

NEWS AND VIEWS  
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**“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”**

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***A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4)***

Have you ever seen a mama cat licking her kittens? Sometimes she licks them to clean them (Yuck) or licks their wounds trying to heal them (probably not recommended in the best veterinary treatment manuals). But could it be that she licks them to comfort them...to show them affection? I'd have to say that the kittens sure seem to enjoy it!

Enough of this talk about licking already. Is this what a soothing tongue is all about? The writer of this proverb is referring to the words that we speak, those that roll off the tongue. It's good for us to hear soothing or comforting words. Encouraging words are sustaining; they keep us going. Soothing words, according to the translators, actually are healing words. So I am provoked to ask myself the question: when I am hurting, what kind of words help me the most? What words do I need to hear? And more to the point, am I the kind of person known for a soothing tongue; healing words; or something much different?

The contrast to a soothing tongue is *perversion*, a twisting of something's purpose. If I am created in the image of God and formed in His likeness, I am created to speak words that heal and not hurt. God's words are powerful in that they create a culture of goodness. In the beginning, when God said: it was so; and it was good. So if I am to become more godly, I think my words are a good indicator of where some of this transforming work is needed the most.

When I speak hurting words, it is like I stab and twist a knife into someone's heart. The writer says that this perversion of purpose can actually crush the spirit. When I am perverted in my speech, I serve a different purpose, a twisted purpose, an *evil* purpose. Sometimes we may use our words to shame someone into behaving better. Sometimes we use words that wound because we are wounded ourselves. But when we wound because we are wounded, that actually hinders our healing. The scabs are torn off, the wound is reopened, and the process of healing begins again. That is, as long as infection is not a factor. Interesting thing about scabs and scars. Scabs are the sign of a healing that is not yet healed. And scars are the evidence of healing, long ago inflicted.

**Consider the Lord's scars.** *Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."* (John 20:27) He who knew no sin bore the marks of human sin; scars; not scabs.

**Consider the Lord's wounds.** *But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:5) Jesus; the Father's sacrificial remedy for restoration, was humanity's whipping boy. Speaking words that hurt dishonors this radical act of love.

**Consider the Lord's words.** *But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.* (Matthew 15:18) When we speak words that do not heal, the problem is not communication; the problem is an evil heart. The Lord can help us with that.

**Consider the Lord's prayer.** *"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."* (Luke 23:34) Sometimes we don't know what we're doing. Now we know. Stop speaking death.

**Consider the Lord's cross.** The Tree of Life where the King of Glory died; and speak Life!

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam