

The Wednesday Word, March 24,2021: Whom Did Paul Blaspheme?

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” (1 Timothy 1:12-13)

Paul’s statement in 1 Timothy 1:12-13 provides another very important reference to the Deity of Christ. The apostle, speaking of his life as a Pharisee before his conversion, says, “Who was before a blasphemer.”

Paul, a blasphemer?

When was Paul ever a blasphemer?

According to the dictionary definition, blasphemy is the act of insulting or attacking God or the act of claiming the attributes of deity.

So, when did Paul do that?

We can discount the second part of the definition in Paul’s case for we have no record of him ever claiming to possess the attributes of Deity in himself. Of all the charges leveled against the apostle, this is not one! So, we must, therefore, conclude his blasphemy consisted in attacking and insulting God.

But when did this happen?

He had been raised a strict Jew and was a dedicated Pharisee. No Pharisee in his right mind would ever have blasphemed Yahweh. Paul, as you remember, was famous for his defense of and zeal for the Jewish faith. He would, therefore, never knowingly have reviled the name or person of God.

So then, when and whom did Paul blaspheme?

Paul gives us the answer quite plainly. In the book of Acts, when speaking to King Agrippa he says,

*“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue and **compelled them to blaspheme**; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. (Acts 26:9-11).*

Did you see it? In Paul’s mind, his previous attacks on Christians and compelling them to deny Christ was in fact causing them to blaspheme. This means that, in Paul’s mind, Christ Jesus was God. If Paul had thought of Christ as a mere man then he could not possibly have reckoned himself as having forced people to blaspheme!

Why not?

Because attacks against men are never reckoned as blasphemous. Likewise, if Paul viewed Christ Jesus as an exalted angel or a second in command to God the attack on His person would not constitute an act of blasphemy.

After his conversion, Paul knew very clearly that Christ Jesus was God. Conversion had dispelled his ignorance and unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13).

For people, therefore, to claim to be Christians yet who continually, verbally blaspheme the beautiful name of Jesus leaves us questioning their profession of faith.

However, those of us who hold Jesus to be our Lord, Master and God, have been persuaded by the Holy Spirit that to use the lovely name of Jesus as a swear word is a serious act of blasphemy and a marked departure from the faith! If you claim to be a Christian and are in the habit of taking the Lord's name in vain then this time of ignorance must and will come to an end as you embrace Jesus the Christ as Lord and God!

And that's the Gospel Truth!