

‘The Blasphemy Challenge’ Tempts Teens to Curse God

Though only 17, high school senior Perri Frost has met more than her share of atheists and agnostics. For several years she has been reaching out to fellow teens who are skeptics, including some who post videos on the internet insulting God.

“Some of the teens who seem most hostile toward God are the same ones who emphasize that they are rational thinkers,” she says. “It seems odd to want to insult Someone who supposedly isn’t there.”

Regarding the videos, Frost is referring to “The Blasphemy Challenge,” an Internet-related activity that encourages people to post a clip of themselves cursing God or renouncing the Holy Spirit’s work in their life. The more brazen clips include assertions that the person willingly accepts the consequences this action (including hell) incurs should it turn out that God *does* exist.

Blasphemy-challenge promoters make no secret of their desire to promote atheism among teens. One website offered to send a free DVD documentary against Christianity to teens who post a video rejection of God online. One of the project’s organizers told Fox News, “It (the blasphemy challenge) exposes the crock that is Christian doctrine.”

Some Needed Clarifications

Online atheists base their so-called “blasphemy challenge” on Scriptures such as Mark 3:29 in which Jesus says, “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin” (ESV). On the basis of this Scripture, some atheists fault God for apparently being unable or unwilling to forgive this specific sin.

But what exactly is blasphemy? Are there unforgivable or unpardonable sins? How does one know whether or not they have “crossed the line” and passed beyond the point of God’s forgiveness?

Biblical examples of blasphemy imply irreverence or slander against God. But the term also means, “to spurn.” The Scriptures alluding to “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” imply a two-fold indictment against the leaders who personally encountered Jesus while He was here on Earth: They refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, *plus* they accused Him of being empowered by Satan. To say the least, they *spurned* Jesus.

Considering the Context

Barry Leventhal, Ph.D., is director the Jewish studies program at Southern Evangelical Seminary. Regarding passages that deal with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Leventhal states, “There is a difference between *an* unpardonable sin, and *the* unpardonable sin. The sin which ultimately places a person beyond God’s forgiveness is to live and die in the act of unbelief. That is, to reject Christ.”

Most scholars agree that Jesus’ ominous warnings about “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” represent a situation unique to the time that Christ was on Earth. Leventhal explains, “Jesus had presented Himself as Messiah to the Jewish leaders. With irrefutable evidence, He had done everything necessary to validate who He was.”

Because the religious leaders were intimately familiar with all of the Old Testament Scriptures—and because the incarnate Lord was right in front of them—these particular Jewish leaders had been entrusted with an unparalleled amount of revelation. “For them to stubbornly maintain that posture of unbelief and then to attribute Christ’s work to the devil—this rejection of God’s overtures was the inexcusable,

unpardonable, “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit,” Leventhal explained.

Could a Christian Commit the Unpardonable Sin?

Some Christians struggle with a nagging fear that they may have committed an unforgivable sin. Verses like 1 John 1:9 reminds us that when people come to God in repentance and faith, “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Rom. 8:1 assures believers: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus taught that part of the Holy Spirit’s work in the world would be to reveal to people their sinfulness and need for salvation (John 16). A healthy concern about sin evidences the fact that the Holy Spirit is still at work in a person’s life. To feel contrite about sin is proof that one hasn’t committed something unpardonable.

Effective Witness in an Age of Doubt

Interestingly, the taunts of blasphemy-challenge videos are directed almost exclusively at the God of Christianity.

“The online atheists and teens who are into the blasphemy challenge are almost exclusively opposed to Christianity,” says Frost. “There are almost no complaints against other faiths. Virtually *all* of the atheists rail against Christianity only.”

The rise of spiritual skepticism and outright blasphemy are vivid reminders that Christians must strive to be authentic. After listing the spiritual qualities that ought to be tangibly present in a Christian’s life, Gal. 5:23 says that “against such things there is no law.” In other words, “it can’t be argued against.” The blasphemy of an unbelieving world is tangibly answered by a testimony of Christ-likeness on the part of God’s people.

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