

Avoid Backbiting

My beloved brethren, we need to beware of backbiting, and we need to completely avoid it. You see, to backbite is, "to maliciously talk about someone who is not present." So, to be simply put, backbiting is talking about someone behind their back in a degrading way. You see, when one backbites they are engaging in an evil and cowardly act. They are forsaking the act of love and kindness, and they are putting their soul in danger. Likewise, it is important to note that Paul informs that not only are those who practice backbiting deserving of death, but also those who approve of those who practice such are deserving of death (Romans 1:30-32).

So, knowing that, we need to keep our tongues from evil, and our lips from speaking deceit (Psalm 34:13). We need to always strive to guard our mouths and tongues (Proverbs 21:23). We need to pursue the things which make for peace, and the things by which we may edify another (Romans 14:19). We need to let no corrupt words proceed out of our mouths, but rather that which is good for necessary edification (Ephesians 4:29). We need to be one who speaks evil of no one (Titus 3:2). We need to lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking (1 Peter 2:1). We need to be one who always endeavors to let our words, and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in the sight of the Lord (Psalm 19:14), and we need to avoid those who backbite (Proverbs 20:19).

Brethren, the fact of the matter is, backbiting will not profit anyone anything good, but rather just the opposite. For, the wise man said, "The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance" (Proverbs 25:23). Also, evil typically provokes evil, and in Galatians 5:15, Paul says, "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" We all also need to give attention to, and remember these inspired words of David, "Lord who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend...(Psalm 15:1-3).

Once more brethren, I plead with you to seriously think about these things concerning backbiting, and always remember, one who backbites will not only be one who will not obtain favor from men, but more importantly they will be one who will not obtain favor from the Lord. So, be one who avoids backbiting, and let's never forget, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 18:7).

- by Brad Phillips

The Need for Distinctive Preaching

The role of the teacher is to hold back nothing profitable, but to teach the *whole* purpose of God (Acts 20:20,27). That is the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist, i.e., that we hold back nothing that is *profitable* to the people.

Preaching on the love of God is not going to help the young women of the congregation when they fail to hear a sermon directed toward their immodesty. Preaching on grace is good, but not if you fail to preach on how folks frequently absent themselves from worship in favor of their favorite sports or recreational activity. Preaching on mercy is wonderful, but sometimes people need to hear a lesson on social drinking or dancing (prom). Forgiveness is a grand theme, but sometimes brethren need to be warned of encroaching false doctrines and practices.

I believe there is a justifiable cause for concern today, not just because of *what is preached* from some pulpits, but even more because of *what is not being preached!* One of my heroes in the faith once observed, "If we *don't* preach on certain subjects, it won't be long before we *can't* preach on those subjects because people will not put up with it." He was right and, in my opinion, we are seeing the fruit of that in our time. Again, the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist is to hold back nothing that is profitable. It is not always easy to properly assess and preach to the needs of the people, but by all means do it!

The "old Jerusalem gospel" has a distinctive ring about it. It is a message flooded with Scripture and practical application. It is not always popular, but it is always right when presented with the best interest of the hearers in your heart and on your lips (Eph.4:15).

- by Jim Deason

Forgiveness (4th in a series)

Under instructions to forgive others *“just as God in Christ also hath forgiven you”* (Eph. 4:32), we have observed that God is 1) willing to forgive, 2) anxious to forgive, but 3) He forgives only when we have met His conditions of forgiveness, including repentance. We continue our study with some additional and important points about God’s forgiveness.

It is clear that when God forgives it is an absolute and total form of forgiveness. Too often men never really get over something. Past wrongs and offenses remain an issue and are allowed to fester like an open wound. People are heard to say things like, “I’ll never forget what he did to me.” But, thankfully, God is not that way, and we need to imitate Him. The Psalmist wrote (103:8-12): *“The Lord is merciful and gracious . . . He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”* We should be extremely grateful for His absolute forgiveness, and we should treat others the same way.

Furthermore, God’s forgiveness is permanent. Once forgiven, He never calls up our past sins again. The Hebrew writer quoted the promise made by the prophet Jeremiah: *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”* (Hebrews 10:16-17). Too often we will tentatively ‘forgive’ someone who wrongs us, but are quick to dredge up these old sins if that same person ever crosses us again. It is not that way with God, and it cannot be so with us.

(continued next week)
- by Greg Gwin