



The Power of the Tongue

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Introduction:

On a windswept hill in an English country churchyard stands a drab, gray slate tombstone. The quaint stone bears an epitaph not easily seen unless you stoop over and look closely. The faint etchings read: "Beneath this stone, a lump of clay, / lies Arabella Young, / Who on the twenty-fourth of May, / began to hold her tongue."

Last week we shared about the power of Jesus name, and the fact that He has given us His name and the authority to use that to fulfill his purpose. He told us to ask his father in His name and he would do it.

This morning we are going to look at the power of the tongue.

TEXT: Proverbs 18:21 - The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Here are some witty statements about the tongue that I came across this week.

- He who has a sharp tongue soon cuts his own throat.
- The tongue is a deadly weapon, whether it is sharp or blunt.
- A dog is smarter than some people. It wags its tail and not its tongue.
- Cats are not the only creatures that can lick themselves with their tongues.
- A sharp tongue and a dull mind are usually found in the same head.

The Christian should learn two things about his tongue – how to hold it and how to use it.

I. Words from the tongue have the power to bear fruit.

In other words we will taste the result of our words. When I think of fruit, I think of something that is either bitter or sweet. Something that is ripe, rotten, or sour because it is not completely ripened yet.

Understand with me this morning that again in life there is the principle of sowing and reaping. There is

great power in the words we speak. When we speak, if we sow that which cuts, which puts down, and hurts, the fruit of that will be sour and bitter, and not very palatable.

What comes out of our mouths as speech is powerful and has the ability to build up, or tear down. What we express in words comes from the heart. Sooner or later what you feel in your heart will be expressed by your words.

Let me say to you parents – your words can build up or tear down. On Wednesday evenings we have been studying the giants of our faith. This past Wednesday we looked at David. He overcame great obstacles to become all God wanted him to be. He did not allow the words of his father, his brothers, the king, or the enemy to crush him. I think they may have made him more determined. However, words are powerful. If you believe in someone, let him or her know that. **AFFIRM THEM.**

I must have been a disaster when I was a kid growing up. I loved to take things apart, and often couldn't get them back together. In fact, my parents had been given a beautiful antique reed organ, and I loved music, and played it often. But I wanted to know at 12 or 13 what made it work. What was inside, and I took it apart and looked. Then I couldn't get it back together again. I can still hear my dad's voice in my head – what's the matter with you? I suppose I've done the same thing to my sons when I didn't see things the way they did through the eyes of an inquisitive child. One can tear down with words or build up.

Let me say to you spouses – your words can have a tremendous impact on your spouse. Believe in them, encourage them, build them up don't tear them down. There is enough negative junk that people have to get beyond in the everyday grind of life that we don't have to clutter it up more.

Scripture tells us that out of the heart the mouth speaks.

II. Words from the tongue have the power to unite or divide.

The tower of Babel is a prime example of the power of the tongue and language.

Genesis 11:1-9 - Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to

do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from Shinar over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Language and speech are tools that God has given to us and we must be very careful how we use those tools. If we misuse this tool, it can bring destruction, damage, and even as our text indicated death. Do you understand the power of your words? Your words have an impact on your spouse, yourself, your children, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, your relatives, and on God.

I'm impressed by the power in their speech. Because of their discussion and their one-mindedness, God had to step in. The building of their city wasn't wrong; it was the motive of their heart. They wanted to make a name for themselves, and reach into heaven, and not be scattered over the face of all the earth.

III. Words from the tongue have the power to do great things.

David recorded his prayer in **Psalm 19:14** - May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer

Here are two examples of the power of words.

Nehemiah had a desire in his heart and vision from God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The story is recorded in Nehemiah. 2:17-20. Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding,

but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”

He spoke to the exiled people as to what God had shown him and the plan of how it would be accomplished. It was because of his positive speaking that the work of God was accomplished and the walls of the city were rebuilt.

Another example of the power of words is from the history of Israel. The story is recorded in Numbers 13. God spoke to Moses and told him to send men to explore the land of Canaan, which he was giving to the people of Israel. So Moses sent in 12 spies to the land to check it out. They were to bring a report back as to what the land was like. Were the people strong or weak, were the cities walled, or not walled. Was the soil fertile or poor, were there trees there, and were the people few or many. They went and explored the land. They were there for 40 days. They were very accurate when it came to who lived where. The land is a fruitful land. It is abundant with milk and honey. BUT (V. 28) – the people who live there are powerful and the cities that are fortified are very large. We can begin to see the power of the words of 10 of the spies. The people listened to them and acted on what they said.

Caleb (v 30) silenced the people before Moses and said – we should go up and take the land. We can certainly do it. (V. 31) – but the men who had gone up with him said, we can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. They spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored (V. 32). The people are like giants and we are like grasshoppers. The entire nation of Israel spoke and grumbled and complained about how God had led them and now what were they to do. Numbers 14: Again Caleb and Joshua spoke positively in verse 7 – the land we passed through is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us he will lead us into that land, and will give it to us. Don't rebel and don't be afraid. We will swallow the people up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Don't be afraid of them. (V.9)

But the whole assembly spoke of stoning them. Look at verse 28 – tell them that as surely as I live, I will do to you the very things I heard you say.

IV. Words from the tongue have power to reveal the condition of our heart

Listen to what you are saying.

James 3:5-6 - Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

It is for this very reason that when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit they spoke in other tongues. The precious gift of the Holy Spirit is provided for us, because God wants our speech to be holy, to be pure, to build up and be that which honors Him. Jesus said it would be out of our inner most being that rivers of living water would flow. I believe this has to do with our heart and our tongue. He wants to cleanse our heart, and from a place of purity will flow pure words that have the power to build up and give life, rather than tear down and bring death.

James 3:8-9 - But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.

If the confession of your mouth and tongue are negative, then look at your heart. Ask God to do a work there. Ask Him to fill your heart and to have control there, and what you say will be affected.

Psalms 139:4 - Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

Proverbs 10:19 - When words are many, sin is not absent; but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Proverbs 12:18 - Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 13:3 – He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

Proverbs 21:23 - He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.