

Profanity

By Leon King

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." --Ephesians 4:29.

My Aunt Daisy, who departed this life several years ago, would not mind if I told this story as she told it to me. Many years ago, while in her childhood, she had an experience she never forgot. She was the daughter of two pioneers who moved into Arkansas. Her father was a Regular (today called primitive) Baptist. He died the same year I was born, so I did not have the opportunity to know him, but my kindred told me that he was a godly man. Aunt Daisy's mother, my great-grandmother, must have been greatly influenced by her husband as well as the principles of Scripture. One morning, Aunt Daisy's mother was removing the ashes from their wood cook stove. Aunt Daisy said, "A compelling spirit came over me to say an ugly, corrupt word, so I just blurted it out." "Come here, Daisy," her mother said, "We've got to get that nasty word out of your mouth!" With those words, she took a handful of ashes from the stove and smeared them in Aunt Daisy's mouth. "She filled it up and just smeared them around all over my mouth and tongue," Aunt Daisy said. "It was awful – but a great lesson because, Leon, I never forgot it and, to this day, I've never said that word again."

Well, in our day, if some social worker were to get hold of a juicy tidbit like that, he would haul the "abusing parent" into court. Thank God, there weren't social workers around in those days. The children of parents with godly values learned to speak without using corrupt communication.

Today, the television and motion picture industry pours out rivers of corrupt words right into the living rooms of our homes. If a godly person invited someone into his house who began to say things like we hear from Hollywood, etc., the man of the house would immediately invite the offender out of his house! He should! Maybe he ought to invite the box out of his house! Maybe he ought to stay out of the motion picture theater and video store. I was thinking about all this and ran across a little article that gives some insight about why man is so intent to use profane words. This article shows us that the main thing to guard is not our mouth, but our heart. There is little doubt that profanity has its origin in the corrupt nature. If we learn to guard our heart with all diligence, we can overcome the carnal nature in our speech.

In earlier years, I must have fallen for the idea that such talk was manly. Certainly, the majority of military people are encouraged to use that kind of language - at least it was so when I was there. What a problem I had with getting those things out of my mind.

I thought you would like to consider the article. "Profanity" Adapted from *"The Cast Net,"* Fishers of Men Ministries.

"In the aisle of a neighborhood store, a 3-year-old caught my attention. I heard him before I saw him. Then he said it again. From the height of his father's knees, he mirrored the irony of a generation, which, while attempting to remove the name of God from public life, has developed an obsession with profanity.

I remember getting my mouth washed out with soap as a child for repeatedly using similar words at the dinner table. Later, in my high school

years, I spoke the forbidden language among friends in an awkward adolescent rite of passage. But the problem is not locked in the past. On occasion, I still catch myself expressing feelings of self-contempt, frustration, or anger in silent or muffled profanity. I cringe at the thought of letting such words and emotions slip out in public.

I'm fearful when I hear stories of how the most unlikely people have been known to "swear like a trooper" when coming out of surgical anesthesia. Where does this profane impulse come from? Why say, "Jesus," "God," "damn," and "hell"? Why combinations of holy cow, holy Moses, or holy smoke? Why not the names of politicians, entertainers, or athletes? And what is the emotional draw that has inspired a whole series of sound-alike "darn" and "gol darn", "gees" and "gee whiz"? Why do those who know enough not to say the real thing still feel a need to exclaim "for Cripes' sake", "Judas Priest", "Oh, my gosh", or "what the heck"?

A dictionary of slang shows that to use such phrases is, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to flirt with profanity. Profanity doesn't just happen. It is rooted in the dark muck of fallen human nature. *"What then? are we better <than they>? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat <is> an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps <is> under their lips: Whose mouth <is> full of cursing and bitterness:"* --Romans 3:9-14.

In a twisted way, it does something for us. The aggressive or careless use of "damn", or "hell", or "God" expresses feelings of anger, anxiety, or arrogance. They are aggressive words, which express the opposite of submission or the touch of grace. They show our latent desire to achieve dominance not only over the restraints of social custom, but over the One who has told us not to misuse His name. *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* --Exodus 20:7.

Profane impulses are red flags of the soul. They never signal a submissive relationship to the Father. They never show grace. And in my case, the near-miss substitutes such as "heck" or "darn" never reflect a good awareness of the presence of God. Father, thank you for being so patient and merciful. It is because we see and believe so poorly that we speak so carelessly.

If we could see you as clearly as Isaiah did, we would say with much greater emotion, *"I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."* -- Isaiah 6:5. *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* -- Ephesians 4:29. ". . . for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." --Matthew 12:34b. God, cleanse my heart!"