

Pac Man In The Church

Do you remember one of the very first video games to come out and sweep the nation? It was called Pac Man. I remember it well. I used to go to Pizza Hut where they had the game installed in some of the tables. You could sit and play the game while you waited for your pizza. Remember? The game had this little yellow round character that was mostly all mouth. His mouth opened and shut rapidly as he moved about, gobbling up all the little men. Occasionally another character would pop up, and if you weren't quick to move him, he would gobble up your Pac Man and thus end the game. The goal was to get your Pac Man to eat everyone up before getting eaten himself.

Why do we bring up Pac Man? Because that game is a perfect illustration of what's going on within the Body of Christ today. Christians are hurrying around gobbling up other Christians, "wiping them off the board" and out of the church. Occasionally they get gobbled up themselves, but usually not until they have destroyed many people. The sad fact is that most of these folk don't even realize that they are a Pac Man!

Remember this: Satan's most effective tool is a deceived Christian!

God's Word says this:

**"These six things the Lord hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness who speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren." Proverbs 6:16-19**

This is very strong language! God "hates" and "are an abomination to Him." The very thought of committing any of these things should strike terror into our hearts! Facing the anger of God is a terrible thing. And yes, a Christian can! That's what Galatians 6:7-8 and Hebrews 12:3-15 is all about.

Do you know what all these seven things the Lord hates really are? Put all together, they can be summed up in two words – gossip and backbiting. It all starts with the mouth and tongue, just like Pac Man, gobbling others up. No wonder James had this to say:

"Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 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. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 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. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so." James 3:3-10

The tongue is dangerous and we need to examine the importance of keeping such a dangerous weapon under control. Dynamite is stored, and moved with great caution, because of the knowledge we have of the power that it possesses to destroy. Likewise, Christians, we have something as powerful as dynamite; yet, very often it is handled as if there is no danger at all.

We should, rather, hang a sign on our tongue that reads: "DANGER, HIGHLY EXPLOSIVE and DAMAGING.

David said:

**“I said, ‘I will guard my ways,
Lest I sin with my tongue;
I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, . . .” Psalm 39:1**

With their mouths opening and shutting, talking, talking, talking, Christians run about gobbling others up, destroying them.

A recent incident came to our attention which sharply and suddenly made us realize that the average Christian does not even know what gossip and backbiting is, nor realizes when he is committing this sin. With this realization came the command to us from the Lord to teach on this subject. Why? For two main reasons:

**“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ‘For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
Matthew 12:36-37**

“Buy why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Romans 14:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

We want you to clearly understand the meaning of these scriptures. After you die, you must stand before Jesus Christ Himself. He will examine your life here on earth. At that time every word you ever said will be examined and judged! You will have to give an account to God for every bit of gossip that ever came out of your mouth! No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote about “knowing the terror of the Lord!” Our problem is we don’t know the terror of the Lord. If we did, our churches and our lives would be very different indeed.

How terrible it will be, that many many true servants of God, some who have labored their whole lives for God, will get to heaven only to find all their works and labor for God burned up and judged to be worthless. (1 Cor. 3:13-15) Why? Because of their habit of engaging in gossip! Thus, after a whole lifetime of labor, they find they have nothing to show for it and that they have lost all their rewards.

Are there going to be tears in heaven? You bet there are! Buckets of them. Bitter tears of sorrow and remorse over the way lives were lived here on earth. Not until Revelation 21:4 does God finally put a stop to our tears – that’s after the 1,000 year millennial reign! A thousand years of crying is a long time. Pac Man is busy. Make sure he isn’t busy in your own life!

Let’s start by defining the words gossip and backbiting:

Gossip -- rumor or report of a intimate nature, a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others Webster’s dictionary

Notice that by very definition, gossip **is not** based on facts.

Backbiting -- malicious comments about one not present Webster’s dictionary

To help you understand exactly gossip and backbiting are, let us give you an example of the recent incident we made reference to at the beginning of this newsletter. Of course, all names and places are withheld. We use this true incident purely as an example so that others can learn by it.

There were two Christian friends. We shall call them Brother 1 and Brother 2. They decided to take a trip together to visit a church in a distant city. Now Brother 1 had been close friends with the pastor of that church for some years. Brother 2 had never met the pastor before.

During the visit, Brother 2 thought Brother 1 said something that greatly offended him. (As it turns out, Brother 1 never said that thing. It was all a simple demonically induced misunderstanding. Oh yes, demons can take the words from someone’s mouth and twist them so that you think you are hearing something entirely different than what was actually said. This is a major source of conflict in marriages and all

relationships.) Anyway, Brother 2 did not say anything to Brother 1 about the offense. They finished their trip and returned home.

Then, instead of following God's explicit directions given in His Word, Brother 2 became a Pac Man, gobbling up Brother 1. Here's how he did it.

First he ran to a person who was a mutual friend between him and Brother 1. He told this person all about the offense. The more the two of them talked, the more upset they got, and more offenses were added and the more exaggerated the whole situation became. Then Brother 2 ran to a second mutual friend and told him. As they discussed the situation in great detail, more accusations against Brother 1 got added. But Brother 2 wasn't finished yet. He ran to at least four mutual friends that we know of. They all talked and talked. The more they talked, the worse they thought of Brother 1. Finally, more than a week later, Brother and 2 and the first Mutual Friend contacted Brother 1 and asked to meet with him. **But**, by the time they finally did meet, everyone had judged Brother 1 to be guilty of many offenses that he didn't even know about.

The meeting was a disaster. Brother 2 and Mutual Friend 1 hurled accusation after accusation at Brother 1. He was completely bewildered and didn't know what they were talking about, as he had not been in any of the numerous discussions that had gone on. Brother 2 told Brother 1 that he had been on the phone talking long distance to his pastor friend every day since arriving home!

The final result was this. The pastor, without ever once talking to Brother 1 simply severed their relationship and refuses to have any contact with him. Brother 2 and all the Mutual Friends and their friends (whom they all talked to) have decided to have no further contact, prayer, or fellowship with Brother 1.

In the end, Brother 1 is left hurt and devastated, having lost in just one week, several friendships built up over years. All over something he never said or did in the first place! Fortunately he has a strong relationship with God, or he would have been completely stumbled.

Brother 2 and Mutual Friends feel very self-righteous having "dealt with sin, and separating themselves" from Brother 1.

Pac Man has been busy gobbling! Sound familiar? I am sure many of you reading this have experienced something similar in your own life.

You know, we are quite sure that Brother 2, the pastor, and all the mutual friends would never once dream that they have all sinned the seven sins that God hates according to Proverbs 6:16-19 (quoted in the beginning). We are sure they never once saw themselves as being involved in gossip. They think they spoke to one another out of simple "concern for another brother." Wrong!

Perhaps you, the reader, have fallen into this trap. That's why we are writing this newsletter. ALL of us need to stop and refresh our memories as to how God wants us to deal with such situations.

Jesus said:

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17

Let's look at this closely. When you think someone said or did something that offends you, you **do not** talk to anyone else about it! First, you must go and talk directly to that person about it face to face. Humbly, knowing it is quite possible you misunderstood what was said, and with the knowledge that you yourself are a sinner. This is where Brother 2 and the pastor made their first errors. They never went first to Brother 1. Instead they talked and talked about it, and Brother two ran to other people and talked to them about it. By so doing, he directly violated God's word.

99.9% of all situations would be resolved quickly if we would follow this one simple command. Oh how we hate confrontation! We would much rather talk to someone else about our hurt than confront the person who hurt us. If we would get our pride out of the way and realize that we, too, are just a "sinner saved by

grace,” confrontations wouldn’t be so painful or difficult. In fact, it wouldn’t be a confrontation at all. It would instead be a simple question of “Did I hear you right? Did you really say so and so?”

Those of us being confronted, if we were also well aware of our own need of a Savior, if we misspoke, we would be quick to apologize and ask for forgiveness. If we did not say it, then we could explain without taking offense ourselves.

We must be quick to forgive one another. Remember what Jesus told Peter?

“Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” Matthew 18:21-22

God’s Word says, **“Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”** (1 Peter 4:8) Our problem is, when we get hurt, we cannot just forgive and go on, no, we want to talk to everyone around us about the hurt and the “dirty dog” who hurt us! Gobble . . . gobble . . . gobble.

You may say, “But Jesus said if your brother won’t listen and repent, go get one of two more to confront him.” Yes, but under one condition! Jesus said: “. . . **by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.**” If you don’t have at least two witnesses, then you are prohibited from talking about the event (sin), period! This will rule out 99% of these cases, as most offenses between Christian brothers and sisters have no witnesses. You do not have at least two witnesses to the supposed sin? Then shut your mouth! If you do not, then you will be judged guilty of gossip before the Judgment Seat of Christ!

Let me give you an example from my own life. Recently I received an E-mail from a sister in South Africa asking me a question. A friend of hers was telling her that she shouldn’t read my books because I was having a lesbian relationship in addition to my marriage! She wanted to know if this was true or not. I wrote her back and told her that it absolutely wasn’t true! She then wrote me again, sadly, stating that her friend wouldn’t accept my word because she believed what she had heard. Did this woman have two witnesses who could confirm that I was engaged in this sin? NO! All she is doing is listening to gossip and sitting in judgment on me because of it. Sadly, one day, she will have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give account of her involvement in this gossip.

How far America has fallen! Our whole media and elections systems are based on gossip, backbiting and slander. We live with it every day without ever being aware of it.

Next point. God’s word says:

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24

This command is given as an additional safe guard against gossip within the church. If you know someone has something against you and they have never come to talk to you about it, then you must go to them and attempt to settle the matter. That takes courage! This is something that Brother 1 must do eventually with his pastor friend. Unfortunately there is so much hurt in the whole situation that this is a very difficult thing for Brother 1 to do. But, if the pastor never contacts him, eventually he must obey God’s word.

I believe we would be horrified if we knew how many times God rejected our love offering simply because we knew someone had something against us and did not go to set the matter right. We believe this is a big source of hindrance to financial blessings.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Galatians 6:1

Unfortunately, in the Church today, people would rather be a Pac Man than operate in love. Once Christians decide a brother or sister has sinned, they never make any attempt to reach out to them in love to turn them back. Instead they shun them and sever all contact with them. This only multiplies their hurt and drives them further away from God. This practice is not pleasing to God!

Even the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians to reach out in love to the one who has sinned.

“But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent – not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.” 2 Corinthians 2:5-8

This verse makes reference to the man whom the Apostle Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians. This man was sinning grievously, publicly. Paul told the church to put him out and not associate with him. However, pretty soon, Paul then tells the Church at Corinth to go after that man and bring him back with love, “lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.” This attitude is most certainly NOT within the church today! Are you still shunning someone whom you believed to be sinning? It is time for you to follow Paul’s advice and go after him with love.

One thing that amazes us is this. Once a person sins, the blood of Christ is never enough to wipe out that sin! They are held by the Body of Christ to be forever disqualified for doing anything in God’s service!

In fact, there are whole so-called “ministries” out there who do nothing but publish supposed past sins of servants of God, declaring them to be disqualified to serve God. I, Rebecca, never cease to be amazed at how effective these false ministries are. In my own case, all the false accusations against me took place more than 20 years ago. The accusations happen to be false, but even if they were true, where is the Blood of Jesus? Is there no forgiveness?

Our problem is that today people are looking for perfect servants. Perfect politicians, perfect pastors, perfect teachers of God’s Word. They think only those who have never sinned are qualified to serve. But that’s not God’s view of things. Let’s look at some of God’s greatest servants.

Abraham, Isaac & Jacob -- all three were liars. Abraham and Isaac lied about their wives. Jacob lied to get the blessing belonging to his older brother. Yet when God introduced Himself to Moses several hundred years later He thundered, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” (Exodus 3:6)

Moses -- murdered a man, later married against God’s law outside of the tribes of Israel. Yet, when Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for his flaws, God struck them with leprosy.

David -- committed murder and adultery. Yet God gave him the highest honor by calling him “A man after His own heart.”

Peter -- lied and denied that he knew Jesus three times. Yet God used him to preach the first gospel ever preached, and write two books of the Bible.

Paul -- Persecuted and murdered Christians. Yet God called him to write a significant portion of the Bible. Paul and his writings would never be accepted in our churches if he lived today.

Dear brothers and sisters. In all the history of the world, there has only been one perfect servant – Jesus Christ. God is not looking for perfect servant, just blood-washed ones. Why should we demand any more?

So, you want to accept what is written on the internet against someone? Do you, personally, have at least two eye-witnesses that the accusations are true? If not, then you had better not be accepting that trash as truth, AND you had better not be telling anyone else about it! Many times we fail to learn all the facts about a situation or about a person and we jump to conclusions. Worse yet, we talk to others about our conclusions without realizing that this is considered as gossip in the sight of God.

To murder character is as truly a crime as to murder the body. The tongue of the slanderer is the brother to the dagger of the assassin. Character assassination is at once easier and surer than physical assault. It involves far less risk for the assassin. It leaves him free to commit the same deed over and over again, and may, indeed win him honors of a hero even in the country of his victims.

We have come to the conclusion that so much hatred is included in most gossip that the demons get involved. People becoming involved in gossip literally come under a demonic bondage. Soon, it becomes impossible for them to ever receive the real truth about a particular situation or person. If you have fallen into this trap, you need to repent and then command all demons of hatred and gossip to get out of your life at once in the name of Jesus Christ. Then ask the Lord to take the demonic blinder off your eyes so that you can see the truth.

**“Where there is no wood, the fire goes out;
And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.
As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body.”
Psalm 26:20-22**

Remember, every word you say will one day be judged by Jesus Christ. How many tears will you be shedding in heaven?

This is perhaps one of the most important, and the most difficult newsletters we have ever written. We are asking each and everyone of you reading this to pray the follow prayer with us:

“Father God, when Jesus was here on earth He told us that one of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of our sins. Therefore, Blessed Holy Spirit, I am earnestly asking you to search my life and reveal to me every time I have sinned the sins of gossip and backbiting. Please show me so that I may repent. And Lord, I am asking you to set a guard on my tongue and instantly alert me in the future if I am about to fall into the sin of gossip and backbiting. I ask you for this, and thank you, in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.”

Now -- Take out a sheet of paper and start writing. Write down all the people you have gossiped against. Then pray through your list, confessing, repenting, and asking God to cleanse you. We are sure the Lord will ask you to go to some of those people and ask their forgiveness. Let us all operate in love and humility so that the Body of Christ may grow strong, and not be torn apart.

No Body's Friend

**My name is Gossip. I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing, I break hearts and ruin lives.
I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.
The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.
I flourish at every level of society.
My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.
To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.
I am nobody's friend!
Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.
I topple governments and kill friends. I even wreck marriages.
I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartache and indigestion.
I spawn suspicion and generate grief.
I make innocent people cry on their pillows.
Even my name hisses. I am called gossip, party gossip, telephone gossip, and don't forget, Church gosssip.
I make headlines and headaches.
Before you repeat a story, ask yourself, is it necessary? If not, SHUT UP!**

A couple of weeks ago, we came across a card in a secular store on the topic of friendship. It is published by American Greetings. It is a rare friendship that can stand against the onslaught of gossip. This card so beautifully depicts a true friendship that we feel is well worth our time and space to copy it here. This is a secular card! Why cannot Christians understand this concept of friendship?

Harvest Warriors
P.O. Box 65
Clinton, AR 72031 USA

warriors@artelco.com