

THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY
www.thewordtoday.org

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"SLOPPY GOSSIPS"

Recently a joker at the health club approached me with the quip, "You should hear what they're saying about you!" I fell for it half-heartedly, "Oh, yeah, what do they say?" He replied, "I shouldn't say; I don't want to be a gossip." I thought it was funny, even though it makes the other person the butt of the joke. The joke has been making the rounds, as one of our congregation members knew it as, "Listen carefully, I don't repeat gossip!" The whit in these jokes highlights the hypocritical nature of people. Our sinful self enjoys obtaining juicy information about the failings of others. Sadly, instead of being repulsed by news of the failings of others, we are drawn to it, like gawkers viewing a car accident. Our better, or Christ-like, nature attempts to resist salacious or slanderous talk. Rather than being "sloppy gossips", being careful *whom* we share information with so as to protect ourselves from trouble, we should be careful *what* we share, so as to honor God. One way to check our intent on what we share is whether we are willing to lead someone else in prayer for the person(s) we are discussing. Unless we have a desire to pray for the person we are discussing, we likely should not share the information.

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LEAKY ROOFS AND "LEAKY" MOUTHS

No one likes a leaky roof! We had a difficult to find leak in the flat portion of our roof at Our Shepherd this past year. It took several tries to locate the source, but once it was "buttoned up" it has been marvelously dry! Similarly, our demeanor "leaks" out of us when we talk. If we are showing the Joy of the Lord it will come through in our words. If we have bitterness and callousness, that, too, will seep out of us in our conversation. Colossians 4:6 reminds us, "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." What drips from your lips; bitterness, sickening sweetness which is perceived as hollow complements, or salt – useful discussion fit for a Christian?

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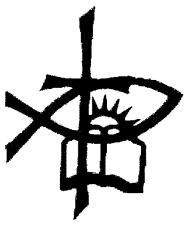
WOULD HE DIE AT CHURCH?

Paul the Apostle could be long-winded, even if inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the town of Troas as Paul preached late into the night in the third story of a building a young man named Eutychus perched on the window sill fell asleep and plummeted to his death! The account relates that Paul was enabled to bring this young man back to life, then they all resumed their worship with the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7-12)! Perhaps you have never thought of the possibility of a fellow worshiper dying at church, but it certainly does happen.

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Thoughts
Box 77
Greendale
WI
53129



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*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

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That was the thought that raced through all the members' minds last Sunday, Mother's Day, as an elderly gentleman named Art slumped as he was being assisted out during the sermon. He had indicated he was not feeling well, so his wife, Maxine, and he had assistance making their way to leave. Suddenly, Art collapsed in full view of the congregation! He did not lose consciousness, but it was necessary to call emergency personnel from the local fire department. Art was checked into the hospital, tested, and sent home the same day. It remains a mystery to Art and Maxine why over the years he has had these episodes three times.

What if Art had died during the service? No problem! Yes, of course it would be surprising, upsetting to Maxine, the love of his life, and disrupt the normal flow of worship. *But, in attending church we are preparing ourselves for the inevitable, death, and for the eternal life which comes after!* I can think of few better places to be with one's wife or entire family when called Home. Why? It's the best evidence that your faith is living! Art and Maxine are old enough and frail enough that they must *struggle* to make it to church. They work at being faithful, whereas for most others it is easy to rise, dress one's self, drive to church and participate. They give a powerful witness to *commitment* to Christ, and so do all other elderly persons who are regular in worship. Others are home or care facility bound, but would be at the church door in the flesh if they could. These people are powerful witnesses to the young, begging the question, "Will you also be found in the house of the Lord when it ceases to be convenient for you to attend? Will you be faithful unto tiredness, weakness, even death? God willing, we all will be found desiring to be in worship and with God's people, even on the week we are called to our eternal rest!

CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS

As Christians we are given several roles – disciple (student), servant, soldier, and ambassador. An ambassador has been applied much more widely today than years ago, when it meant predominantly a representative of a foreign land. One has to watch the labels used by liberals and many celebrities, as they are "ambassadors" or "advocates" because this does not require them to actually use money made by appearances for the causes they support!

There is a word of discipline in that discussion for us as Christians. When first century Christians were told they were ambassadors for Christ, it was with no expectation of benefit in a worldly sense. Today, I fear, Christians *expect benefit in a worldly sense (i.e. wealth, acceptance, etc.)* simply because they are Christian. If we really understand our role as ambassadors, especially in our country's current climate, we will anticipate possible less than enthusiastic acceptance and inconvenience. As others observe us, if being a Christian is so easy, then what is it worth?

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder