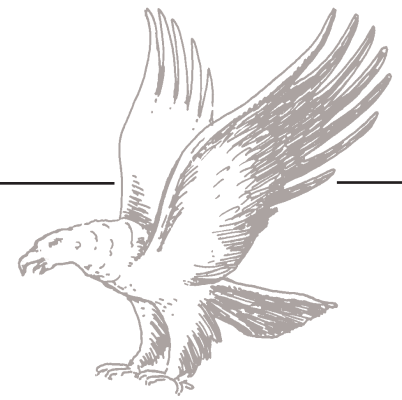


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



May 19, 2013

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

A curious saying of Jesus seems to place one sin in a category all by itself: unforgiveable. But a closer look at the context reveals a more reasonable—and sobering—explanation.

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matt. 12:31-32).

Amidst all the New Testament language about God’s amazing mercy and His willingness to forgive even the most vile sins, this passage delivers an unexpected jolt. It sounds as though Jesus is blocking out one sin as being beyond God’s grace. Commit this one, and you’re toast, no matter how many apologies you offer or tears you shed.

Why is an insult against the Holy Spirit so much more deadly than an insult against Jesus Himself? Is there really no hope for someone who has committed this sin—even inadvertently?

As with most such questions, the context provides useful clues to help us unravel this mystery. Jesus had just healed a man who was demon-possessed, blind, and mute (v. 22). To

counter the impact of this miracle on the crowd, the Pharisees discounted the miracle as an act of Satan (v. 24). This explanation, of course, was logically inconsistent—why would Satan cast out his own demons (v. 25-26)?

But Jesus was concerned with a much more serious error in their thinking. He claimed to cast out demons “by the Spirit of God” (v. 28). If they refused to believe that God’s Spirit was behind this miracle, what avenue was left by which Jesus could convince them of His credentials? What further proof could God provide to change their minds?

The answer is, there was nothing else God could do. By denying the power of the Holy Spirit, displayed in such a dramatic and unmistakable fashion, they effectively destroyed their last remaining opportunity of ever coming to accept Jesus as the Servant of God.

That’s why their blasphemy against the Spirit was such an egregious sin. It was not because the Holy Spirit is more important than Jesus, but because the Spirit’s work, particularly through the miracles, provided the best evidence of

Jesus’ legitimacy. By rejecting that, there was nothing else God could do to bridge the gap between Himself and their stubborn pride. They were doomed.

The same principle is in play today. We no longer have apostles and miracles today, but we do have a validated record of the miracles of long ago. That documentation—inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit—serves as God’s message to the human race today (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 3:4-5). Today, as then, “no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3); that is, the Spirit, speaking through God’s word, draws men to the Savior. But if people, for whatever reason, choose to reject the testimony of the Spirit—by dismissing the Bible as a fabrication, or rejecting its message as an ancient myth—then there is nothing else God can do to reach them. By denying the Spirit’s work, they have eliminated any possibility of ever accepting Jesus as Lord.

And by so blaspheming the Spirit, they have placed themselves beyond God’s mercy. They *cannot* be forgiven because they *do not want* to be forgiven.

– David King