

LESSON 11



THE IRREVERENCE OF PROFANITY

Scripture Texts: Exodus 20:7; Matthew 5:33-37; Colossians 3:8; James 3:10

In the lesson for today, we will attempt to reflect on the profound significance of the divine name. God is a divine Being. He is holy. His name is holy. To know the name of God is to know His nature, and to know His nature, is to stand in reverence of Him. We are to hallow His name. We are never to take it lightly in conversation, nor use it wickedly in anger. The practice of profanity is widespread, but it has no place in the life of a Christian.

MEMORY VERSE: *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.* — Matthew 5:37

Israel Stood Guilty

Exodus 20:7. **Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.** This is one of the ten commandments. This law that was given to Israel has continued on in the present Gospel dispensation. **The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.** He stands guilty before God. God's name stands for God Himself. To use it lightly, carelessly, or angrily is an insult to the Holy One who is far, far above every other being. See Ephesians 1:19-22. This lesson is more than a warning against profane swearing. It is also a warning against profane living.

Saints Need No Oath

Matthew 5:33-37. **Thou shalt not forswear thyself.** What is profanity? Profanity is defined as any irreverent reference to holy things, light or impious mention of names, titles, attributes, or acts of God. Jesus is talking about oaths to bind promises. He quoted the old rule not to forswear oneself—swear falsely, but to **perform unto the Lord thine oaths**—to do them sincerely as unto God, not men. But Jesus gave a command greater than the old rule. **But I say**—He has all authority—**unto you**—to us—**Swear not at all.** Nothing can be found which is not too sacred for mere man to swear by. Jesus says this is both foolish and wicked. We have no right to swear **by heaven**, the throne of God, **nor by the earth** which is a footstool of His feet, or **by Jerusalem which is the city of the great King.** Neither may we turn to something we think to be our own, our **head.** We cannot **make one hair white or black.** Nothing is our own; nothing is without the mark of God's creation and ownership. We must drop all thought of bringing any person or thing to prove our truthfulness or bind our promise.

Let the reliability of our statement rest on its own merit. Be simple in your speech. **Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.** A saint's statement needs no oath. His word is good enough. Some feel they have not made a positive statement unless they use some oath or profanity. Good people are simple people, straight-forward in their affirmations and in their denials.

Lightness Does Not Excuse Us

Colossians 3:8. **Put off . . . anger, wrath, malice.** These are often the cause of **blasphemy** and **filthy communication**, which also must be **put off.** Jesus holds that the place to stop evil is at its source. Speaking evil or lightly of God is but a step beyond speaking scornfully to our fellow man. We must use our willpower to destroy this habit outwardly as Jesus cleanses us inwardly of sin. Jesus will help us, but we must put forth the effort to put it from us.

Some who would never use God's name in vain will say, "gosh" or "gee" which stands for those

names, or "for heaven's sake," "Judas priest," "holy cow," etc., which are connected with Jesus and the Father. The dictionary calls these "minced oaths." We do not like to put them in print, but do so to make clear the message. This is borderline swearing. ("Darn, "shoot," and other such slang words fall into this category also.)

Are we excused in the use of these words because we "mean nothing by it"? No, they are in vain, empty and meaningless. The only right way is to *never* use these names and words except as God intended and with deep reverence and loving motives. See Titus 2:8. To use the name of the Lord in connection with unclean conversation is using His name in vain. Neither should His name be used in connection with jokes or jesting of any kind. His name is sacred, divine, and holy and should be used only with great reverence.

An Impossibility

James 3:10. **Out of the same mouth . . . blessing and cursing.** That is, it appears to be so, but both cannot be real. Read verses 11-12 and see that they cannot. If we curse, we cannot bless. God will not accept our praise and prayers and testimonies and "church work" if we do not reverence His name in our words to our fellowman.

Murder has its origin in anger which runs into name calling and fighting. Adultery has its conception in evil thoughts and glances and fantasy. Fantasy is profane living. Untruthfulness starts from a tendency to exaggerate and to play fast and loose with the facts. Jesus replaced the old doctrine of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" with overcoming evil with good. The true Christian does not hate his enemy, but loves both his enemy and his neighbor. Profane speaking leads to profane living. Blasphemy, double-dealing, and perjury are examples.

JUST A THOUGHT

Profane speakers are usually profane liverers.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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