

What is that doing in there?

I can recall on many occasions looking at some aspect of my cars and exclaiming, “What is that doing in there?” The “That” could be many things.

I remember finding a pair of pliers inside a flat rear tire on my street car. The only explanation I could figure out the front tire had kicked up the old style pliers in the road and it shot back at the rear tire with the handles of the pliers popped open at just the right angle to penetrate the tire and end up inside. What a big surprise when the tire was removed from the rim and the pliers were discovered inside.

Probably the best story was a friend of ours who trailered his racecar to an out of state racetrack. When they arrived at the track and were unloading the car, one of his crew members was checking fluid levels and found oil was dripping out the dip stick hole. The level had been carefully checked in the shop and although we had all heard of engines burning oil we had never seen an engine “make oil”. Someone noticed that the oil seemed very thin and had a hint of a gasoline smell. Eventually they determined on the long trip to the track the car had been left in gear on the trailer. As the hold down straps had loosened on the long trip, the car had been moving back and forth on the trailer, ever so slightly. The pistons moving up and down had moved just far enough to pull some raw fuel into the combustion chamber and this fuel eventually had leaked past the rings and ended up in the sump. The long tow and all the stops and starts had resulted in the sump eventually being filled to overflowing with gasoline. This was definitely one of those “What is that doing in there?” experiences.

It was in my early 20's I received Christ into my life and one of the most dramatic things that changed on the surface was my language. I have to confess that I have had a battle with profanity for much of my life. Even while only in my teens I had practiced my “craft” well and early 20s I would fill my garage with cursing. Every banged knuckle or bump on the head was followed by a tirade of profanity. After I came to Christ this almost immediately went away – for a while. Whenever I slipped myself or whenever I heard someone else cursing, it was like hearing someone playing a beautiful symphony on the piano and then hitting a discordant note. I recall being embarrassed and thinking “What is that doing in there?” Or “Where did that language come from?”

I was most convicted by the bible verses in James 3:9-12:

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

Clearly this passage spoke to me in a few ways. First, I was convicted that I was not being consistent – how can the same lips that sing songs on Sunday and curse God or Man on Monday? Also, I realized that these little “surprises” coming out of my mouth were just a symptom of some underlying area that I had not fully surrendered to God. In my case the symptom was swearing but the underlying cause was my anger. So for me I have had to recognize the “Thats” and their underlying causes and begin to allow God to work in those areas, too.

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