

MINCED OATHS

--An Important Message for Believers--

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength [my Rock], and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14)

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:35-37)

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" (James 3:10-11)

"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)

The words of our mouth ought to be well pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ who purchased us with His own blood "that He might redeem us from all iniquity [lawlessness] and purify unto Himself a peculiar people [a people of His own], zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). May the fruit of our lips always honor "that worthy Name by the which ye are called" (James 2:7).

As blood-bought children of God we should be very thoughtful about the words that we use, and very careful in our choice of words. This is especially true at times of surprise or amazement or sudden pain or disappointment when we tend to burst out with an exclamatory word or comment. Those of the world blurt out all kinds of inappropriate words, not giving much thought to what they are really saying. All such careless speech and profane cursing should find no place on the lips of a redeemed saint: *'Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips'* (Psalm 141:3).

What is a MINCED OATH? The verb "mince" means "to lessen the force of, to weaken, as by euphemism." What does the word EUPHEMISM mean? A euphemism is "the use of a word or phrase that is less expressive or direct but considered less distasteful, less offensive, etc. than another." What we have then is one word or phrase being substituted for another. Instead of using the Name of God, we use a substitute word in place of God's name that sounds better and is less offensive. Instead of using a swear word we use a substitute word that actually means the same but does not sound as bad. Thus we can say that a MINCED OATH is **'a form of cursing that replaces a direct curse word with a more acceptable word [better sounding word] which in effect does the same thing.'**

"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) Consider some of the words that are used as substitutes for the Name of God. Look up these words in a good dictionary and you will find the following: GOSH is "a substitute for God used in minced oaths." GOLLY is "a euphemism for God." EGAD is "a softened or euphemistic form of the oath 'by God.'" GOODNESS is a word substituted for God (compare Matthew 19:16-17). GOODNESS GRACIOUS are two key

attributes of God used in a careless and irreverent way. The expression MERCY or MERCY SAKES is another thoughtless use of a precious attribute of God. HOLY COW, HOLY MACKEREL, HOLY SMOKE are expressions that make fun and make light of the awesome holiness of our God. If we really believe Revelation 15:4 ("for Thou **only** are holy") then we will not call other things holy in a thoughtless and frivolous way. May the Holy Spirit control our lips.

Those who are outwardly lawless and wicked often are heard saying, "for God's sake" or "for Christ's sake." It is done in an irreverent, blasphemous way. Those who are more cultured use substitutes: "for Goodness sake" "for Pete's sake" "for the love of Mike" "for crying out loud" etc.

In a similar way the Name of Christ is abused. GEE is a "euphemistic contraction of **Jesus**." The same is true of other words such as GEE, GEEWHIZ, GEEZ or CHEEZ, CHEESE, CHEECE, SHEECE, "all of which relate back to the Lord Jesus Christ when used as an exclamatory remark." It's not difficult to figure out the origin of such expressions as JIMINY CRICKETS and JEEPERS CREEPERS.

Curse words and swear words have also been softened by minced substitutes. Remember, garbage is still garbage, even if it is placed in a nice container. We need to detest all curse words and realize that the substitutes stink as well.

It is of interest how the ungodly so often speak on themes of judgment, hell and damnation. Deep in their hearts they blaspheme and rebel against a God whose right it is to damn all those who reject His beloved Son (John 3:18). DARN simply is a substitute for "damn, a euphemism for the curse." HECK is "an exclamation used as a euphemism for *hell*."

"All of this, while deplorable, is nevertheless a sort of backhanded acknowledgment that God is real and Biblical revelation is true. It is significant that adherents of other religions never take the names of their gods in vain! Who ever heard of a Buddhist, or a Muslim, or a Hindu do such a thing? If they want to swear, they also will often inadvertently use the Name of the true God, or His Christ, in vain. Even atheists frequently sprinkle their conversations with blasphemous Christian epithets, calling on God [whom they claim doesn't exist] to send someone to hell [which they claim doesn't exist].¹ Satan, who energizes these people (Eph. 2:2), knows so very well the reality of God and hell, and his children (John 8:44) give evidence of this by their cursing.

"The third commandment requireth the **holy and reverent** use of God's **Name, titles, attributes, ordinances, words and works.**" As heavenly citizens, may our God keep us from profanity and from "near profanity" (from anything that comes close to it). When other believers are found to use minced oaths, seek to gently and lovingly and tactfully point this out to them, remembering that at times we have all been guilty of the careless use of language (James 3:2). May the fruit of our lips consist of praise to God and thanksgiving to His Name (Hebrews 13:15).

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