

Sticks, Stones and Words

by Bill Crews

Who thought of it, who composed the words, how old is it, I don't know. Whether an adult or a child, I know not. Whether first used by an adult or a child, I cannot say. But in my lifetime, how many hundreds of times has some child, when taunted or teased with words, replied, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." No doubt many a mother has sought to console her child, in tears, with these words. Perhaps they have even given comfort to many children wounded by words, and perhaps they have served to cause many young offenders to stop their assault by words. **BUT THEY ARE NOT TRUE!**

Words can not only hurt anyone; they can do *far more damage* than sticks and stones! In the Scriptures the tongue is likened to a scourge (**Job 5:21**), a sharp razor (**Psalm 52:2**), a sharp sword (**Psalm 57:4**), a bow (**Jeremiah 9:3**) and a deadly arrow (**Jeremiah 9:8**). All of this because of the ability of the tongue to speak words, and because of the power of words, for good or evil.

The words that come from the lips of the wicked are like "*a scorching (or burning) fire*" (**Proverbs 16:7**).

Words can wound like the piercing sword, or words can heal (**Proverbs 12:18**). Words can depress, or cheer (**Proverbs 12:25**). Words can ensnare, or deliver (**Proverbs 12:13**). Words can turn away wrath or stir up anger (**Proverbs 15:1**). Words can be a "*tree of life,*" or "*a breaking of the spirit*" (**Proverbs 15:4**). Indeed, "*death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (**Proverbs 18:21**).

The deceptive, lying words of Satan **beguiled** Eve into sinning against God in the garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:1-6**). False words led to the **unjust execution** of an innocent man in **1 Kings 21:8-13**. The words of Demetrius, the silversmith, inflamed his fellow-craftsmen and stirred up the people of Ephesus into mob action (**Acts 19:23-29**), but the words of the town clerk calmed them down (**verses 35-41**). The words of the man of God out of Judah angered king Jeroboam, and the words of the old prophet led the same man of God to disobey God and lose his life (**1 Kings 13**). From Moses at Mount Sinai came words that could lead the nation of Israel into righteousness, prosperity, growth and peace. From Jesus came the words of eternal life (**John 6:68**). From the apostle Peter came words by which Cornelius and his house could be saved (**Acts 11:13-14**). Let us never underestimate the importance and power of words, both for good or for evil.

Let us teach our children the place, the purpose and the potential of words. Each one is responsible for his own words, for they come forth out of his heart and indicate what is in his heart (**Matthew 12:34-35**). We shall answer to God for them (**Matthew 12:36**), and by them we can be either justified or condemned (**Matthew 12:37**). There are times when we should speak, and there are times when we should refrain from speaking (**Ecclesiastes 3:7**). No one should speak without thinking, and no one should speak every thing he is thinking. Words can encourage, commend, comfort, cheer, instruct, enlighten, guide, rebuke, correct, strengthen, bring faith and give hope. But words can also embarrass, offend, hurt, grieve, distress, discourage, dishearten, confuse, mislead, deceive, tear down and destroy. In truth, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words **can** hurt me much, much more." Please be kind and careful and considerate with your words.

— via Gospel Communicator

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