

DO YOU HAVE A HURTFUL TONGUE?

Psalm 64: 1-10 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

If I had the chance to rename this message today, it would rather be, “The Boomerang Of A Hurtful Tongue.” Perhaps, nothing hurts marriages more than a hurtful, critical tongue, either by the husband or the wife. Often nothing hurts parents’ relationships with their children more than a hurtful tongue. Parents who refuse to discipline in love, often opt for punishing their children with words. Seldom does anything bring growth in a church to a stalemate or rob a church of a glorious future more than backbiting, gossip, speaking privately with some about others, behind their back, and all other forms of a hurtful tongue. Both employers and employees on the job know the power of just one hurtful tongue at work. And Psalm 64 was written by David under divine inspiration to meddle with us all today and warn us of the terrible boomerang of a critical, hurtful tongue. We may say that our back-biting and gossip and hurtful critical words were true and that the person had it coming. Nevertheless, no one knows completely the destruction that a few well-placed hurtful words can have. Beloved, one person who chooses to break ranks with unity in the Body of Christ can create with the devil’s help and engineering a virtual spiritual hurricane, typhoon, or cyclone. The most tragic part of using our tongues to hurt others is that, apart from repentance to God and to the people we have slandered, back-bitten, and spoken hurtfully against, being a partner with the accuser of the brethren—the most tragic part is that the hurricane comes back to its source with a fury even greater than it came against our target. The hurricane comes back to destroy us.

The setting of this psalm is probably found most clearly found in the words and hurtful accusations, back-biting, criticisms, and accusations of David’s own son against his very own daddy. Beloved, some of the worst possible things can be spoken even by Christian men and women, boys and girls against their own dear friends, brothers and sisters. Why? It is because we are all prone to fight back with a vengeance when we sense anything going in a way we had not hoped. We jump into the fray of speaking without praying, accusing without thinking, and we go into a zone that is every bit as deadly as pornography or murder. We set out to hurt others, and not only do we succeed, but like Haman of old, speaking words against the Jews and building a 75 foot high scaffold and hangman’s noose for Mordecai, the Jew, the day after he had the gallows built, who was hanging from the gallows? It wasn’t the intended receiver—Mordecai, the Jew. No, it was Haman. When we check out the 120 satraps who were out to get Daniel, deciding to trap him in his words—in his praying to God, found that the den of lions that never ended Daniel’s life made those divinely mouth-stopped lions even more hungry than ever. They were crunched to bits before they hit the ground. Oh, the boomerang of

hurtful words. Never is there any family or any job or any marriage or any church that is exempt from hurtful words. Divorce rarely ever happens without tons and tons of hurtful words, and millions of divorces come to men and women who have come to faith in Jesus, but who have been unwilling, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to bridle their tongues. Today, I want to preach on the etymology of Psalm 64 and the etymology of what happens with hurtful words that we all can speak, and what happens if we don't quickly repent? I find in our text three parts to this etymology? You may say, "Pastor, what does etymology mean? If you don't know, listen to Webster's definition. Etymology means "the explanation of the origin of a word." I want to use this word etymology spiritually to search out the explanation and origin of hurtful words? I see three questions we must answer today. (1) How does the hurtfulness of the tongue begin? (2) How do enemies with hurtful tongues act and how do those who are the victims of a hurtful tongues feel and how are they affected? (3) How does God bring divine vengeance on those who choose to ignore God's warnings and use their tongues to criticize, lambast, accuse and attempt to ruin even the least of one of God's saints? Beloved, I urge us all to refuse to think of others today, but rather to examine ourselves. If today is our altar day, our day to weep before God and others over our words, today, let revival begin with us, being willing to surrender to the Spirit's gentle work. Examine these 3 questions:

HOW DOES THE HURTFULNESS OF THE TONGUE BEGIN? (I.) There are thousands of verses in the Bible to turn to, but let's examine what happened in the life of Absalom with his dad, David, the king. Before we look at Absalom, let's examine Psalm 64: 1. We read, "Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from dread of the enemy." David was forced by fleeing in exile from his own throne and kingdom in Jerusalem to see the conspiring coup of Absalom as placing him and his life in dread danger of being murdered. That was the plan of Absalom's coup. Absalom was not interested in allowing David to flee as he took over the kingdom. No, Absalom intended to kill his father, but first he aimed to shame his father by defiling David's house and his wives publicly, in one of the worst immoral acts ever recorded as happening before the public eye. Then Absalom sent his own army out to find David, to kill his dad. But why did this all happen? Why is David writing this psalm in desperation from somewhere out on the edge of the barren wilderness of Judah? Let's look at the etymology of Absalom's rebellion, which is truly the etymology of how the hurtfulness of the tongue begins? In fact, beloved, listen for yourselves, each of you, as I listened to the Lord in preparing this message. God deeply desires to get each of our attentions individually today. Listen to the Word, or feel free to turn to II Samuel 13-15. You'll notice titles such as **Amnon and Tamar**, then **Absalom murders Amnon**, and then **Absalom flees to Geshur**. The long story short is that Amnon fell in love with Absalom's sister, Tamar. Tamar was a beautiful virgin young lady and

Amnon was pining away for her but Tamar wasn't interested in him. Amnon was so tormented in love he made himself ill, until his friend Jonadab heard Amnon's story and told Amnon a crafty way to get Tamar for himself. Jonadab said, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning?" Amnon told his friend and Jonadab told him to lie down in bed and pretend to be very sick. When David came to make a sick call on Amnon, his son, Amnon was to tell David he wanted Tamar to come and prepare a meal in his sight and feed it to him. David fell for the plot and sent Tamar to Amnon's house to cook bread cakes for him. After cooking the bread, Tamar gave the cakes to Amnon but he wouldn't eat a thing. Then Amnon told Tamar to send out everyone else in the room, as apparently others were there. Then Amnon asked for the breadcakes and Tamar brought them to him. Immediately, Amnon grabbed hold of Tamar and said, "Come lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. But go speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you, or marrying you." But Amnon was bent on forcing Tamar and being stronger than her, he did. He violated her and lay with her. Tamar really wasn't against Amnon, just opposed to his evil plot. Having violated Tamar, now Amnon hated her and sent her from his room weeping. Tamar left weeping, and said, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than what you just did in violating me." Tamar threw ashes on her head, tore her robe and went home crying loudly. Absalom soon found out the story, and he hated Amnon his brother for the violation of Tamar. But Absalom plotted to kill Amnon. Two years later, Absalom was sheep-shearing in Baal-hazor and he invited all the king's sons to go down. David told Absalom that all the king's sons would be burdensome to him. David would not go down, but gave Absalom a blessing. So Absalom asked his Dad for one last blessing, -- "Just let my brother Amnon come down." Then Absalom told his servants, "Mark when Amnon's heart is merry with wine. When I say, 'Strike, kill him.'"

Listen beloved, every time we begin saying hurtful words, there is a story behind it—and we may feel justified in everything we say or do. When Amnon was killed, the other sons of David fled on their mules. The first news David received was that Absalom had killed all his sons. But crafty Jonadab told David only Amnon was dead, and it was because Amnon violated Tamar. Now Absalom was afraid for his life and he fled to Geshur, 75 miles northeast of his sheep-shearing station, north of the Sea of Chinnereth, known as the Sea of Galilee in the days of Jesus. Absalom stayed in Geshur for three years under the protection of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. David mourned daily for the his son, Absalom for those three years. Joab, David's commander knew David's heart went out to Absalom, so he sent for a wise woman from Tekoa to pretend to be a mourner to David. The plan worked and David finally allowed Absalom to come back home to Jerusalem, but David

would not see his son, or let him in his presence. Absalom lived 2 full years in Jerusalem without ever once seeing his Dad. Absalom finally told Joab to let him go to David his father and if David wanted to kill him, he could. So finally David summoned Absalom who bowed low before his Dad and David kissed him. Then listen carefully as I read to you six short verses of how Absalom's mouth stabbed his dad and led to his conspiracy in taking the kingdom from David. Notice the words of Absalom—hurtful, envious, jealous, accusing words, out to destroy his Dad. II Samuel 15: 1-6 reads, “After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, “From what city are you?” And when he said, “Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,” Absalom would say to him, “See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.” Then Absalom would say, “Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.” And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

The etymology of this hurtful tongue event began in enmity over a hurt—Absalom wouldn't forgive his Dad for not seeing him for two years, right in Jerusalem. Just like Absalom couldn't forgive his brother Amnon, he couldn't forgive David. Beloved, listen, hurtful words often begin with bitterness, hurt, enmity, unforgiveness, and a wounded heart. Then the wounded heart plots to get back at whoever has hurt it. Absalom wanted David's job. Beloved, it happens in homes. Wives want their husband's authority and control, and often have some valid reasons. Folks in church want the job someone else has in church that they wish they had, including wanting a pastor's job. That is a frequent flier in church. Children want their parent's job and resent their parents' authority. The beginning of a hurtful tongue begins with a wounded heart, that turns sour, bitter, envious, and starts conniving to steal position, authority, or to depose another. Christian people are very capable of such a plan. May God spare us and deliver us from all such plans and plots in our homes, our marriages, our jobs and in our church. But before going to the 2nd question, realize, beloved, that hurtful tongues are almost always born out of wounded hearts that seek revenge and vindication. 2ndly,

HOW DO ENEMIES WITH HURTFUL TONGUES ACT AND HOW DO THE VICTIMS OF HURTFUL TONGUES FEEL AND HOW ARE THEY AFFECTED? (II.)

Look with me at Psalm 64: 2-6. This is David's complaint and desperate prayer to God. “Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers, who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows, shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear. They hold fast to their evil purpose; they talk of laying snares

secretly, thinking, “Who can see them?” They search out injustice, saying, “We have accomplished a diligent search.” For the inward mind and heart of a man are deep.” David often mentions his enemies in his prayers, as we all can remember, looking back at the first 63 psalms. As David asks to be heard by God, he pleads with God to preserve his life from dread from the enemy—v. 1. Now, in verses 2-6, David is praying for God to hide him from the “secret plots of the wicked” -v. 2. These are the people who whet their tongues on a whetstone or grindstone. -v. 3, and they aim their bitter words like arrows. By the way, these arrows are poisonous arrows dipped in the poison of their bitterness and wounded hearts. (v. 3). The enemy then shoots at their victim, in this case, they shot at David, or it could be that they shoot at you or me, they shoot at us suddenly, and without fear, v. 4. Then they keep it up, not wavering from their evil purpose—they shoot to kill. They hold fast in attempting to wound us, hurt us and kill us, if not physically, they want to ruin us emotionally, vocationally, or ruin us in our calling. The enemy gets secret counsel with folk who are in on their schemes, counsel to continue in their plans to shoot from their deer stands, their camouflaged hideouts & secret places.

The enemy often targets the righteous man or woman. Amazingly, the job to wear down the saints is tough, so v. 5, the enemy gets discouraged in their efforts at times. So they encourage each other and remind each other—saying “No one can see us.” They looked together for dirt on David and dirt on us, trying to dig up charges that will stick against us. They search to bring us down like they were on a treasure hunt (v. 6). They proudly brag on themselves saying, “We have accomplished a diligent search.” Once a hurtful tongue sets in, it is hard to change. Nothing short of repentance will change a man or a woman from a hurtful tongue. The wounded bitter spirit behind a hurtful tongue is deep. It is no superficial hatred or malice. Why do you say that, Pastor? Because I read in v. 6—“For the inward mind and heart of a man are deep.” Beloved, this kind of pursuit by once friends, family or brothers and sisters in Christ hurts deeply. Read between the lines as David cries out his complaint to God. He cries as a broken man, wounded and weary and helpless, with nowhere to turn but to God. Perhaps some of you know the sting of being hurt over and over with the tongue of someone who should be your prayer warrior, but they have gone from being a honey bee in your life to being a stinging bee. Even as the victim of a hurtful tongue feels helpless, if they know Jesus, they pray for their betrayers. Do you remember David’s last words to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, his three generals as they mustered troops to pursue Absalom. The generals wouldn’t let David go with them, for they said, “You are worth 10,000 of us.” So David said to them, “Whatever seems best to you, I will do...Deal gently for my sake with the young man, Absalom.” Those were his last words regarding the enemy that had hurt him so deeply with his tongue. 3rdly, what is the etymology of the hurtful tongue—what is the aftermath of it?

HOW DOES GOD BRING DIVINE VENGEANCE ON THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO IGNORE HIS WARNINGS AND USE THEIR TONGUES TO CRITICIZE, LAMBAST, ACCUSE AND ATTEMPT TO RUIN EVEN THE LEAST OF ONE OF GOD'S SAINTS? (III.) Notice verses 7-10 for the response of God is swift and unbending. I read, "But God shoots His arrow at them; they are wounded suddenly. They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them; all who see them will wag their heads. Then all mankind fears; they tell what God has brought about and ponder what he has done. **Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in Him! Let all the upright in heart exult!**" Beloved, vengeance belongs to the Lord, as He confirms in Romans 12: 19. He is not absent, unhearing or uninterested, saying "They are in the dark; I can't see what is going on." Never! God also has arrows and He will shoot at the enemies of our souls -v. 7. The work of the enemy tongues will recoil upon them. The boomerang of their hurtful words will come back with venom upon those who gave out the hurt to begin with. -v. 8. Their planned ruin for us, will fall on those who have come against us. When this happens, men and women will see and declare that God is at work in this judgment—saying God is defending us from the enemy, just as Pharaoh's last words showed he finally realized God was fighting for Israel. See verses 8b, 9. When God gets involved, it's all over for the enemy.

So the psalm is about to end but wait, Pastor, what happened to David and Absalom? Did Joab and Abishai and Ittai obey their king? II Samuel 18:9-15 declares, (v. 10). "And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. And a certain man saw it and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt." But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not reach out my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake protect the young man Absalom.' On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life, and there is nothing hidden from the king, then you yourself would have stood aloof." Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." And he took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him." Then David wept and cried, saying, "O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, Would to God I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!" Yet ultimately the righteous are glad for how God ends the story of our being attacked by vicious words. Ultimately, God has the last word. See v. 10 above. God is calling those of us willing to admit our hurtful tongues to come clean today. Will we? (Altar open)