

**Text:** Hebrews 12:16b-17

**Title:** Watching out for Worldliness

**Truth:** Do not love the world or the things in the world.

**Date/Location:** December 4, 2011 at FBC

## Introduction

These notes pick up where the last set left off, with the fourth in a series of items that we are told to watch out for in the church as we pursue peace with all people and holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

## V. Make Sure There is No Worldliness, v. 16b-17

- A. One question that you might ask right away is this: was Esau a fornicator? I do not believe this text says he was. Read it this way: “See to it that there is no fornicator (comma), or profane person like Esau who...” All we can glean for certain from verse 16 is that Esau was profane.
- B. The meaning of profane is, as the BDAG Greek dictionary puts it, is *totally worldly*.
1. If someone is profane, they have no interest in *transcendent matters*, that is, the things of God. Other ways to translate it are *unholy* or *godless* or *irreverent*.
  2. Esau had no interest in the promises that God made to Abraham, which were passed on to Isaac. These promises brought with them great blessing. One meal was enough for him to trade away his birthright. The account in Genesis 25:29-34 records Esau asking “What use is this birthright to me?” and it closes with “So Esau despised his birthright.” To despise it means that he depreciated it, disparaged it, and hated it.
  3. Notice other texts that use this same word: 1 Timothy 1:9, 4:7, 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16. Notice how often it has to do with speech.
- C. The consequences entailed real loss.
1. When he realized what he had done, he did not like the consequences (Genesis 27:33-41). This caused great anger on his part, so much so that he planned to murder his brother.
  2. I believe that Esau wanted the blessing (the goods, the inheritance) but he did not care so much about the “God part” of the blessing.
  3. Look at the pattern of his life. One thing he did was he married two Hittite women. The first problem is the polygamy. His parents did not

believe in that. They were evidently not godly wives because they were a grief for his parents (Gen. 26:34-35).

We ought to recognize, having grown up in this church or been here for some while, that it is absolutely NOT OK for a believer to marry an unbeliever. Likewise, if you are an unbeliever, you should be marrying an unbeliever. And if you are in a relationship of the mixed sort, you need to stop right away. Don't fool yourself.

4. If you doubt this analysis of Esau, then just remember the Bible here in Hebrews calls him *profane*. He did not pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

#### D. Esau's repentance was a false kind of repentance

1. The kind of repentance that Esau had was not the true kind we read of from 2 Cor. 7:8-12. His was clearly the worldly kind that does not have to do with salvation or the things of God. Exodus 10:16-20 is another example of a false kind of repentance, one that was just about the consequences of sin.
2. Real repentance means a change of mind regarding the badness of the thing that was done *with regard to God*. It is turning away from sinful things, and correspondingly it is associated with a turning toward God. The turning away is repentance, the turning toward is faith. This happens at the inception of the Christian life and we call the package of repentance and faith by the name *conversion*. But those who are in the middle of the Christian life also repent and believe in response to sin in their lives. The same kind of attitude, thinking, and response toward sin then marks the entire life of the Christian.
3. At its base, repentance is not an emotional thing, although it likely has an emotional reaction tied up in it. The sorrow of 2 Cor. 7 has to do not with, "Uh oh, I'm sorry I did that because now I have to deal with consequences." It is "I am sorry I did that because it was wrong and God is displeased with it." There is a massive difference.

#### E. The consequences were irreversible.

1. The Bible says Esau was rejected. This means he was regarded as unworthy or unfit. This rejection was by God more than by Isaac.
2. The Bible says there was no opportunity for repentance. It was too late. There was no blessing left. Isaac had given the inheritance to

Jacob. We probably find it hard to understand this because we think like “Just call back Jacob, tell him he is a sinner, take the blessing from him and give it to his brother.” Official pronouncements could not so simply be undone in Old Testament times. Words had meaning and significance and were not simply to be used lightly (perhaps the Lord reminds us of this in Matthew 12:36).

3. There are other places in the Scripture where this irreversible idea comes out.
  - a. Consider Hebrews 6:4-6 again, just a few pages earlier in the Bible.
  - b. A similar thing is mentioned in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. God “giving them over” refers to God permitting them to fulfill their depraved desires and go down a path of no return.
  - c. Another instance is in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. In this passage, God promises to send a delusion to people who follow the deception of Satan. They will believe the lie and be condemned. This is another “point of no return” situation.
4. We cannot say for sure when someone is on this path, or if every person that begins to go there will have no chance of salvation. I believe there is a scary reality that some are on that road right now. There is also ample evidence that the worst of sinners can be saved.
5. We might question God in this connection about how He runs the world. How can God disallow any further opportunity? That’s not fair!!!
  - a. Most people call it “no second chance.” The reality is that many people probably had a first, second, third, and one thousandth chance. We are talking about opportunity number 1,001. God is not obligated to give us any chance, much less 1,001 of them.
  - b. The Bible’s answer to such questioning of God is this: Submit to God and His wisdom, and stop questioning. Job learned that (start reading at chapter 38). Paul echoes the same in Romans 9:19-21.

## Conclusion

Watching out for “profane” people in our churches is very important. People whose interests seem to be all on the worldly plane need to be warned of their status before God.