

Swearing

Introduction

In times gone by Christian people understood that foul language was forbidden, at all times. Any slip up was a sin that needed dealing with. Sadly, this has all changed.

In recent times I have had personal experience of, not only believers but, pastors that swear. Indeed, they not only use foul language with no qualms of conscience, but some actually justify it with casuistry.

This is all part of the gradual destruction of Christianity through corruption that has been going on for several decades. The ruination of the church has not come through persecution but has been slowly achieved through pollution of doctrines and morals from the inside. Few understand the take-over of the church that has been actively going for a hundred years whereby satanic principles are replacing godly doctrines one by one.

So let's look at the issue of bad language.

Words

No power?

Some apologists for swearing say that words have no power and don't hurt anyone except prudes who need offending. The idea of a word having power to hurt anyone or do anything at all is meaningless, they say. It's just the frequency of sound waves in the air changing from a person's mouth.

Well, if you are one of these people who think that words have no power, when you are next drowning in a river do not cry, '*help*', because it won't save you.

Only fools think that words have no power.

If you say the wrong words in a court of law, you commit perjury and will go to jail.

When you say the words forming a verbal contract in Scotland it becomes legally binding and you must abide by the contract.

When a bride says, '*I do*' in a wedding ceremony, she binds herself to her husband for life by the power of her words. God sees that confession and holds her to it.

God's word says that every word we utter will be judged and accounted for.¹ Thus words can have the power to condemn us to hell.

What are words?

Words are the utterance of the human soul; the expression of the human heart. They are the product of the imagination, desires, thoughts, aspirations, hopes and will. They are important because they express what we are.

¹ Matt 12:36-37, 'I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned'.

How do you get to know a person's character? You talk to him and listen to his words.

A person manifests himself through his words and actions, but mostly through his words; thus you can get to know a historical character by reading his words in books.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **Matt 12:34**

Bad words

Are there good and bad words?

Of course there are because people are both good and bad. The expressions of a bad person are found in bad words. The expressions of a good person are seen in his good words.

There are words that are intrinsically bad in themselves, as I will explain later, and there are neutral words that, when used by a bad person, become bad statements.

When an evil person lies, he may use a host of neutral words to make statements, but because the statements are lies those words carry a bad message. This is a case of a person using non-aligned words to produce a bad effect.

Words carry the inner message of the soul of the person uttering them; thus they can become good or bad.

When words express hate, they are bad words.

When words slander another person, they are bad words.

When words court treason they are bad words.

And so on.

Intrinsically bad words

Are there words that do harm if they are uttered by anyone, good or bad?

Yes, of course.

Why?

The first reason is because God says so (which I will examine later).

Secondly, there are words that cause offence to some people. They may not offend everyone universally, but they offend a good proportion of the population. People can be genuinely hurt by certain expressions.

Now since we are commanded to do good to all people and not to cause unnecessary offence, then swearing which causes offence is sin. If my words hurt someone then I have sinned.

If I lie and slander someone, I have used neutral words to damage somebody. However, if I swear at someone I have used terms of offence to deliberately hurt someone; I have used bad words; foul language.

Do words change?

Yes they do. It is the property of human language to undergo development and change. Therefore a word that once was considered foul may become acceptable centuries later. Conversely, a word that was considered acceptable once may eventually become unacceptable.

What this means is that you cannot use sophistry to justify your swearing by recounting how a certain word was acceptable 500 years ago. We judge whether a word is acceptable in society or not by the norms of the present day.

The litmus test is – does a word hurt anyone today? If it does, it is unacceptable.

Conclusion

Words do have power and have effects.

There are neutral words used by bad people to create bad effects.

There are good words and bad words.

Intrinsically bad words are those which cause harm and offence to other people.

This is basic Christianity

All that I have stated so far is simple and basic. Everybody understands this through their development of good character by responsible parents. [Admittedly, bad parenting fails to educate in this matter.]

As for Christians, it is fundamental and essential. It is something that should naturally be dealt with at conversion when a person properly repents. In fact, only rarely should a convert need admonishing about this because it is a natural part of repentance.

I will give a personal testimony.

Before I was converted I swore like a trooper. I swore to deliberately offend people. The reason I did this was because I considered that words were meaningless and had no power and should not offend anyone. I thought that people should be worried about bigger things than words (at that time the Vietnam War was operating in earnest).

When I was converted, aged about 19, I immediately stopped swearing with no consideration or decision whatsoever. I simply noticed after a few days that I had stopped swearing. This is an entirely normal conversion experience. The Holy Spirit, in conversion, deals with us to begin the work of sanctification.

How do I know (apart from God's word) that swearing is bad? Because God stopped me swearing when I got converted.

Examples of Christians swearing

The problem of using foul language, especially by church leaders, is that it very quickly becomes an accepted norm. Others copy the swearing because a person in authority has given them permission to be like the world by their actions.

Why do some Christians swear?

Without over-analysing and pontificating on this I will simply list bullet points.

- Some Christians swear because they are worldly.
- Some Christians swear because they are antinomian.
- Some 'Christians' swear because they are not really Christian at all.
- Some Christians swear because they have fooled themselves by some sort of sophistry that it is acceptable.
- Some Christians swear because they want to be accepted by the young as being in tune with the current fads.
- Some Christians swear because they want to provoke others for some foolish reason.
- Some Christians swear because they do not read their Bible and have not properly repented.
- Some Christians swear because they have never been able to control their temper. They do not know how to put off the old nature.

Bad language

There are all sorts of foul language and the list of bad words is growing all the time. Slang dictionaries will reveal scores of words for human genitalia or sexual intercourse. You would be shocked to see how many variations there are.

As expressions change so swearing increases its vocabulary. As these expressions become commonplace, there is the temptation for Christians to use the commonplace terms.

For example, instead of saying, '*I am really annoyed*', modern people tend to say, '*I am p...d off*', or '*I am pd*'. I have heard church pastors, or former pastors, use these phrases.

Instead of saying, '*This argument is rubbish or false*', people will ejaculate, '*This is bull....t*'. I have heard many Christians use this statement.

A common term of expression of anger is to simply use the word '*s....t*'. Christians regularly use this word.

While these are still foul language because they offend people, they are low down the scale (yes, there is a scale of offence).

Higher up the scale there is the obvious 'F' word. Fewer Christians use this but, yes, I have heard a Christian pastor use this word.

Finally there are the top end of the scale expressions such as the obvious 'C' word and the really foul but popular American term, 'mother....'.

It grieves me to say this but, yes, I have seen former church pastors use the 'C' word. Worse still, one person I once knew has defended this use in his poetry by appealing to historic precedent going back to Chaucer.

This is a logical fallacy and really a piece of casuistry. The form of word used by Chaucer (with different spelling but similar sound) is utterly irrelevant. Perhaps it was not an offensive term then but a normal word for female genitalia, or perhaps Chaucer was deliberately causing offence since he was writing satire. I am not a medieval literature scholar and cannot say. What I can say is that it matters nothing at all.

The issue is whether it causes offence to someone today. Does using this word actually hurt people? Yes it does.

Can we justify using such words because it is only Victorian prudery that is offended? No. We are not permitted to hurt anyone, prudes or not. In any case, it is not simply a matter of Victorian prudery that is involved. Very ordinary, reasonable, intelligent people (especially women) are deeply offended by this term.

Easy to understand tests

Would any sane parent enjoy seeing their five-year old child using extreme swear words? I very much doubt it. This proves that such words are not acceptable in social situations.

Would you use extreme swear words and direct them at your mother?

If you had an audience with the Queen would you address her with a swear word?

If the Lord Jesus stood in front of you would you speak to him with swear words?

When God examines you on the Day of Judgment, would you use swear words?

Since the answer to all these questions is obviously, 'No', then it proves that swear words are bad, inappropriate and harmful. In fact, in certain circumstances swearing would be directly harmful to you (such as swearing at the Queen in her court).

Intermediate words

There are words that are not yet foul language but are in the process of being hijacked from their historical meaning.

An example of this is the word 'crap'. This is not currently a swear word but it is close to becoming one.

The Oxford Dictionary states that it is vulgar slang representing something of poor quality. Its prime meaning is 'nonsense' or 'rubbish' but it has recently come to apply to 'excrement' or the act of defecating.

The origin of the word was the Middle English term which was related to the Dutch *krappe*, from *krappen* 'pluck or cut off', and perhaps also to Old French *crappe* 'siftings' and Anglo-Latin *crappa* 'chaff'. The original sense was thus chaff; later also residue from rendering fat or dregs of beer. Current senses date from the late 19th century. Americans use the word in reference to a casino game ('craps') or to give up on an enterprise ('crap out') or to fail in an activity ('they crapped out').

So the traditional meaning of 'crap' was chaff or waste matter and was applied to rubbish and something of poor quality. I have used this word occasionally in that sense. However, the word is undergoing change and when the meaning in Britain becomes universally 'excrement' and becomes fully understood as an offensive term, then it can no longer be used in the traditional sense. Perhaps it is time for me to stop using this term (which I use very rarely).

Forbidden by God

Whatever our thoughts, the fact is that God forbids corrupt speech. That is the end of the matter. No matter what circuitous argument you use to defend speaking foul language, God says that it is wrong. Here are statements proving this to be true.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. **Eph 4:29**

‘Corrupt’ is *sapros* meaning: rotten, putrefied, corrupted no longer fit for use, worn out, poor quality, bad, unfit for use, worthless.

Now Paul does not define what a corrupt word is because he knows that everybody fully understands this within the social mores of their situation. As I explained, understanding this comes with normal conversion. If a person claims to be saved and swears with no compunction, we should have grave doubts as to their spiritual state.

There are words that are corrupt; God says so. We cannot use corrupted, putrid words that cause offence.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; **neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting**, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **Eph 5:3-4**

Our words can express filth, foolishness and coarseness; all are forbidden to the Christian. Righteous speaking means that we cannot tell rude jokes, cannot make coarse observations, cannot speak filth (swearing or lewd speech) and should rule our tongue and not speak foolishly.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. **Col 3:8**

‘Filthy language’ is foul speaking, low and obscene speech.

Paul explains that swearing and filthy language is part of the old nature and should be put off. If we are in the new man we will not be swearing. Note that filthy language is here associated as evil with blasphemy and malice.

For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* destruction; their throat *is* an open tomb ...Pronounce them guilty, O God! **Ps 5:9-10**

Here a passage later quoted by Paul speaks about the sins of the totally depraved, fleshly person. One aspect of the sins of the flesh is that there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their throat is full of death.

Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness. **Rm 3:14**

Again, we see that cursing (swearing) and bitter nasty speech are signs of the old man and are not appropriate for the believer.

The tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Jm 3:5-8

James explains that the fleshly tongue is a world of iniquity, capable of causing great destruction. Note also that using corrupt speech defiles the whole body and is tied to hell. The speech of the old nature is evil and full of poison.

Why would any Christian choose to use the evil speech of the old nature?

For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

2 Pt 2:18

Peter agrees with Paul and James; the speech of fleshly people is full of emptiness and futility and used to speak about lewd things. In fact 'emptiness' really means perverseness or depravity.

There is speech that is depraved and perverse, and everybody knows this.

Conclusion

I shouldn't need to write this; it is a disgrace that I have to do this.

Understanding that there is such a thing as foul language is clearly understood by all people and only those trying to conceal their depravity use futile arguments and sophistry to defend using such language.

To make sure that Christians understand that foul language is out of bounds, God's word gives clear instructions about corrupt speech and condemns it out of hand as evil, depraved, toxic, corrupt, filthy, fleshly, sinful and iniquitous.

Swearing, obscenities, coarse jesting and other evil forms of speech defile the whole person as well as causing harm to others. By damaging others we stand condemned. But above that, corrupt speech is an offence to God who will not tolerate it.

Any person claiming to be a Christian that persistently and unrepently uses foul language cannot be a Christian. They are in the old nature; that is an observable fact. God's word decrees that foul language is of the flesh, of the old nature (Col 3:8); thus anyone habitually persisting in this has never truly repented and remains in the flesh.

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt. Col 4:6

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