**The Problem with Euphemisms**

*by Stan Cox*

Language is a problematic thing for Christians. They find themselves, time and again, caught in sin because of their tongue. Truly James knew of what he wrote when he penned the following: *“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body”* (James 3:2). Gossip, slander, idle words, profanity, taking the Lord’s name in vain — all of these corrupt fruits of the tongue cause brethren to sin. It is important that we remember: *“no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”* (James 3:8). If we keep a tight rein on our tongues, we can control them. But, we can never assume that we are beyond the danger of sinning with our speech.

One problem area of speech is that of exclamations. It is a natural thing when one is surprised, excited, angry or hurt to exclaim. Exclamations are the words and short phrases that we blurt out without forethought. And that is the problem, we engage our mouths without engaging our minds.

Most Christians are aware of profane exclamations, and avoid them. Unless they are newly converted out of the world, such words are sufficiently foreign to them that they do not readily escape the lips. No, the more common problem for the Christian is the use of a euphemism.

The word euphemism is defined:

“the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt.” (*dictionary.com*).

Paul used a euphemism in 1 Corinthians 15:20, *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”* When Paul wrote, *“fallen asleep”* he euphemistically referred to those who had died. Such use of a euphemism is totally proper. **However, consider the fact that when Paul used the term, his readers instantly thought of death, as he intended.**

I recently came across a *Facebook* video someone had shared, which taught a good Biblical principle. In introducing the video, the individual said, “This is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ awesome!” In place of the blank I typed here, he supplied a euphemism for one of the most profane of all words in the English language. He didn’t think twice about it. This particular euphemism has become almost ubiquitous. That, however, doesn’t change the fact that everyone knows what word it replaces; nor the fact that their minds are directed by it to the more profane word! It was so jarring for me, seeing a spiritual teaching introduced in such a profane way. However, I know that the offensiveness of the term barely registered to the majority who read it.

Some might object, “I didn’t know that’s what that word means!” Or, “I didn’t intend it to have that effect.” Maybe not, but your intention or ignorance does not change the meaning of the euphemism, nor the reference intrinsic in the term. That is why we must bridle the tongue — because of the dangers present any time we open our mouths.

The worldly will say this is a small thing … that we are nitpicking. Especially since the profane words themselves have become so prevalent in our culture. But, the child of God is held to a different standard. The apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:8 told us to put off *“filthy language out of your mouth.”* In Ephesians 4:29, he wrote, *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”* Don’t let careless words corrupt you, and endanger your soul!

**What Does the Scripture Teach about Our Speech?**

*by Harry Osborne*

It is hard to venture into a public place or event without being subjected to the use of cursing and foul language. It has become commonplace on television and the entertainment industry. It is evident that many accept filth as a normal part of human expression. However, the Bible does not. It clearly warns against and condemns such language. 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 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.”*

Just as one can tell a good tree from a bad tree by its fruit, 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 that dwells within. 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).

Let us always seek to have speech that is *"good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers"* (Ephesians 4:29).