

## DR. TALMAGE ON PROFANITY

## IT'S A VILE AND DISGUSTING HABIT.

The Vice Rampant From the Low Pot-House to the Glittering Drawing-Room—Women Swear in the Parlor and Men in the Counting House.

So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a pothos to scrape himself withal; and he did not smite the sore. Then said his wife unto him: Do these still retain their integrity? Curse God and die.—Book of Job, 1, 7 and 9.

A story oriental and marvelous. Job was the richest man in all the East. He had camels and oxen and asses and sheep, and, what would have made him rich without anything else, seven sons and three daughters. It was the habit of these children to gather together for family reunion. One day Job is thinking of his children as gathered together at a banquet at the elder brother's house.

While the old man was seated at his tent door he sees a man running from his master, bringing bad news. What is the matter now? "Oh," says the messenger, "a foraging party of Sabeans have fallen upon the oxen and the asses and destroyed them and butchered all the servants except myself."

Stand aside. Another messenger running. What is the matter now?

"Oh," says the man, "the lightning has struck the sheep and the shepherds, and



all the shepherds are destroyed except myself." Stand aside. Another messenger running. What is the matter now? "Oh," he says, "the Chaldeans have captured the camels, and slain all the camel-drivers except myself." Stand aside. Another messenger running. What is the matter now?"

"Oh," he says, "a hurricane struck the four corners of the tent where your children were assembled at the banquet, and they are all dead."

But the chapter of calamity had not ended. Job was smitten with elephantiasis, or black leprosy. Tumors from head to foot, forehead ridged with tubercles, eyelashes fall out, nostrils exoriated, voice destroyed, intolerable exhalations from the entire body, and with tongue to heaven. He was hewn down in the palms with nothing but pieces of broken pottery in the surgery of his wounds. At this moment, when he needed all encouragement, and all consolation, his wife comes in, in a fret and a rage, and says:

"This is intolerable. Our property gone, our children slain, and now you covered up with this loathsome and disgusting disease. Why don't you swear? Curse God, and die!"

Ah, Job knew right well that swearing would not cure one of the tumors of his agonized body, would not bring back one of his destroyed children. He knew that profanity would not cure the pain, would not end the poverty, more distressing and the bereavement more excruciating. But, judging from the profanity abroad in our day, you might come to the conclusion that there was some great advantage to be reaped from profanity.

Blasphemy is all abroad. You hear it in every direction. The drayman swearing at his cart, the sewing girl imprecating the tangled skein, the accountant cursing the long line of troublesome figures, swearing at the store, swearing in the loft, swearing in the cellar, swearing on the street, swearing in the factory. Children swear. Men swear. Women swear. Swearing from the high saloon to the saloon, from the low restaurant clear up to the rankless "Oh, Lord!" of a glittering drawing-room; and the one is as much blasphemy as the other.

There are times when we must cry out to the Lord by reason of our physical agony or our mental distress, and that is only throwing out our weak hand toward the strong arm of a father. It was no profanity when James A. Garfield, shot in the Washington depot, cried out: "My God, what does this mean?" There is no profanity in calling out upon God, in the day of physical anguish, in the day of bereavement. But I have seen the need of the triviality and of the recklessness with which the name of God is sometimes managed.

A gentleman coming from the far West sat in the car day after day behind two persons who were indulging in profanity, and he made up his mind he would make a record of their profanities, and at the end of two days several sheets of paper were filled with these imprecations, and at the end of the journey he handed the paper to one of the persons in front of him.

"Is it possible," said the man, "that we have uttered so many profanities the last two days?"

"Then," said the man who had taken the manuscript, "I will never swear again."

But it is a comparatively unimportant thing if a man makes record of our imprecations of speech. The more memorable consideration is that every improper word, every oath uttered, has record in the book of God's remembrance, and that the day will come when all our crimes of speech, if unrecorded, will be our condemnation. I shall not to-day deal in abstractions. I hate abstractions. I am going to have a plain talk with you, my brother, about a habit that you admit to be wrong.

The habit grows in the community in the fact that young people think it manly to swear. Little children, hardly able to walk straight on the street, yet have enough distinctness of utterance to let you know that they are damning their own souls, or damning the souls of others. It is an awful thing the first time the little feet are lifted to have them set down on the burning pavement of hell!

Between sixteen and twenty years of age, there is apt to come a time when a young man is as much ashamed of not being able to swear as he is of the clothes on his first sight. He has lost his head, his heart, his coat of the right pattern, and now, if he can only swear without awkwardness, and as well as his comrades, he believes he is in fashion. There are young men who walk in an atmos-

phere of imprecation—oaths on their lips, under their tongue, nestling in their shock of hair. They abstain from it in the elegant drawing-room, but the street and the club-house ring with their profanities. They have no regard for God, although they have great respect for the ladies! My young brother, there is no manliness in that. The most ungentlemanly thing a man can do is to swear.

Fathers foster this great crime. There are parents who are very cautious not to leave in the presence of their children a moment of solitude, when they look around to see if the children are present when they indulge in this habit. Do you not know? O father, that your child is aware of the fact that you swear? He overheard you in the next room or some one has informed him of your habit. He is practicing now. In ten years he will swear as well as you do. Do not, O father, be under the delusion that you may swear and your son not know it. It is an awful thing to start the habit in a family—the father to be profane, and then to have the echo of his example to come back from other generations, so that generations after generations curse the Lord.

The crime is also fostered by master mechanics, by carpenters, those who are at the head of the trade, hot天气 and in dock yards, and at the head of great business establishments. When you go down to look at the work of the scaffolding, and you find it is not done right, what do you say? It is not praying, is it? The employer swears; his employee is tempted to swear. The man says:

"I don't know why my employer, worth \$50,000 or \$100,000, should have any luxury I should be denied, simply because I am poor. Because I am poor and dependent upon a day's wages, haven't I as much right to swear as he has, with his large income?"

Employers swear, and that makes so many employees swear.

The habit also comes from the infirmity of temper. There are good many people who, when they are at peace, have righteousnesses of speech. But when they get into the place with imprecision. Perhaps all the rest of the year they talk in the right language, but now they pour out the fury of a whole year in one red-hot paragraph of five minutes. I knew of a man who excused himself for the habit, saying: "I only swear once in a great while. I must do that to clear myself out."

The habit comes also from the profuse use of by-words. The transition from a by-word which may be perfectly harmless to imprecision and profanity, is not a very large transition. It is "my stars!" and "mercy on me!" and "good gracious!" and "by George!" and "by Jove!" and you go on with that a little while, and then you swear. These words, perfectly harmless in themselves are next door to imprecision and blasphemy. A profuse use of by-words always leads to profanity. The habit is creeping up into the highest styles of society. Women have no patience with flat and unvarnished profanity. They will order a man out of the parlor indulging in blasphemy, and yet you will sometimes find them with fairy fan to the lip and under chandeliers which bring no blush to their cheeks, taking on their lips the holiest of names in utter triviality.

Why, my friends, the English language is comprehensive and capable of expressing all shapes of feeling and every degree of energy. Are you happy, Noah Webster will give you 10,000 words with which to express your exhilaration. Are you righteously indignant, there are whole armies in the vocabulary righteous, vociferous, and stern, and words, and irony, and sarcasm, and wrath. You express yourself against some meanness or hypocrisy, in all the oaths that ever smoked up from the pit, and I will come right on after you and give a thousand fold more emphasis of denunciation to the same meanness and the same hypocrisy in words across which no sullen has ever trailed, and into which the fires of hell have never shot their forked tongues—the pure, the innocent, God-honored Anglo-Saxon in which Milton sang, and John Banyan dreamed and Shakespeare dramatized.

There is no excuse for profanity when we have such a magnificent language, such a flow of good words, words just to suit every mood, words, just to suit every crisis and every case. Whatever be the cause of the profanity is on the increase, and if you do not know it, it is because your ears have been hardened by the din of imprecations so that you are not stirred and moved as you ought to be by profanities in these cities which are enough to drown the ears of the most sensitive of us. Listen! Listen! All blasphemers shall have their place in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." And it is according to the theory, that a man commits in this world the sins which he commits in the next world—if unpenitent, unrepentant—think of a man's going on cursing in the name of God to all eternity.

Onemoring on Fulton-st., as I was passing along, I heard a man swear by the name of Jesus. My hair lifted. My blood ran cold. My breath caught. My foot halted. Do you not suppose that God is aggravated? Do you not suppose that God is angry? Do you not suppose that God is mad? Did he not mean to have a cave in which his culprits were incarcerated, and he listened at the top of that cave, and he could hear every groan, could hear every sigh, and he could hear every whisper of those who were imprisoned. He was a tyrant. God is not a tyrant; but he bends over this world and he hears everything—every voice of praise, every voice of imprecision. He hears it all. The oaths seem to die on the air, but they have eternal echo. They come back from the ages to come.

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The habit grows. You start with a small oath, you will come to the large oath. I saw a man die with an oath between his teeth. Voltaire only gradually came to his tremendous imprecision; but the habit grew on him until in the last moment, supposing Christ stood at the bed, he exclaimed: "Curse that wretch!" Oh, my brother, you begin to swear and there is nothing impossible for you in the wrong direction.

Who is this God whose name is you are using in this way? Who is He? Is He a tyrant? Has He pursued you all your life long? Has He starved you, frozen you, tyrannized over you? No. He has loved you; He has sheltered you; He watched you last night; He will watch you to-night. He wants to love you, wants to comfort you. He is your father's God and your mother's God. He has housed them from the blast, and He wants to shelter you. Will you spit in His face by an imprecision? Will you ever thrust Him back by an oath?

Who is this Jesus, whose name I heard in the time of my youth? He pursued you in the name of God, and He pursued you until you were five, long? What vileness can He do to you that you should so dishonor His name? Why, He was the lamb whose blood sinned in the fires of sacrifice for you. He is the brother that took off His crown that you might put it on. He has pursued you all your life long with mercy. He wants you to love Him—wants you to serve Him. He comes with streaming eyes and broken heart and blistered feet to save you. On the craft of our doomed humanity He pushed out into the sea to take you off the wreck.

Where is the hand that will ever be lifted in imprecision again? He is the hand, now blotted up, he lifted that I may see it. Not one. Where is the voice that will ever be uttered in discharging the name of that Christ? Let it speak now. Not one. Not one. Oh, I am glad to know that all these vices of the community and these crimes of our city will be gone. Society is going to be bettered. The world by the power of Christ's gospel is going to be saved, and this crime, this iniquity, and all the other iniquities will vanish before the rising of the sun of righteousness upon the nation.

There was one day in New England hardly ever equalled in storm and darkness. The clouds which had gathered all day unlimbered their batteries. The Housatonic, which flows quietly, save as the paddles of pleasure parties rattle the oar locks, was lashed into foam, and the waves hardly knew where to lay themselves.

What a time it was! The hills jarred under the rumbling of God's chariot. Blinding sheets of rain drove the cattle to the bars, or beat against the window pane as though to dash it in. The grain fields threw their crowns of gold at the feet of the storm king. When night came on it was a double night. Its might was torn with the lightnings, and into its fields were a great and howling tempest and the shards of canvas torn from the masts of the beached shipping. It was such a night as makes you thank God for shelter.

When I was a young man I was very profane. I conquered the habit, but I had to struggle all through life. You haven't for forty years heard me say an improper word, but it has been an awful struggle. The tiger is chained, but he is still alive.

If you would get rid of this habit, I want you, my friends, to dwell upon the uncleanness of it. Did a volley of oaths

ever start a heavy load? Did they ever extirpate meanness from a customer? Did they ever collect a bad debt? Did they ever cure a toothache? Did they ever stop the twinges of rheumatism? Did they ever help you forward one step in the right direction? Come, now, tell me, who have had the most experience in this habit, how much have you made out of it? Five thousand dollars in all your life? No. One thousand? No. One hundred? No. One dollar? No. One cent? No. If the habit be so utterly useless, avoid it.

But you say, "I have struggled to overcome the habit a long time, and I have not been successful." You struggle in your own strength, my brother. If ever a man wants God, it is in such a crisis of his history. God alone by His grace can emancipate you from that trouble. Call upon Him day and night that you may be delivered from this crime. Remember, also, in the cure of this habit, that it arouses God's indignation. The bible reiterates from chapter to chapter, and verse after verse, the fact that it is accursed for this habit, how much it makes a man miserable for eternity. There is not a sin in all the catalogue that is so often perpetrated and suddenly punished in this world as this sin of impurity.

The crime is also fostered by master mechanics, by carpenters, those who are at the head of the trade, hot weather and in dock yards, and at the head of great business establishments. When you go down to look at the work of the scaffolding, and you find it is not done right, what do you say? It is not praying, is it? The employer swears; his employee is tempted to swear. The man says:

"I don't know why my employer, worth \$50,000 or \$100,000, should have any luxury I should be denied, simply because I am poor. Because I am poor and dependent upon a day's wages, haven't I as much right to swear as he has, with his large income?"

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