**It’s Not French, It’s Vulgarity**

*by Harry Osborne*

Have you noticed that many find it difficult to express themselves, especially with any degree of fervor, without the use of profanity? The "entertainment industry" has had a corrupting influence on our society towards greater acceptance of expletives. The use of obscene language is no longer limited to movies with adult ratings – it is a large part of dialog in movies rated as open to all. Decency would not allow me to repeat examples of that which has become commonplace in modern movies. Television is also allowing an abundance filthy language to come into our homes. Obscenities are used extensively in the lyrics and on the covers of popular music albums. They contained some of the most revolting descriptions of violence and sordid sexual activity imaginable. Modern "comedy" is filled with vulgarity as well. Lenny Bruce started the trend more than 50 years ago with his rancid routines. His autobiography was titled *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*. The level of indecency has grown as recent so-called "comedy" channels on some cable television and XM radio have provided a forum for twenty-four-hour exhibitions of profanity. In short, pop culture is saturated with filthy speech!

However, the presence of profanity is not limited to popular figures in pop culture and celebrities on the “left.” Go to the grocery store, the mall or a restaurant and it is almost certain that you will not escape the expression of vulgarity. Modern schools from elementary to college level evidence a greater familiarity with cussing than proper grammar, classical literature, math, science or other academic subjects. It has gotten so bad that cursing is even used in public meetings where proper language was at one time demanded. Not only that, but some on the political and cultural “right” speak about the need for morality in our actions and teaching find no contradiction when in the next breath they utter words of profanity.

Why is it that our society has come to the point where exclamatory statements require a curse word for emphasis? Why is it that obscenity is seen to be a mark of adulthood? Why is profanity seen as speech of strength by some? In fact, it is not a sign of strength, but a sign of a weak vocabulary which seeks to intimidate rather than persuade by use of reason and clear expression of thoughts through compelling words.

Cursing is commonly introduced with the phrase, "Pardon my French, but ...." Profanity is not the equivalent of one who has studied to learn a second language, but a sure sign of one who has not even mastered English! It is a sad commentary on our society that the dedication necessary to learn and express oneself in a beautiful language, not native to the speaker, is paralleled to speech drawn from the depth of ignorance in our own language.

How has our society sunk to this level? Is there no protest left to this repulsive verbiage? Does everyone accept such filth as a normal part of human expression?

**The Bible does not.** It warns against and condemns such language in clear terms. Let's notice a few passages that denounce filthy speech:

Colossians 3:8 – "But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, *filthy language out of your mouth.*"

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

Ephesians 5:3-4 – "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place,* but rather thanksgiving."

Just as one can tell a good tree from a bad tree by the fruit born, Jesus says that one's heart can be known by his speech. He noted, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). He goes on to apply the principle as follows:

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But 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" (Matthew 12:35-37).

The root problem of the vulgar language so common today is found in the minds of people who dwell on vulgar thoughts. When people fill their minds with debasing, evil, vile, wrathful, and shameful thoughts, their mouths will vent the corruption which dwells in them. Filthy speech will be corrected only when people correct their filthy minds!

We must adopt the path that Paul commands towards the evil surrounding us. He said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (Ephesians 5:11-12).

We must cleanse our minds from the base and sinful matters around us and think properly. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

The proper goal of our speech is not to spread filth, vent anger or entice to worldly desires. Through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul expressed the goal of speech this way:

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:5-6).

Let us always seek to have speech that is "good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). That is the kind of speech befitting a child of God.

Think Things Are Bad Today?

Many good faithful brethren are rightly troubled and heart-sick over the current advocacy towards homosexual marriage. Godly and moral people rightly grieve over the acceptance of wickedness whenever it occurs. Jeremiah exemplifies the rightful lamenting by the follower of God at the disobedience and rebellion of his fellow-countrymen. However, let us not allow our sorrow at sin’s advance get to the point that we give up and fail to speak in defense of truth (Ephesians 5:11-12). As bad as it is in our society, imagine what it must have been like for Lot, “oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked,” in Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6-8). Abraham could not even find 10 righteous souls in that place to prevent God’s judgment against it (Genesis 18:23-32; 19:23-25). Though the number of morally-minded people is declining, we still have more than that! In Noah’s time, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Out of all the earth, only 8 were seen by God as fit to save, yet Noah continued on as a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:4-8). Let’s not give up, but continue to speak out in defense of truth and biblical morality! God will take care of His part in ruling over the kingdoms of men, but let us do our part as tireless preachers of righteousness! [HRO]