

The Wednesday Word, August 19, 2015: Paul and the Great Commandment

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha”

(1 Corinthians 16:22).

Paul is stating that those who do not love the Lord Jesus are devoted to their own destruction. What an extraordinary thing for the great apostle to say if, that is, Jesus is not God. For Paul, Christ was everything. He was his Saviour, Master, Lord, Life and Hope. Jesus was the very centre of his thoughts! But, we must face it, this command to love Jesus, is a violation of the First Commandment if Christ is not God!

Remember Paul’s history! No man had ever despised the name of Jesus more intensely; no one had ever devoted himself so passionately to the extermination of that lovely name. But from the moment of Paul’s salvation, the Lord Jesus had become his all-in-all.

Consider how Paul is very sweeping in this warning, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” ... “If any man!” That means not one of us is exempt! As you remember, “Anathema” means “accursed.” The Bible is, therefore, very plain on this matter: it curses anyone who does not love the Lord Jesus! This is strong language and we should pause a little to consider it’s teaching.

In Paul’s divinely enlightened understanding, to not love the Lord Jesus was to not love God. Indeed, this scripture makes it impossible for us to say we love God, but Jesus, we’re not so sure about! If we say this sort of thing, we have invented a God of our own making and are, therefore, guilty of idolatry.

God’s self-revelation is in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He refuses to be accessed any other way because there is no other way (John 14:6)! In the heart of the Almighty, from all eternity, was the crucified Lamb who would mediate God to men.

Meanwhile, let’s consider the other side of the coin. If Jesus is not God and we love Him above all, we again make ourselves violators of the First Commandment. It’s that simple. As we take a hard look at it, we realize that the only way this scripture is prevented from contradicting the rest of the Bible is to embrace the truth that Jesus is actually God. If He is not God, then it is entirely incorrect to love Him in the way the Scriptures instruct us to do! Moreover, if Jesus is not God, then the Bible, by telling us to love Jesus, actually puts us, and Christ, into direct conflict with the One true and living God!

In conclusion, one more thing needs to be noted. If Christ Jesus is not God in human flesh then his death and sufferings were the best thing that could have ever happened to Him. He got what He deserved!

He was brought before the court of the Sanhedrin, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge they condemned him to die. No lawyer could have successfully defended Him. The evidence against Him was damning and daunting. He had made himself equal with God, not once, not twice but continually throughout His ministry. If Christ Jesus was not God, His condemnation for blasphemy was, therefore, well deserved and just. In fact, not only was His crucifixion justly deserved, it was an act of righteousness on the part of Chiapas and the rest of Christ’s enemies.

However, as Spurgeon says;

“It is his being truly God that frees him from the charge of blasphemy; it is the fact that he is God, and that his Godhead is not to be denied, that makes his death an unrighteous decision at the hand of apostate man, and renders it, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all the people whom he redeemed with his precious blood. But if he was not God, I do repeat, that there is no reason whatever, why we should have had a New Testament written; for there would be then nothing in the sublime central-fact of that New Testament but the righteous execution of one, who certainly deserved to die.”

CHS: Sermon # 258: His Name the Mighty God

And that's the Gospel Truth!