

## Profaning the Holy

‘A man goes to see the pope. “Your Holiness. I work for KFC, and we’ll offer you ten million dollars to change the reading of the Lord’s Prayer from ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ to ‘Give us this day our daily chicken’”. The pope is aghast! “I can’t just go changing God’s word for money!” The man comes back the next day: “Fifty million! Now, think of all the good the church could do with all that money, Your Holiness!” The pope is unimpressed: “Look, I told you. I just can’t do it. I’m sorry”. The guy is back a week later: “Final offer—\$500 million. Take it or leave it”. The next day, the pope calls all the leaders of the church together: “Boys, I have good news, and I have bad news. The good news is we’ve raised \$500 million dollars for Catholic Charities”. The room erupts! Everybody is so happy! The pope waits for the room to settle down. Then—“And now for the bad news: We lost the Wonder Bread account”.’

Well, talk about compromising for filthy lucre! I guess, in the just cited “case”, it depends on how much we’re talking about! Which brings to mind that all-too-oft quoted axiom: “Everyone has their price”. But do they? Really? Is there ever a price that is actually too high? Or conversely, are there times for which or persons for whom no price is high enough? Meaning no amount

of money, no matter how vast, could buy someone off? Are there people for whom absolutely nothing could change their minds? Even on the pain of death? For whom even excruciating physical torture and unrelenting psychological torment, could not convince them to do or say whatever their tormentors demand? Yes, there are many such persons. They may be few and far between but gather them all together from all times and places and they will form a great grand choir in heaven praising the One and Only Everlasting God and Creator and Savior of All.

While us gathered here may well admire such people, and rightly so, would we, could we, ever be counted among them? Have we ever faced any tests of our faith that would cause us to buckle and say or do something that we know is sin and displeasing to Lord Jesus? Or, heaven forbid, are we among those people who, when confronted by any headwind, however slight, prefer to be seen as peaceful people, who will never “rock the boat”, always be friendly, always get along to get along? When push comes to shove, we quickly get up and get out of the way? Are we among those who actually stand for nothing and everything? Who are utterly useless for the Kingdom of God? Who never speak up for righteousness and justice for others who can not speak for themselves? Who never let on that we’re “closet” Christians? Have some of us forgotten that God is holy?

Thanks be to God that we still live in a land that is largely free. But the screws have been gradually tightening, circumscrib-

ing, limiting our freedom of speech, our freedom of religion. Everything goes along hunky-dory until we do something, or say a word that some others who think they're better and more important than we are are offended by, or have "cancelled" by their own fiat, and who conveniently forgot to send us the memo. Folks, our country, the "land of the free and the home of the brave", is not nearly as free and brave as we were only a few decades ago. And the reason is, we have forgotten God, and forgotten holiness.

Since God is holiness itself, the incidences of profaning whatever is holy are not hard to find. If we actually look for them, they can't be missed, for they're truly everywhere. If we actually listen for them, they can't be missed, for they're truly everywhere. Everyday speech in America is so littered with profanity that most people don't bat an eye when hearing or seeing a "bad" word. But it isn't just today's everyday discourse that's become vulgar. People's behavior, expressions, appearance and dress has for far too many become profane. So-called celebrities and entertainers parade themselves in front of cameras, on stages and runways, and are, essentially, naked. This overt sexuality is designed to stimulate lust and depravity in all around. In case any here have forgotten, that is the diametric opposite of holiness. It is flat-out sin and flagrant rebellion against God and His holiness. And it will end in eternal darkness, death, hate and evil, due to everlasting separation from God. In hell, all hope is lost. Forever.

There is a limit beyond which God will not allow any society

to continue to rebel against Him, and profane His holiness. That point is vividly revealed in Daniel 5. Here in chapter 5, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson is the king, in a co-regency with his father, Nabonidus. Belshazzar had reigned as regent during his father's earlier multi-year absence from Babylon, and was recognized as the real ruler. He also, obviously, thought of himself as the center of power and authority in Babylon. At one of his orgies, something truly miraculous happened. When we hear orgies, I think we, at least those of us who've been paying attention to the lurid details of what's been going on, turns out, for many decades on end, have a much better "grasp" of what really goes on during these "parties". Most of the uber rich and powerful often gather in magnificent mansions and palaces on private islands and indulge themselves in all manner of evil and depravity. For us normal people, we can't really imagine all of what goes on, because the evil is so far beyond what we "decent", God-fearing people can even conceive. Father God in Holy Spirit protects us from the worst of sinful humanity under demonic influence, for whom killing, stealing and destroying are the normal state of affairs.

Here's King Belshazzar hosting, perhaps his biggest ever "party orgy". Everyone is indulging in whatever they desire, and the rare, most expensive wines are flowing freely in limitless quantities. Then a fantastic idea comes to Belshazzar. How fun it would be if the wine was served in the exquisitely beautiful, sacred vessels that had been stolen from the holy Temple in

Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar had sacked it. Belshazzar gave the order to bring them out. The great menorah was lit, adding a brilliant light to the proceedings, while the goblets and vessels were admired and filled with all manner of liquors, intoxicants, and various other fluids. The very instruments and utensils commissioned by God Himself to enable the sin of God's Chosen People to be covered and temporarily atoned for were now being used for the most vile activities imaginable and beyond imagining. The very worst mocking of the One and Only Living God by those who saw themselves as, if not equal to, then as close to gods as humanly possible. Sounds like a high time for an object lesson.

Suddenly, a gigantic, mysterious, ethereal, disembodied hand appeared over the sacred, burning menorah and it began writing on the wall! Instantly sober, literally scared spitless, the king and all the assembled, exalted company of nobles, aristocrats, and high officials with their playthings watched in ominous dread as words formed on the wall. But what could they mean? What could the hand itself mean? When the royal wisemen, magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers immediately summoned to interpret the words were unable to make any sense of them, the king's likely grandmother recalled Daniel. Now much older, Daniel was roused from his chambers and brought in to reveal the meaning of it all. In short, all the lessons that had been so painstakingly given to Nebuchadnezzar by God had seemingly gone up in smoke. No one remembered Nebuchadnezzar's pre-

vious experiences of being humbled by God, and his pronouncements and his exalting of the One true God of the Jews, how he'd charged all his subjects multiple times to worship and honor Adonai. Well, under Belshazzar, not only was Adonai forgotten, but He was now being blasphemed in the worst possible manner. God is not mocked. Daniel knew immediately what God was saying: Belshazzar, "God has NUMBERED the days of your reign and brought it to an end. God has WEIGHED YOU in the balance, and you have been found lacking. God has DIVIDED UP your kingdom and given it to the Medes and the Persians". And that very night, the Medes and the Persians slipped into the very palace, having diverted the waters that fed the moat, and killed Belshazzar, and so the haughty and arrogant, proud-beyond-description Babylonian Empire was destroyed, never to rise again.

Friends, America finds herself in a similar catastrophe in the making these very days. She and the world are piling up sins like there's no tomorrow, and God will not withhold His judgement much longer. God's people, that's you and me, can no longer avoid confrontation with those propagating evil. The ocean of lies in this year's political ads, almost entirely from the democrats, are breathtaking in their unprecedented scope and audacity. We can not sit idly by and let them go unchallenged. While we can't go on TV and the Internet and run ads ourselves, we can pray against them. And that is the most important thing we can do. The question is, are we doing it? Are you standing up for what's holy?

