

Profanity and the Lord's Supper

Hebrews 12:14-17; Ezekiel 22:26

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With the Lord's Supper soon to be administered, we must be careful not to profane this holy meal by our carelessness as we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, which signifies eating and drinking of our Savior spiritually (not physically) by faith alone.

There is the natural tendency in us all to minimize sin or to redefine sin so as to excuse our sin in some way. For example, you might minimize various sins in your own life by blaming others ("My sin is not so bad in comparison to the sin of so and so"; or "Everyone is doing it"; or "I would never have said what I did had she not provoked me"). Or consider how you might redefine sin so as to excuse yourself ("At least I am not an idolater, murderer, or adulterer"). But the Scripture teaches that coveting is idolatry (Colossians 3:5)—your discontentment is idolatry. Jesus taught that calling someone you know or don't know a name in anger is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. The Lord Jesus also taught that to lust in your heart for anyone who is not your spouse is to commit adultery (a violation of the Seventh Commandment).

One sin that has been redefined in this age is the sin of profaneness or profanity. Ask most people (even professing Christians) to tell you what they understand profanity to be or to describe for you a profane person and you will see that most people do not understand what profanity really is. Most people will respond that a profane person is someone who is vile and irreverent. That is true, but profanity is more than just that.

Let us consider the following main points: (1) A Definition of Profanity; (2) A Biblical Example of a Profane Person; (3) Remedies to Profanity.

I. A Definition of Profanity.

A. What is profanity? Can you describe the characteristics of a profane person? Consider the following.

1. Profanity is not mere cursing, using God's name irreverently, or uttering gutter language. Profanity is that, but it is far more basic and fundamental. A profane person is not merely the crude, crass drunkard, nor the vile fornicator, nor the obstinate atheist.

2. The Greek word used here for "profane person" (*bébēlos*) (Hebrews 12:16) signifies a threshold (like the entrance into the temple). Likewise, our English word "profane" comes from the Latin *pro* (before) *fanum* (temple), which emphasizes that there are certain matters related to God that should be treated with reverence as standing before Him and His temple. But a "profane person" has no regard for the fact that he/she is standing at the threshold or before what is holy and rather takes what is holy and treats it as unholy, as common, or as ordinary. The profane person does not make a distinction between what is holy and common (Ezekiel 22:26). A "profane person" lightly esteems what God says is to be honored and treasured because it reveals and makes known something about God Himself (creation, providence, the gospel, the Lord's Day, the sacraments, sacred covenants etc.). God is profaned whenever that which should be greatly esteemed by us because it reflects God in some way, is rather lightly esteemed—that is irreverence.

B. Dear ones, you do not have to speak evil of the holy things of God in order to profane His holy name. All you need to do is to fall into some comfortable lifestyle where your zeal for the cause of Jesus Christ, your love for Christ and the brethren, your reverence for God's name, for the Lord's Day, for the Lord's truth, for the Lord's salvation, for the Lord's Supper, for the Lord's covenant, for the Lord's church, for the Lord's worship, for the Lord's ordinances of marriage or ministry become ordinary and commonplace to you so that

you become apathetic and complacent to that by which the most holy God makes Himself known unto you. You do not actively have to promote some wickedness or heresy. You profane His holy name by your mere indifference to the holy things of the Lord in treating that which is heavenly and divine in its origin as merely earthly and human by your attitude, affections, words, and actions. A profane person may be one who simply ignores, neglects, and treats as ordinary that by which God reveals Himself to us (as His ordinances and sacraments).

II. A Biblical Example of Profanity (Hebrews 12:16-17).

A. This inspired letter was directed to Hebrew Christians who were tempted to fall away from the Lord Jesus Christ in order to avoid the persecution they were presently undergoing for their faith in Jesus Christ from fellow Jews in the synagogue who hated Christ and the gospel (like Paul who at one time hated Christ and Christians).

1. A powerful incentive to these Hebrew Christians remaining faithful to Christ and not viewing their circumstances as unique was given by the apostle in Hebrews 12:1-2: The faithful contending of witnesses from the past (cf. Hebrews 11) and the faithful contending of Christ Himself. If God gave sufficient grace to those witnesses of the past to stand faithful when persecution arose, and if Christ stood faithful in the face of the cursed death of the cross for His people, then God will give grace to all Christians who face the same circumstances that they might not fall away from the living God.

2. Now the Holy Spirit gives another powerful incentive to remain faithful to Christ: the unfaithful example of Esau. God has not only given to us examples to follow by way of faithful witnesses, but also examples to shun by way of faithless men (1 Corinthians 10:11).

B. Paul calls Christians to use the loving discipline of the Lord to promote holiness in their lives (Hebrews 12:3-13). This is why we are taught to kiss the rod of the Lord's discipline, for it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in the lives of God's children who in love submit to Him (even when it hurts). When the Lord brings trials and afflictions into your lives, it is not because He hates you or is punishing you in getting even with you, but is rather because He loves you and uses even pain, suffering, sorrow, trials, and tribulations to show to you your sins, weaknesses, and desperate need of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

C. But this Spirit-produced holiness that is growing in your life involves looking out for certain sins that they do not take root in your life; for you do not have to plant sins into your life any more than you have to plant weeds in your gardens, they will grow by your mere inattention, complacency, and carelessness— Hebrews 12:14-15: (1) falling short of God's grace so that God's grace is not effective in your life (hearing of the wonders of God's salvation but never embracing the promise of Christ offered); (2) allowing bitterness to grow in your life (not dealing with anger toward others).

1. The apostle says that this complacency and apathy in not receiving the grace of God or in allowing bitterness to grow in your life will lead to other sins: practicing fornication or profanity (Hebrews 12:16). Unrepentant sin may seem to lie dormant, but it will inevitably lead to more conspicuous sins. Sins that lie below the surface will manifest themselves soon if they are not taken to the cross of Jesus Christ and to the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

2. One of the most significant reasons for the fall of Christians away from Jesus Christ (love of adulterous relationships, love of applause and favor of men, love of riches, love of power, love of the world) is because they became complacent about the "little foxes" of sin until the little foxes became big oxen (oxen) of sin. A little fox will become a very big ox by simply doing nothing and not taking it seriously with a firm and holy determination to rely on the grace of Christ to mortify it.

D. Although the apostle speaks here of two sins (Hebrews 12:16), fornication (a sin against man)

and profanity (a sin against God), I will be focusing my attention on the sin of profaneness. Esau especially stands out as a prime example of a profane person; for he did not treat with reverence his sacred birthright—a promise of God’s blessing.

E. From our text, how did Esau profane the name of God? He “sold his birthright.” If this birthright belonged to Esau what was the great sin committed by selling it to his brother Jacob?

1. The birthright usually belonged to the first born son as was Esau (him being the twin brother of Jacob, but emerging from the womb before Jacob).

2. The birthright which was lightly esteemed by Esau was earnestly desired by Jacob and not simply for monetary or material reasons. For this birthright not only issued in temporal blessings, but more importantly it also pointed to the spiritual blessings bestowed by God upon Abraham and his seed. Esau sold an eternal birthright to satisfy temporary comfort. And in so doing he profaned the name of God whose blessings the birthright represented. Esau lightly esteemed what was immensely valuable because he did not have eyes to see the Seed of Abraham (the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His glory—Galatians 3:16).

3. By his words and actions, he despised that which was holy to God. It was not so much that he blasphemed the name of God directly, but rather showed contempt for the name of God by his indifference in his actions. Dear ones, do not your actions reveal how valuable you account your God? Do you delight in secret worship, family worship, and corporate worship because there you come before the face of God to glorify Him and enjoy Him? Are you cheerful givers to the ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ? Do you show your love for Jesus Christ by your obedience to His commands or rather your apathy by your carelessness, negligence, and procrastination to do the revealed will of God? Do you lightly esteem God’s blessings by your unthankful heart and discontentment, by your complaining of what you do not have and want? Do you hear the sermon preached, but quickly forget the challenge and conviction of the Holy Spirit that fell upon you—a hearer not a doer?

4. Esau found no place of repentance in the heart of Isaac even when sought with tears—Esau’s father, Isaac, would not change his mind about the blessing once it was given to Jacob (Hebrews 12:17). According to Hebrews 11:20: “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

5. Dear ones, is it not evident that profanity is a grievous sin that leads to the destruction of the soul? For how is a professing Christian acting any different from the heathen when both ignore and lightly esteem the holy things of God (they both act like God does not exist). Does not the professing Christian aggravate his/her sin due to the greater degree of knowledge he/she has of God? Oh, brothers and sisters, awaken yourselves from your slumber of indifference to the holy things of God. Take care that you daily stir up faith, love, and devotion in your hearts for the holy things of Jesus Christ. Daily take the sin of profanity to the cross of Christ in order that it might be crucified in your life. If you are not even aware of this sin, how will you mortify it?

6. In what way may you profane the name of God?

a. In your ATTITUDES by not cherishing the Lord, nor enjoying communion with Him, and thus treating Him like you treat any other person in this world—Not having a thankful heart for His many blessings—Doubting His promises—Not fearing His threatenings.

b. In your WORDS by referring to God’s name in casual or common speech (“Lord”, “Jesus”, “God”, “I swear to God”)—Making such serious words like “damn” or “hell” common and ordinary through your careless speech—Making heaven or hell, truth or error common by the jokes you tell or to which you listen.

c. In your ACTIONS by treating as common the covenant of marriage (Malachi 2:13-14), by not sanctifying the Lord’s Day (Isaiah 58:13), by not preparing our hearts to enjoy all that is set apart unto God in worship (just going through the motions of worship), by not eating and drinking at the Lord’s Supper in faith from a broken and contrite heart and out of love rejoicing in your Savior who has purchased

through His death your salvation, sanctification, and glorification.

III. Remedies to Profanity.

A. Commune with Christ, give yourself to Him daily. Do not let your communion become perfunctory.

B. Watch your hearts before God in all that you do. Shun all mere external religion and hypocrisy (that is not an excuse to avoid obedience just because you do not have the right heart). Stir up those godly affections for Christ and His cause.

C. Treasure the least commandments of God and the least blessings of God. Take nothing for granted whether by way of material or spiritual blessing, blessings in the family or blessings in the church.

D. Love what God loves and hate what God hates.

E. Pray that God continually searches your heart, speech, and conduct and brings conviction for all the ways you lightly esteem Him, or ignore and neglect His cause. We are all guilty of profanity. However, the profane person is one who does not care about his/her profanity.

F. Embrace with all your heart the promise made to you in Christ (Matthew 22:1-5). Sell not the glory of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper by your carelessness, indifference, apathy. That is what Esau did. That is profanity. That is casting God's Pearl of Great Price before swine who by their carelessness are simply trampling Jesus Christ underfoot as worthless. Come now to this gospel feast and eat of Christ by faith.

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