

“Rumor is Not Humor!”

Exodus 23:1 and Other Selected Passages

Intro. –

“O be careful little tongue what you say,
O be careful little tongue what you say,
For the Father up above is looking down in love,
O be careful little tongue what you say.”

Do you remember that song? I use it to introduce today’s message. Check me out on this. When it comes to secular literature there has been little written concerning the use of the tongue. Yet a cursory reading of the Bible reveals dozens of verses dealing with this very matter. Two of the Ten Commandments have reference to the tongue. The book of Proverbs is packed with instructions on the use of the tongue. Jesus, during His ministry, repeatedly made reference to the use of the tongue. Paul and James, under the inspiration of God gave numerous references to the proper use of the tongue.

What is my point? Man holds the use of the tongue with little concern, but God places a great deal of emphasis upon it. With this in mind, today we’ll be looking at the tongue and its misuse in rumor, innuendo or tale bearing.

After the untimely death of her husband, Madame Curie, the radium genius, bravely carried on with her work. Naturally, in the laboratories where she worked producing radium there were men who were colleagues. Subdued whispers began to circulate. These whispers turned into nasty, hurtful rumors of gross untruths. The lies cut deep. So much so Madame Curie was distracted from her work. Fact is, she never did recuperate from the assault that came from this rumor mill.

Purpose: to better understand the seriousness behind the rumor mill

I Rumor is Often not TRUE (Exodus 23:1)

- “*You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.*”

A. We Often Fail to Verify

1. When it comes to the accuracy of a story we pass on, do we ever check it out?
2. Illus. – Dad’s wrist had a scar on it he received while working at A & P. Another employee there was showing Dad how to defend himself if ever confronted with a knife... Accidently slit his wrist... Ministry in Joliet, IL, person didn’t like Dad so they started rumor that the scar on his wrist was the result of a knife fight while he was a gang leader...
3. Appreciate our folk coming and asking (i.e. verifying) before repeating information... Like petitions floating around... make sure they are legitimate before passing them along...
- as Christians we have obligation not to perpetuate falsehoods...

B. We Often Embellish

1. In passing on a story (rumor) we often exaggerate or aggrandize matters to make it more tantalizing or juicy.
2. Such is raising or bearing a false report:
 - a. someone said, “I like the parrot. It’s the only creature gifted with the power of speech that is content to repeat exactly what it hears without trying to make a good story out of it.”
 - b. someone else said, “The parrot doesn’t have a keen sense of rumor.”
3. More than once the very words of Jesus were embellished/misconstrued...
 - a. false witnesses testified He had forbidden to give tribute to Caesar and he would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days...
 - b. both allegations were false for Jesus said, “*Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s...*”
 - c. as for the temple matter, Jesus was obviously referring to His own body...
 - d. before passing along statements of others, must be sure understand what they mean and that we quote them accurately.
4. The truth can be stretched by innovative and skilled gossip:

- Illus. story about a preacher's wife at a town meeting was being circulated... Her husband went there in a rage, dragging her from the town hall. The preacher, new to the community, allowed the tale to circulate until one Sunday he addressed the rumor: "In the first place, I don't tell my wife what meetings to attend and not attend. Second place, my wife was not at that particular meeting. Thirdly, I was not at that meeting. And finally, I'm not even married."

5. If we can't write it and sign it, we probably have no business "saying it!"

Rumor, more times than not is simply not true!

II Rumor is Often Not NECESSARY (Proverbs 11:13)

- *"He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter."*

A. Not All Rumors are False

1. In other words, there are some matters that are true, but are better left unsaid:
 - Illus. – Grandpa Hoff chewed... but he thought none of us knew about it... Come to find out we all knew it, but didn't talk about it until just a few years ago.
2. There are some "secrets" that NEED to be exposed for the common good of all:
 - Ephesians 5:11 *"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."*

B. Not All Rumors Are Secrets

1. Secret = "Something you tell to one person at a time."
2. We need to learn to keep confidence when asked to do so.
3. Bible speaks those couldn't keep a secret: Illus. – Doeg in 1 Samuel 22:20-23... note Doeg is never mentioned in a positive light...
4. Illus. – new person in the community invited to local church's ladies' aid society. Attending the first time she sat and listened to conversation. She got her ears filled. She left with these words: "This isn't the ladies aid society, it's the ladies' raid society. You've spent most of the time since I arrived raiding the reputation of people I believe I'll not be returning in the future."
5. Illus. –

If you your lips would keep from slips
Five things observe with care:
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
And how and when and where.

6. Point – there are too many other necessary matters about which to talk, than to waste time and words on the faults of others (Philippians 4:8-9)

Rumor is often not necessary.

III Rumor is Often UNKIND (Proverbs 18:8)

- *"The words of a talebearer are as wounds."*

A. Unintentional Harm

- as mentioned above, tale bearers often pass on the unnecessary and harm result though it may never have been intended...

B. Intentional Harm

1. Tales are oft repeated with one intention in mind – to hurt...
2. Like a bell, once the rumor is started you can't unring it.
3. Illus. – church was dealing with a person who admittedly was a vicious slanderer. Leadership urged this person to purchase freshly rung chicken still covered with feathers. They were to pluck the bird as they walked the streets. Then, they were to return to the leaders of the church. This person returned and got the following instructions: "Retrace your steps and gather up one by one all the feathers you have scattered." Person responded, "How can I? The feathers were carelessly cast aside and the wind has blown them everywhere." The leadership responded, "Our point

exactly! So it is with your words. Like feathers scattered by the wind, your words have been taken in all directions. Try to call back your words if you can!"

4. No one this side of heaven can measure the damage done by the slandering tongue. Like a billboard seen in Indiana said, "He who throws dirt loses ground."

Conclusion: There is a song that will summarize this message to a tee. The title of the song: "Rumormill"

Rumormill

Let me tell you a story about a local enterprise,
There's one in every town no matter what its size.
It doesn't turn a profit or bring in any revenue.
It's good for one thing that's the damage it'll do.
It's called the Rumormill, the Rumormill.

If it can be twisted you can be sure that it will
'Cause there ain't nothing sacred at the Rumormill.

The people that work there are all volunteers.
The only qualification is a mouth and two big ears.
If the story's not clear enough, that's okay.
They'll just doctor it up and then send it on its way.
It doesn't matter who's involved or who it's going to hurt.
As long as folks are listenin' they'll keep shovelin' dirt.
At the Rumormill, the Rumormill.

If it can be twisted you can be sure that it will
'Cause there ain't nothing sacred at the Rumormill.

The Rumormill... Manufacturing lies,
Where the truth is disguised.
Where reputations are crushed,
Where nothing is hushed!

If it can be twisted you can be sure that it will
'Cause there ain't nothing sacred at the Rumormill.

Now listen my children to this warning I make.
You have a lot to lose, there's a lot here at stake.
The Bible plainly states you're going to reap what you sow.
And you'll be shown mercy by the mercy you show.
So shut your mouth and ask your friends to kindly do the same,
Or you'll wind up a victim with no one else to blame.
At the Rumormill, the Rumormill.

If it can be twisted you can be sure that it will
'Cause there ain't nothing sacred at the Rumormill