

The Power of the Tongue

Good morning everyone, and this morning I would like to carry on from the subject we spoke about a couple of weeks ago – you may remember I spoke about Holiness.

That it is Gods will we become holy, that we change become more like Jesus in character and behaviour, that through the Holy Spirit God is changing us from the inside, dealing with our old habits and desires and this is a process we undergo throughout our lifetime as Christians.

I said also this is where the *'rubber hits the road'* where we had to *'walk the walk'* and live out our Christian lives faithfully and obediently and that holiness is essentially a practical thing, a dual activity between God and us where God highlights things in our lives pinpoints difficult areas in our lives that He wants us to change in.

In truth there are only 3 possible ways we can deal with these difficult areas as they come up within us, we can either 1. Suppress them (that is bury or deny them) 2. Express them (give vent to them with all the consequences of that) or 3. Confess them (bring them into the open and ask God for forgiveness and healing).

Regarding this area of holiness, there is a specific topic I want to talk about this morning and that is the 'power of the tongue', the spoken word, the words that come out of our mouths. The Bible has a lot to say about the 'power of the tongue' but as a general truth (whether you believe in Christianity or not) widely held, is: our words can have a positive effect or a negative effect on ourselves and others.

In fact the scriptures go further than that, Proverbs 18:21 say *"the tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit"*. The power of life or death! What more powerful weapon can it be? I was thinking about something Dawn said at the Bible study on Monday last and it's the old worldly saying *"Stick & Stones make break my bones but words will never hurt me"* She correctly said it couldn't be further from the truth. Unkind, hurtful words most certainly hurt us, damage us, wound us, and even can kill us! (Proverbs 18:21)

Psalm 64:3 says: *"they sharpen their tongues like swords and aim cruel words like deadly arrows."* And that's what negative words can be like, deadly arrows that penetrate our spirit. Conversely however words can build you up, bring encouragement and even *"health to our bones"* (Proverbs 4:20-22) Proverbs 12:18 *"There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"*.

We all are likely to have memories from our past where the words that people have said about us, whether good or bad, negative or positive still have echoes and can still hold power in our minds today. So firstly let's recognise that within our mouths in the area of our tongue the words we speak have the ability, the power to build up or tear down. The tongue is a

weapon (*'a sword'*) we can use for good or evil and we should be very wise and careful in how we use it.

So what does the Bible say about the 'power of the tongue'? – Firstly: The scriptures make it clear there is a connection between the heart and the mouth, they are inextricably linked! They are Impossible to disentangle or separate. They follow like night and day.

Luke 6:45 *"The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks."* That's interesting, we think it is up here in the mind where our words come from your cerebral region, out of our head, but scripture tells us something else our words come from the heart. *"Out of the abundance of our heart the mouth speaks."*

Prov 4:23 *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life"*. The heart is the spring of life, the seat of our being. This is the direction the spring flows from its source in the heart like a river a tributary flowing all the way down through to the mouth, the tongue.

That why the Bible says: *"where your treasure is your heart will be"* (Matt6:21) and *"if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things"* (Phil: 4:8) because what goes in here (heart) eventually comes out here (mouth).

Isn't it true as well, that our mouths often betray what is hidden in our hearts? and it's usually when we are under pressure it comes out! People say it is often under pressure, when the 'heat is on' we see how we really are! And how we really are, is expressed in the words we speak. It is interesting to note how different Jesus was under pressure , when He was suffering at the point of death he cried out *"father forgive them they know not what they do"* that's because His heart was pure, no sin existed in Him. His spring was unpolluted.

But when these pressure points come upon us God is working, nudging us. He allows pressure to come upon us so we may confess what's in our heart and bring it into the open and there is power in confession. Scripture says: *"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all righteousness"* (1 John 1:9)

Confession works back into our heart, we experience sin and we confess it, we are forgiven. God works it back into the heart creating holiness, backwards & forwards it goes, our sin comes out - His forgiveness goes in purifying & cleansing.

Secondly: The scriptures speak a lot about the negativity of bad words & the effect it has on ourselves and other people. You may remember the story of the nation of Israel who after coming out of Egypt God had promised them they would enter the Promised Land, a land of *"milk and honey"* and all they had to do was take possession of it. They sent out 12 spies to see what the land was like, it was a scouting mission and two of the spies came back and said *"we can go in – God is with us"*

Here's what the other 10 said:-

"We can't attack those people! They're too strong for us!" So they began to spread lies among the Israelites about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored is one that devours those who live there. All the people we saw there are very tall. We felt as small as grasshoppers, and that's how we must have looked to them."(Numbers 13:31-32)

They gave a negative report and because of that negativity and unbelief they infected the rest of the people. In fact the whole of the nation of Israel had to wait another 40 years before that unbelieving generation died off and only then as a nation could they enter in. There is a malicious contaminating power in negative words that can spread like a virus.

We are all prone to negativity at times but have you ever met people (I have met a few in my time) who seemed to be locked into a negative script? they seem to have continual problems they are forever in a quagmire, always struggling, complaining and when you say something positive to them you get the "BUT" ah yes they say "BUT" I have this problem so I can't do that because of this, there is always this hurdle in the way (the truth is there is always a hurdle in the way for everyone of us)

There glass is always half empty rather than half full. It's almost as if what they say is a 'self fulfilling prophecy' because they keep saying it, believing it – it comes true! And again it goes back to the words we say; they have power to affect our future.

In some way you can put a curse on your life by this negative thinking, people say things like "We're all just alcoholics in our family," or "Our family is just jinxed." (You can fill in the blanks). But by speaking these things into your life is basically coming into agreement with them and sometimes people need to be set free to be delivered from curses, it starts by repenting of the lie of negativity and unbelief. Can I say this with absolute certainty, for Christians, we are not under a curse, no curse or anything negative said to us has power over us. Christ became a curse for us.

(Gal 3:13 -14) *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14He redeemed us in order that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit".* In Christ we receive blessings, it is all good news, and it's a totally positive faith.

Grumbling is another sort of negative language that God tells us not to do, we are not to grumble but to give thanks, grumbling is a sign of unbelief – a sign that we don't see God's hand in the difficulties of life.

Also Gossip is another form of negativity - Gossip it's juicy we all love to hear it don't we? Proverbs say: *"The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts"*.

This is the Definition of gossip: *"a conversation or report about other people's lives that might be unkind, disapproving, or not true"*: and that's the thing about gossip it might be or it might not be true! it's hearsay, you simply don't know, so don't go there. It always takes two to gossip.

The truth is, if you hear a rumour or gossip about someone else just let it die with you! *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no gossip, strife ceases."* (Proverbs 26:20). If we accept everything we hear about the others as fact right away, it shows how close the sin of gossip and backbiting is to us. Even letting the idea run around in our minds is the first step on the path towards division and strife.

Can I say something as well about the language we use because sometimes we use it subconsciously, it has become part of our vocabulary and we don't realise it! We had an example of that on Monday night at the Bible study.

Somebody used the term *"it's on the cards"* the context was that something was bound to happen! Now it might sound silly but when you look at the source of that phrase it's talking about 'fortune telling' the use of tarot cards. Now clearly it wasn't meant in that way and when you realise these things you cut it out of your conversation.

A lot of people today, even Christians say things like 'Good luck' or 'your just unlucky' but again when you look at the meaning behind it, by definition is alludes to: 'we are here by chance', that we believe in 'random existence', now we don't believe that as Christians, we don't believe in 'luck' 'random chance' we believe there is a God that orders things, plans things as we have said often: *"nothing happens by accident"* for the Christian that is anyway.

I don't believe we should go around analysing everything we say, but if there are things that we become aware of, the words we use, that are not in line with what we believe, we should try to extract them from our vocabulary.

Using swear words is another one. I know Edwin said that when he was saved he stopped swearing altogether (it was the same for me) but we have to watch that we don't just replace a swear word with an alternative. People say things like "Oh sugar" etc. But it's the attitude behind what we say that matters, what's in the heart that is what God is interested in.

Thirdly: The bible talks a lot about the quantity of our words that we should use words sparingly. (Proverbs 10:19) *"When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise"*.

The more you speak the more chance of saying something wrong it's an obvious statistical truth! (Proverbs 17:27-28) *"He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent"*

I have heard it said: *"we have one tongue and two ears and that should be the equation when using our mouths and ears"* we should listen twice as much as we talk! I don't mean be 'silent morons' who say nothing but we should be *"quick to listen & slow to speak"* and isn't it interesting that often silences are very difficult, uncomfortable in prayer times for instance, we feel we need to say something.

Fourthly: The bible tells us to *"guard our tongues"* Proverbs again: *"He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles"* "And this word 'guard' is a military term, the Greek word suggests to *"watch in advance"* to *"post a guard or spy at gate or garrison as a protection"*. I have this picture for those that are submitted to the Spirit of God, we are working together to guard our lips and our speech. We play our part, we must guard what we say, but God through the Holy Spirit is guarding our lips also protecting us from what we might say.

Have you ever felt that 'restraint' when you could of said something but you didn't? That's the Holy Spirit at work restraining your lips from saying something you shouldn't. We need to be 'on watch', 'on guard' at all times so that we can be the one who builds unity with our words, instead of being the one who tears it down. But how do we change our words? How do we make them more loving? We do it by replacing them.

That why proclamation of God's word is so important because its speaking Gods truth about ourselves and others it's about replacing the 'negative script' within us the negative thoughts and words that is in us all because of sin and it takes time to replace these things. Eph 4.29 *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen"*.

We change our language from negative to positive from curses to blessings from gossip to helpful words that build up, to saying only kind words and there are no 'quick fixes' this is done only by every effort, lots of self control and we do it only by the help of the Holy Spirit as we yield what we say to Him.

It's a long process of growing in holiness and it should happen continually throughout our Christian lives, controlling the tongue is just one area in this goal of working towards becoming more like Jesus.

Tony Troy

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