!)

MORE REALITY, BEWARE: At times, those bringing accusations and seeds of division come as "vulnerable victims" ... "Unjustly hurt" or "abused" by another. They may pull on the strings of your heart with a sad story as the Scripture above warned, - **"by SMOOTH and FLATTERING SPEECH they DECEIVE the HEARTS of the unsuspecting."** It works much like a son or daughter complaining to their friends about "unfair" treatment by their parents, - "My parents grounded me for no good reason . . . They don't understand me." (Their friends usually go along to get along, giving them an ear to complain to and sympathizing with them along the way.)

AT THE SAME TIME, YES, the world is filled with GENUINE, HURTING people; and if they are Christians, walking in the steps of Jesus, they will ... 1. Have JOY, and PEACE; 2. They will have a broken heart for their offender; 3. They will want wisdom on how to WIN the offender; 4. They will be teachable, humble, and open to SEE WHAT God may want to change in their own heart...

As God told Cain concerning his attitude toward his brother Abel, **"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, SIN IS CROUCHING AT THE DOOR ; and its DESIRE IS FOR YOU, but YOU MUST MASTER IT."** (Genesis 4:7)

V. REALITY: Without a doubt, a chief tactic used by Satan to spread strife among CHRISTIANS AT HOME, AT WORK, and/or IN A CHURCH FAMILY is through the poison of gossip and slander. PROVERBS 16:27-28, - "A worthless man DIGS UP EVIL, while HIS WORDS are as a SCORCHING FIRE. A PERVERSE MAN SPREADS STRIFE, and a SLANDERER SEPARATES INTIMATE FRIENDS."

PROVERBS 18:6-8, - "A fool's lips BRING STRIFE, and his MOUTH calls for BLOWS. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the SNARE OF HIS SOUL. The words of a WHISPERER are like DAINTY MORSELS, and they go down into the INNER MOST PARTS of the BODY."

REALITY: A WHISPERER is one that introduces gossip and slander secretly, usually asking that his words be kept confidential. But notice that his words are as "dainty morsels" which go down into the innermost parts of the hearer's body. (This illustrates the dangers of listening to gossip and slander.) God's command to us is to not engage in gossip and slander nor listen to it from others.

PROVERBS 20:19, -"He that GOES ABOUT as a SLANDERER reveals secrets, therefore DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH A GOSSIP." **REALITY:** This isn't just an idea or good advice, but what God is commanding.

EPHESIANS 4:29-32, - "Let no UNWHOLESOME WORD PROCEED FROM YOUR MOUTH, but only such a WORD AS IS GOOD FOR EDIFICATION according to the need of the moment that it may give GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR . And do not grieve the holy spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all BITTERNESS, and WRATH and ANGER and clamor and SLANDER be PUT AWAY FROM YOU, along with all MALICE. And be KIND TO ONE ANOTHER , TENDER-HEARTED, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

1 TIMOTHY 5:13, -"And 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." **HEBREWS 12:15**, -"See to it that

no one comes short of the grace of God; that NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS springing up CAUSES TROUBLE and by it MANY BE DEFILED." **REALITY:** Just how would a "root of bitterness" springing up in someone "defile MANY" if it wouldn't be through gossip and slander? **This is the vehicle by which bitterness is spread.**

JAMES 3:6-10, - "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. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race. But NO ONE CAN TAME THE TONGUE, it is a RESTLESS EVIL and full of DEADLY POISON."

VI. THE POISON OF A DEADLY SERPENT ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE

Unless a poison is absorbed into the body it cannot harm you. Satan is called the "serpent" ... Therefore, let's consider that the poison of a deadly snake cannot harm you unless by some means the VENOM enters the inside of your body. When a person is bitten by a poisonous snake the critical damage is being done on the inside, but soon the effects become visible on the outside.

I read AN ACCOUNT OF the effects of the poison of a snake, through the eyes of a microscope, - The snake had bitten a lady on the foot. The lady was in excruciating pain and the microscope revealed why, - One by one the deadly poison was causing her blood veins to literally explode inside her foot and leg! She almost died but survived due to quickly administered anti-venom, but her foot still required extensive restructure and numerous surgeries. This lady had walked that same trail many times and had always worn

snake-proof boots. She was well aware of the dangers of snakes... IN FACT, her job was to study them. **But this one time she made a conscious decision to proceed carefully without changing into her protective boots.** In recounting the story, she said that she was watching extra carefully and could not believe that she did not see the snake lying in wait on the side of the paved trail.

As Christians we don't have to wonder if there is a serpent lying in wait in our path— we know the Devil is always there seeking an opportunity to give us the poisonous bite of gossip and slander....

Or wanting to use us to give the POISONOUS BITE to others!

1. So let us make sure we don't neglect to put on the full armor of God in our Christian walk. 2. And don't let Satan's deadly poison of gossip and slander enter into our body through our ears; or into the Body of Christ through our mouths.

JAMES 5:9, - "DO NOT COMPLAIN, brethren AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, that you yourselves may not be JUDGED; behold the JUDGE (Christ) is standing right at the door."

BEHOLD! Satan and sin crouching at the door. Satan is CROUCHING in order to hide and not be seen clearly.

CHRISTIAN: Jesus is not merely STANDING 'at our door and knocking' — HE LIVES WITHIN US BY HIS SPIRIT, ready to empower us! James 4:7, SUBMIT TO GOD! RESIST THE DEVIL. HE WILL FLEE!

CHRISTIAN: RUN INTO THE ARMS OF JESUS!

Grace to one and all! James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

PS. HERE IS Dr. David Gibbs, of the Christian Law Association:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1485680176659559>

SUNDAY SERVICES for JULY 19, 26

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. **[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

JULY 19 — LORD'S SUPPER // Home Groups

JULY 26 — EVENING WORSHIP, 5:00PM

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM — Men's Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!*) *July 11 & 18 (2 WEEK break from Romans)*

NEXT LADIES' BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY,

JULY 21 @ 11:00 AM **TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am [NEXT Study: Acts 13-14]

Young Adults! Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhī's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE: BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

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