

ARE YOU A TALE-BEARER?

David P. Brown

“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (Jam. 3:6)

There are many sins of the tongue. This article will briefly deal with one of those sins, tale-bearing. No one has fully tamed the tongue, but at least one can control it to the point of not habitually and routinely engaging in any sin of the tongue (Jam. 3:1-10). Hence, our study of this vital subject is primarily directed to the person who consistently and routinely engages in this sin.

Israel of old was commanded, *“Thou shall not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people”* (Lev. 19:16). God reveals what a tale-bearer does: *“He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth a matter”* (Pro. 11:13). Are you a tale-bearer or one who “is of a faithful spirit?”

Furthermore, godly people do not associate with tale-bearers. *“He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; therefore company not with him that openeth wide his lips”* (Pro. 20:19). The words “go up and down...among thy people” and “goeth about” proves a person to be an habitual, practiced tale-bearer.

One who listens to gossip is just as guilty as the one who spreads it. Remember, the tale-bearer’s work would cease if no one desired to hear the tale. The writer of Proverbs penned, *“A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue”* (Pro. 17:4). If you seek out gossip, the Bible labels you as “a wicked doer” and “liar.” The scriptures clearly and emphatically declare that *“all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”* (Rev. 2 1:8). May we not correctly conclude that both the tale-bearer and the listener to the “naughty tongue” will also share in the lake of fire?

Now that we have set out the truth of God’s word regarding tale-bearers and their listeners we will make a few observations concerning them. Following the observations we will pose a few questions for them.

99.999% of the time the tale-bearer talks about other people. If there is any reference to himself, you may be sure it is not derogatory. In fact, when the talebearer speaks of himself, he is always the wise problem solver; the great advisor, who if “they” had only listened to him, the problem would have never arisen in the first place. Such a person usually gets people into more trouble than can be solved by many years of hard work. It is a despicable thing when one knows a person to be a tale-bearer but refuses to do anything about it. Of a truth, Paul told Titus that part of an elder’s job is to be a mouth stopper (Tit. 1:10-11). Furthermore, he commanded Titus that it is an evangelist’s responsibility to instruct the elders regarding this aspect of their work (Tit. 1:5-16).

Does the talebearer only speak of others because he is innocent? Does he not know some tale about himself that is equally as interesting as what he tells about others? Is the tale-bearer trying to counter a tale about himself by telling a “bigger” one about someone else? Has he never made a mistake? Is he free from faults? Maybe he just prefers to keep those “juicy tid-bits” about himself hidden by always focusing on

someone else's faults or what he makes out to be faults. Whatever the case, one thing is sure: the person who is a known tale-bearer soon becomes an object of suspicion and distrust; and rightly so.

We have this strong suggestion for the tale-bearer. Why not "go up and down...among the people" bearing tales about yourself rather than others? If such a character really wants to do the honorable thing, let him scripturally confess his own sins and not the sins of others (Jam. 5:16). If you know something is wrong (sin—1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:17) in a person's life, why not deal with it like the Bible teaches (Mat. 17:3; 18:15-17; Gal. 2:11-14; 6:1-2)? However, if you want to destroy another person's character simply because you like to hurt people, then prepare for the eternal consequences; for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29)! ~