

e-concepts

A Weekly Publication of Relational Concepts Inc.

Swearing that the Bible Endorses

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(an excerpt from the study, Swearing, Honesty, and the Bible)

Swearing in the Old Testament

Godly men in the Bible did not always use soft words. Neither did God.

God said:

- *I will spread refuse on your [the priests'] faces (Malachi 2:3), I have come to hate her [Judah] (Jeremiah 12:8), I Myself have also stripped your skirts off over your [Judah] face that your shame may be seen (Jeremiah 13:26).*

David wrote some pretty harsh words and did some tough name calling:

- *that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed ...Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred (Psalm 139:19-22).*

Swearing in the Gospels

I remember years ago hearing a literature professor say (from my memory, not a direct quote), "Matthew 23 is the harshest language ever used by anybody against anybody in all of literature."

Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, and He said:

- **Matthew 23:15** *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves...*
- **Matthew 23:17** *You fools and blind men....*
- **Matthew 23:24** *You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!... For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness*
- **Matthew 23:33** *You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?*
- **John 8:44** *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.*

He even told Peter:

- *Get behind me Satan you are a stumbling block to Me [not a very nice way to talk to the "pope" (Matthew 16:23)]*

Swearing in Acts and the Epistles

Jesus' half-brother Jude also used some rough language to describe false teachers:

- **Jude 12-13** *These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.*

Paul told the Ephesians to only use words that were *good for edification according to the need of the moment* (Ephesians 4:29). But when he was dealing with a *Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-jesus*, we read:

- *But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, and said, “You who are **full of all deceit and fraud**, you **son of the devil**, you **enemy of all righteousness**, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?* (Acts 13:9-10)

That’s pretty rough name calling.

Paul told the Galatians:

- *I wish that those who are troubling you would even **mutilate themselves*** (Galatians 5:12).

Again, pretty harsh language.

Just before Stephen was stoned to death, he said this, being filled with the Holy Spirit:

- *You men who are **stiff-necked** and **uncircumcised in heart and ears** are **always resisting the Holy Spirit*** (Acts 7:51).

Also, pretty harsh.

Conclusion

Swearing is a traditionally offensive vulgar emphasis. In the Bible, swearing is strong descriptive language. Honest People May Use Strong Words for Honest Descriptions. Biblical characters sometimes used harsh words to describe sinful thoughts and actions of people who were opposing the kingdom of God. The words were descriptive, expressive, graphic, detailed, vivid, striking, and explanatory. They were not vulgar expletives or character assassinations. They were not “swear” words. Rather, they were words that get our attention.

They were like parables (as the unjust judge) and hyperbolic statements (*if your eye causes you to stumble pluck it out*) because they communicated a vivid description which would not be communicated accurately with gentle words. Those descriptions connect the ones telling the truth to *salty* language like: false teacher, hypocrite, God-hater, depraved, or someone adulterating or bastardizing the Word of God. Jesus said: *Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves...* (Mark 9:50).