

THE BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by William Vigue

William Vigue's biblical exposition on the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, interpreting this grave warning in light of the whole counsel of Scripture.

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"I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matthew 12:31-32)

"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost has never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." (Mark 3:29-30)

Here is a portion of scripture that stands out like a sore thumb, seemingly unattached to any other teachings of scripture. However, it doesn't stand alone. God requires two or three witnesses to confirm a truth. (Matthew 18:16) So to understand this statement we need to interpret it in the light of the whole council of God in the scriptures.

Some will ask, why deal with such a frightening subject? Some I suppose do think the truths of God are "frightening" and will think they know better than God and want to protect people from hearing what Jesus said in this case. The fact is the main reason we seek to understand and then explain such issues is because they are part of God's Word. According to Jesus "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God". If we refuse to hear or deny others from hearing what Jesus said about blaspheming the Holy Spirit we are neglecting a part of God's life.

Another very important reason to deal with this subject is because of the circumstances in which Jesus made the statement. He had just selected 12 disciples out of many striving to devote themselves to God, but they were still babes in the knowledge of God. Jesus didn't say this privately to His elite inner circle of disciples. He did not hide it in a parable so the unbelievers might ponder it slowly. No, He resounded loud and clear for all to hear in straight talk.

Jesus spoke this out publicly and in plain language. Why? It was such a serious issue He required all to hear right away, including the tender babes who believed on Him as well the unsaved and unregenerate sinner. It is a sin so serious that all people need to know what it is and be forewarned. Why some would think to put it on the back burner and not seek to understand this is evidence of how pervasive darkness is in this generation.

Jesus said that all manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men (of course that is dependent on our repentance and faith). Even blasphemy spoken against Himself, the Son of God He said would be forgivable. But Jesus said this sin; "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" shall never be forgiven. Mathew's reported Jesus saying there is "never forgiveness in both this world and the world to come".

Peter's remembrance as the Spirit inspired his was written as Mark's gospel. An additional clue is provided us that is most helpful in understanding the consequences Jesus wanted to convey. Those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven but are still only "in danger of eternal

damnation". For years I didn't consider the value of that bit of truth from God's Word. The distinctions however are there for a reason.

God exhorts us to pay attention to details. Instruction such as: "study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman, rightly dividing the word of truth" has always stood out to me. Other exhortations from the lips of our Lord Himself; "search the scriptures"; "you do greatly err not knowing the scriptures or the power of God...", and Moses instruction to the Israelites to "hearken diligently to the voice of my word" also stand out as exhortations to pay attention to details.

One of the strongest and clearest exhortations resounded in both Israel's Law and the Lord's final words in the Revelation given to John admonishes God's servants; "you shall not add to my word neither shall you diminish anything from my words". (Deuteronomy 4:2 & Revelation 22:18-19) Every word of scripture was carefully weighed and voiced by God.

Let's examine the Greek word translated Blasphemy in the text. It literally means; "to speak with verbal abuse" and it "denotes the very worst type of slander, including bearing a false witnesses". Its meaning also includes "wounding the reputation of someone by the use of whisperings, gossip, evil reports, evil speaking, foolish speaking, jesting, etc... To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is not merely uttering from your lips uncontrolled four letter words at God. No, blasphemy is speaking sharp criticisms of resistance against the true ministry of the Holy Spirit (knowingly or unknowingly). It is the most serious of offences because it spoils the reputation of the Holy Spirit. It stirs up doubts and unbelief in the abilities of God to save, rescue and deliver to the uttermost. It pollutes people's mind and destroys their confidence in the Holy Spirit's power to come to their aid. This sin is so devastating that God will not ignore it, and will not forgive it in this life or in the hereafter. The Spoiling Traditions of Men

Jesus had just cast out a deaf and dumb spirit or a spirit that didn't talk. At the time the Jews had their own exorcists, who tradition tells us their only approach to casting out a demon was by learning its name. But in the case of a deaf and dumb spirit no communication was possible. So the Pharisees traditional belief system was this: He was doing something "beyond the limits handed down to man from God". As a result their conclusion was that Jesus must be using the powers of Beelzebub; their chosen name for the chief demons. How else could he command it out? Like many who lean more on their own thoughts rather than God, their logic was always to limit God's power.

It is interesting to note that these accusers didn't deny Jesus was casting out unclean spirits. In fact they actually acknowledged he was casting them out. However, their lack of understanding the integrity of God led them into perverse reasoning causing them to draw a false conclusion and creating confusion. When the religious leaders claimed Jesus had cast out unclean spirit by the power of Beelzebub (their so named leader of evil spirits) Jesus' reply was temperate. They spoke from lack of knowledge and their hateful spirit was responded to by Jesus in kindness. He did not condemn them directly. He did not command fire down from heaven. Instead He was temperate and tried to reason with them by asking them a question.

He asked; "How can Satan cast out Satan? Can a house divided, stand?" Jesus was not commanding evil spirits He was stopping their assignment. Jesus illustrated how people must first be bound before their goods can be spoiled. In a parable He exposed the strategy of the devil.

"And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, unless he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." (Mark 3:26-27)

Satan is not the strongman in this illustration. Man is the strongman. Many have missed the point. I too was once confused by what Jesus meant. I thought Jesus was saying the strongman was the devil and that He came to bind the devil. But Jesus didn't bind the devil; instead He loosed people who were bound by the devil. Jesus rebuked demons. He cast demons out of people's lives.

Satan is one who strives to bind men with his lies and schemes and once bound up, he spoils our goods. The Christian has the goods not Satan. The goods are what the Holy Spirit supplies us with now through regeneration and the redeeming work of Jesus. But, unless know we have the goods how will we resist the devil? The devil still practices thievery, deception and destruction. That despot will continue to take people captive if they by into his distortions of God. Demons persistently come to steal the good things God has promised to provide us with through the Holy Spirit. But, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit looses people from what binds them. Only by Gods Holy Spirit can people be released from unholy demonic influence, influences that if left alone and not dealt with might lead to demon possession.

Jesus emphasized in the illustration that only the cleansing forces of the Holy Spirit can cleanse the unclean ones. The Holy Spirit came to fulfill these purposes of God: "to set the captives free, to loose the bands of wickedness, to open the eyes of the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised and to heal the brokenhearted." (Luke 4:18-19)

Never once did Jesus bind the devil. We hear many Christians (I once was one of them) going around saying; "I bind you Satan in the name of Jesus". But Satan is not bound by that command he only resisted. In truth, never once did Jesus bind the devil. Satan will not be bound until the end of the tribulation period and the second Coming. (Revelation 20:1-3).

Close followers of Jesus were not confused on this point. The apostle John wasn't afraid of the devil, he taught; "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world". Peter, whom Jesus once told; "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matthew 16:19) didn't interpret that to mean he must or could bind him as if Satan was the strongman. Peter understood the sons of men were the strongman that Satan had bound, and now light had come to empower us to loose those that were bound.

Peter understood that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour". Peter gave the antidote; "be sober, be vigilant;" and "resist him steadfast in the faith". (1 Peter 5:8-9) He didn't say bind him, he said resist him.

James said the same thing; "resist the devil and he shall flee from you" (James 5:7). The NT doesn't teach us we can bind the devil it tells us he seeks to and has bound people. Nowhere in Jesus' history or the Apostles is there one case where Satan or any demon was bound. No, demons keep coming at us.

Furthermore, we can't enter Satan's house and bind him, he has no house. That is why demons seek to possess man and beast. When demons are cast out Jesus said they; "walk through dry places, seeking rest." (Matthew 12:43) They don't have their own residence. That is why they

strive to enter people and take possession. What is Satan's strategy to accomplish that task? He lies about God! He distorts the scriptures. He tries to entangle us with inferior secular philosophies.

If you are influenced by demonic lies you are bound up and need to be loosed. The remedy is through embracing sound teachings, (Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1) going on unto deeper doctrinal knowledge (Hebrews 6:1-2) and drawing from the power of the Holy Spirit. These three things untie in us the twisted logic infecting the carnal mind. When we enter into the light, we enter into the glorious liberty of Christ Jesus. The Unequaled Blasphemy

Initially their verbal attack was against Him personally. When their attack moved from being against Him personally to an attack against the Spirit in Him Jesus moved from a parable to the direct point of reference. He warned of the seriousness of blaspheming the Holy Ghost.

We know by way of definition that blasphemy refers to abusive slander that wounds the reputation of someone. When Jesus spoke of the ultimate worst kind of blasphemy it is revealed to us why. "Because they said He had an unclean spirit".

I always thought of this sin was some big time slur, a slip of the tongue, or some dastardly statement that we should carefully avoid speaking at all cost. What I didn't realize was that it could be identified. When we reflect on the "whole council of God" we find that there are other related scriptures given to better understand of Jesus' point. The Holy Spirit is a person, the third part of the trinity and so His reputation can be wounded by unclean and abusive slander. But, do you realize there are many features of the Holy Spirit? There is the fruit of the Spirit. For instance, joy; "joy unspeakable and full of glory" is fruit that is sometimes spoken against as emotionalism like when David danced before the Lord. His wife mocked his fruit of joy and she was not forgiven. (2 Samuel 6:13-23)

There are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit often called the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some, even Christians speak against some of the gifts of the Spirit. Some abusively say they are no longer necessary, no longer available, no longer manifesting. Some go so far as to say they are actually the work of the devil.

God does not strike those people dead for speaking against these always necessary gifts of the Holy Spirit, but they are not forgiven. Even in this life it is evidence by the fact that they suffer from being deprived of the benefits of God's supernatural miracles.

There are also ministerial gifts, appointed offices of people who are specially anointed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said they "who receive a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophets reward, they that receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous mans reward." (Matthew 10:41)

All good things we do and receive of from God will be rewarded by God, but it is always in a just measure. Reject prophets, apostles, evangelist, pastors, teachers and you are not forgiven. If you demean and devalue the status of a minister of Christ you will not be forgiven but lose out on the fuller reward you would have had if you received them.

There is only one Holy Spirit but according to scripture He has at least seven (7) expressions. (Isaiah 11) There is the Spirit of Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Revelation, Council, Might, and Judgment (discernment). Speak against God's ability to personally council a man, or deny His

might (power and ability) to save from sin, sickness, etc....? You will not be forgiven that blasphemy and lose out on the reward. The Holy Spirit's promises include providing us "comfort", "guidance into all truth", "to teach us all things", and "show us things to come". (John 14:16; John 16:13) Furthermore, Paul once asked; "How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation." (1 Corinthians 14:26) How else can things come to us if not through the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is our conduit to God and His throne. Clog your arteries with waste and the life flow of blood is cut off first in degree and if allowed, to death through a heart attack.

Jesus prefaced His charge against blaspheming the Holy Spirit by saying; "He who is not with me is against me". Therefore, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is speaking verbal abuse against any aspects of the Holy Spirit and every feature. This sin is paramount to all other sins. It is so bad it is unpardonable.

What did Jesus mean by saying there is "never forgiveness"? My eyes would pop open when I read those words "never forgiven". Like many my first instinct was to think the person lost their salvation or could never be saved and enter heaven. However that can't be the case because it would make no sense to add the comment that the blasphemer was furthermore "in danger of eternal damnation".

Strong's Greek definition points out that the word translated "damnation" reads as a "tribunal" in other manuscripts. Thus, the blasphemer of the Holy Ghost is "subject to the perpetual (eternal) justice tribunal (damnation)" is another way some might translate the phrase. If this is an accurate point it implies blasphemer's do make heaven and face judgments since there is no tribunal in hell. Once in hell however, the damnation of hell is permanent.

We need to put the meaning of forgiveness in proper perspective. Forgiveness and unforgiveness should not be thought of as do or die. A classic example of this is found in the leadership of Moses. He was God's servant, one of God's greatest. Two times Moses led the thirsty Israelites to a rock. The first time God told Moses through the Holy Spirit to take his rod and strike the rock. Miraculously water came flowing out. Israel's thirst was quenched by the miracle supply.

However, the second time Israel needed water and were murmuring with fear God gave Moses new directions. God, through the Holy Spirit command Moses to speak to the rock before their eyes and it would give forth water. The intent was to testify to the emerging nation that Moses authority was by an anointing of the Holy Spirit. Moses did not pay attention to details. Instead Moses used the rod as he had used it in the past and struck the rock. The water flowed out at the second strike.

Immediately God announce a punishment to Moses. He would not cross over into the promise land with Israel because he had sinned through unbelief. (Numbers 20:7-13)

There are many instances in scripture (especially in the storyline of Israel's Kings) that illustrate this truth. In this case, God did not forgive Moses because he rejected the Holy Spirit's work in his own self. However, Moses did not lose out on heaven. He did not lose all his eternal rewards. Moses lost a temporal reward in his earthly life. He was not forgiven. He lost the privilege of a long awaited earthly inheritance. To illustrate this further, consider this portion of scripture.

“He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me. He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to a cup of cold water to one of these little ones only in the name of a disciple, verily...he shall in no wise lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:41)

Here Jesus promised a different reward for different degrees of spiritual reception. God actually rewards what one believes and receives as endowed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised a reward for even the very smallest deed done. Just giving a drink of cold water to the least disciple receives a reward. However, a righteous mans reward goes to those who receive a righteous man. There is also a prophet’s reward for receiving a true prophet. It is better to receive a prophet’s reward than a righteous mans reward. The point is, what you receive as anointed and appointed of God shall be rewarded justly. In the same way, what one does not perceive as from God and is then rejected will not go unnoticed. It will not be forgiven and thus the person rejecting it does not receive its benefits.

God’s Reward System

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 22:12) When the Lord returns He will reward every person, saint and sinner according to what they did in their life. This is eternal rewards. God will reward with perfect and equal justice. This does not refer to salvation per say because salvation is a free gift.

God reveals to us several judgment seats in heaven. One is exclusively for the wicked who will stand before a Great White Throne Judgment Seat of God. This event takes place after the millennium reign of Christ. Satan will be released from his bottomless pit for a short season and will deceive the nations once again. The numbers that follow him to fight against God will be vast. Yet, again they will be stopped in a final battle. Then Satan and the wicked will be raised to stand before this final judgment seat to be punished for every sin they ever committed. (Revelation 20:5-15) Each will be rewarded with punishments according to the degrees or their sins. (Matthew 23:14; John 19:11)

However, it does not appear Christians stand before that judgment seat. For those whose believe in Jesus and whose faith endures to the end, they shall stand before another judgment seat known as the “Bema” Judgment Seat.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat (bema) of Christ.” (Romans 14:10) This “bema” judgment is exclusively for those in Christ. In (Luke 14:14) the Lord makes it very plain that the rewards are going to be distributed at the time of the resurrection of the just. (Revelation 20:4-6; Revelation 22:12)

Some teach that the “Bema judgment seat” is only for rewards rendered on behalf of every good thing a Christian did in their life and no reflection of bad things done in the flesh will be mentioned. It is true that the Bible teaches that God promises not to remember (mention) our sins and iniquities (Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 10:17) but that applies to those things we have acknowledged. But there are many things we do and have done that we have not acknowledged. God will deal with them when we face Him so we can give account and receive instruction for a better life in the

Millennial.

“But I say unto you, That every idle (useless, non productive) word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36)

We see here that even the meaningless things we say is taken into account by God. The Greek word in the text for “give” refers to rewards. It literally means a “pay off” or “to do something necessary in fulfillment of an obligation or expectation.” Notice also what the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat (bema) of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Paul’s past is littered with terrible sin for on many occasions he took it upon himself to punish Christians, even unto stoning and death. (Acts 8:1-3) Still, Paul was not afraid to stand one day before the judgment of God. Just before he was martyred he wrote with calm eagerness this powerful truth.

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8)

Gods reward system is further illustrated in the parable of the talents recording in Mathew chapter twenty five. Jesus explained of different servants and their individual abilities. (They all had the goods) One received five talents, one received two talents and one received one talent. Based upon their individual wisdom and achievement they received rewards.

There was a reward rendered to the servant who did nothing with what he had? He received a negative reward. First, he was punished with a sharp denunciation. He was exposed as a slothful, wicked and unprofitable servant. The talent he had was taken away from him and given to the one who had gained the most. (This is capitalism not socialism?) Finally, the unprofitable servant was cast into a place of outer darkness where “there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This consequence fits with Jesus’ warning that those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit buy saying or thinking they could not do what God said they can do and should through the Holy Spirit. They are, “in danger of eternal damnation”.

God Gives and Takes Jesus spoke often in parables. On one occasion the disciples asked Him why. So he explained.

“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why do you speak unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, (has been given) to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:” (Matthew 13:10-14)

Here again is another teaching of Jesus that helps us understand what He meant about the consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The mysteries of God can only be known through the blessed power of the Holy Spirit. God rewards the seeking believer with revelation. (“ask, and you shall receive, seek and you shall find”) Jesus explained that the more one receives from the Spirit the more they shall be given, even unto abundance. Paul received abundant revelation in His life as a reward for seeking God and doing His will. (2 Corinthians 12:1). Coming into Gods revelation was as much Paul’s prayer for us (Ephesians 1:17) as it is Jesus’. (John 17:15-26)

Then notice that those who reject the mysteries of God not only go without its reward, even the little they do know shall be taken from them. They lose the benefit of an enlightened mind. Their senses of God are dimmed and some can become so estranged that they are given over to a reprobate mind. (Romans 1:28) Among many things, this testifies of the sovereignty of God over the comprehensive abilities of men.

Blaspheming against any aspect of the Holy Spirit is dangerous because one is rejecting the very means by which one can be saved. It may be blasphemy against God giving revelations, or disbelief in divine miracles, healings, or opposition against Gods anointed teachers, preachers, and prophetic gift. But, it all falls under the same sin. If you discredit the Holy Spirits power, which is given to enables mortal men, you are not forgiven and you will suffer loss in this life and the next. But that doesn’t mean you will totally lose your salvation and go to hell.

Receiving your just Reward As we come to faith in God, believers progress through various stages. We all start as mere disciples, searching and learning. As we grow God gives light. The opportunity to embrace that light is not always welcomed. Jesus said people reject the light because they “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19) Receiving Gods light is a reward.

Paul wrote by inspiration of the Spirit that “...love believes all things...” People can say they love God but do they? Jesus spoke of hypocrite’s who say they love Him with their lips but “their heart is far from me.” (Mark 7:6) God measures a person’s love by the degree in which they believe what He says. Not all Christians “believe all things” God said. Most claim they believe the bible but they also tend to choose what scriptures apply to them and ignore the others. Others simply disagree with God and refuse to believe.

Everything concerning the Holy Spirit will greatly benefit a believer if they receive it. Yet, God wouldn’t expect anyone to believe something without evidence. So God has laid the foundation. The foundation of evidence is the scriptures. Every attribute of the Holy Spirit was carefully expounded upon in scripture so every believer can embrace the truth and receive its blessings. Every particular aspect of the Spirit is a blessing. The tragedy is this; the same principle follows what you do not believe. Whenever someone doesn’t believe they tend to justify their rejection with verbal abuse. That is the start of blasphemy. Regarding the things concerning the Holy Spirit, whatever feature or aspect one rejects, if it results in blasphemy it will not be forgiven. It will be punished in measure. First, one loses the benefit of each and any aspect of the Holy Spirit, in this life. Yet, in the world to come, a Christian will also not be forgiven. What does this mean? They will lose in heaven the reward they could have received had they received the full features of the Holy Spirit. For instance, in some Christian circles some insist that only pastors, teachers and evangelist are valid ministers for our generation. They decry the present day ministry of the

apostolic and prophetic offices. They are big on looking to expose false prophets. It is a strange thing that they believe more in false prophets than the existence of true prophets. Yet, doesn't the Bible state clearly that all five ministry gifts will be appointed by God; "until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God..."? (Ephesians 4:11-13) We haven't reached that place yet have we? Well, is God a liar? No He is not! So, those ministries continue to be appointed by God, whether some believe in them or not.

Oh don't misunderstand me, there are false prophets. We are commanded to try the spirits to see if they are of God. So it is not a sin to question someone who claims to be a prophet. To just flat out reject all who claim to be a prophet is a sin. However, it becomes blasphemy of the Holy Spirit if one speaks against a true prophet and what they are saying.

Speaking against any particular ministry gift of the Holy Spirit is to wound the reputation of the gift. You will not be forgiven; rather you lose the opportunity for greater reward. In a sense they have forfeited the benefits. If they were Christians, when they get to heaven their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will result in great loss of reward.

What about those who mock the manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Those who slander ministers anointed with divine healing gifts are not forgiven? Generally they don't get healed do they? Isn't it proven that those who speak against the working of miracles go through life never experiencing miracles? Those that claim speaking in tongues is of the devil have blasphemed the Holy Spirit too. Through unbelief they don't receive the gift and therefore don't receive the benefits. In fact God so closes their eyes that they don't comprehend what the benefits are. Others mock Christians who say they received a message from God in a dream or vision. They claim it is foolishness. Yet, scripture tells us this is one way God speaks to His children. (Acts 2) Thus, they go through life never sensing God speaking to them and think that is the norm. Those mockers blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They will not be forgiven. Instead they suffer loss.

Apostle Paul Understood the Danger of Blaspheming The Apostle Paul understood the danger of blasphemy. He turned two Christians over to Satan so they would learn not blaspheme.

"Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme". (1 Timothy 1:20)

Historians tell us that both Alexander and Hymenaeus were active members of the Church in Ephesus. Paul wasn't being vindictive. His intent was to teach them so they would not hinder the work of God. If they continued in their error they were in danger of more than losing their full reward in this world, they were in danger of eternal damnation.

It seems Hymenaeus learned the lesson while Alexander didn't. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, four years later, Hymenaeus is dropped from the reprimand; but Alexander's stubborn blasphemy apparently continued.

"Alexander the metal worker did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words." (2 Timothy 4:13-14)

Alexander was not merely withstanding Paul the man but he was withstanding the Apostolic Ministry Gift of the Holy Spirit. In resisting Paul's preaching Alexander was speaking against the Holy Spirit. If Christians understood this correctly there would be fewer ministers attacking other

preachers. Christians need to understand that when they take liberty in criticizing their brothers in the Lord they are often criticizing the work of the Holy Spirit. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul gave us further insight that ties together the Holy Spirit's work in a believer along with God's reward program for receiving the things of the Spirit. The Corinthian believers were still babes in Christ. They were filled with works of the flesh such as envy, strife and divisions. They were more caught up with their own importance than giving respect to the work of the Holy Spirit. Some preferred the ministry of Apollos while others preferred Paul. So Paul explained.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God is all things because He gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and EVERY MAN SHALL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's farmers, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon... So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but it is God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.... If any man's work which he builds upon remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he shall suffer loss: (there is no forgiveness) but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:8-15)

We have probably all spoken many things that hinder the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yet, no matter how naively, every verbal attack against the Holy Spirit or His various anointings is a serious sin with consequence. Whether we know it or not we lose something, both in this life and the next. Therefore, let us stay humble like Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..." because he had "respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Hebrews 11:26) In closing may I encourage you to look well unto something John wrote? "Look to ourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." (2 John 1:8) And let us remember the words of Jesus, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12) So work! So labor! Not against the Spirit but with the Spirit of God.

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