

Apostasy

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I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned John 15:1-6).

In this passage Jesus represented himself as the “true vine” and declared that his disciples were “branches.” All the “branches” (disciples) are said to be in the “vine” – that is, “in Christ.” Some of the “branches” in him are said to “bear fruit,” and some of the “branches” in him are said to be fruitless. The Lord said: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. ...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” To me it seems the lesson to be learned from the foregoing passage is too clear to be lost on the honest reader.

Those who teach that it is not possible for a child of God to so conduct himself as to be lost, in their effort to break the force of the passage we now study, declare that the non-fruit-bearing branches are not, in fact, in the “vine” (Christ); that they are no more than “water sprouts”; that they are only nominally in the vine, not in the vine in fact; that they have

no vital connection with the vine. Is it not strange to you that the Lord did not have at his command language sufficient to express his thought? True, the Lord says the non-fruit-bearing branches are “in” him – in Christ; and to save a theory, here comes some teacher and declares they were not “in” the vine – that is, they had no vital connection with the vine. Indeed, if they had no vital connection with the vine, what is the necessity of taking them away? Would they not have withered and died without the necessity of being taken away?

The Lord says the branches that bore fruit were “in” the vine; and, too, he declared the branches that did not bear fruit were “in” the vine.

In Christ

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). “Salvation” is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). The non-fruit-bearing branches are said to be in Christ; and that being true, they were saved, for salvation is in Christ. They enjoyed the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). But because some of these branches did not bear fruit, it is said they were taken away and cast into the fire and burned. The destiny of such branches will be the opposite of that which the righteous enjoy. In the face of this plain lesson in the word of God, some insist that when one time a man becomes a Christian, there is no possibility of his failure to enter heaven.

Become a Castaway

“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). The American Standard Version reads, “I buffet my body,” instead of, “I keep under my body.” The Greek word from which “keep under” is rendered is from a word which means to “strike one upon the part beneath the eye; to beat black and blue; hence, to discipline by hardships”

(Bagster). "To beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots. ...Like a boxer, I buffet my body, handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships 1 Cor. 9:27." (Thayer.) The word is derived from the practice of athletes training by subjecting the body to severe discipline to make it strong and able to stand great strain. It then came to have the meaning of treating harshly. Paul buffeted his body he brought it into subjection, he beat it down. Why? "Lest ... when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What is the import of the "castaway"? Among the ancients, as well as in our day, metals are tested; and if a piece of metal does not meet the necessary standard for a certain work, it is cast away – that is, it is rejected. The word is found in the following passages and rendered "castaway," "reprobate," "rejected":

- Romans 1:28: Gave them over to "reprobate mind."
- 1 Corinthians 9:27: "I myself should be a castaway."
- 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."
- 2 Timothy 3:8: "Reprobate concerning the faith."
- Titus 1:16: "Unto every good work reprobate."

In the chapter from which the verse we are studying is taken Paul is discussing games in which people in his day engaged, especially contests in which physical supremacy was tested, and became the decisive feature, other things being equal. The prize awarded to the successful one in the contest was a crown of leaves – a crown or wreath made of pine straw, olive, or laurel leaves. Those who would contest for the prize were required to undergo a course of training for several weeks; they were required to make oath that they had trained the required length of time; that they were not guilty of crime; that they were freemen and upright in character. Each one who would compete in the arena was paraded before the crowd, and it was challenged to lodge against any of the prospective contestants any charge that would disqualify him from the

games. If one of the participants did not “strive lawfully,” he was disqualified, and at times such a one was chased from the arena in disgrace. Judges were chosen for the different divisions of the games, and for some time before the contests the ones who were to contend for the prize were required to train before the ones who would judge them. To these games Paul makes reference, saying: “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” – lest I be declared a “reprobate” and rejected at the final day of rewards.

I was thoroughly disgusted at the only serious attempt I have heard by those who declare one cannot fall from grace and be lost. My opponent said:

Paul entertained grave fears that the opposition which was hurled against him, even from false brethren, would result in a wave of protest against him; that he would allow his body to fall into sin and bring about his rejection as a preacher; that his brethren would cast him out of the ministry, silence him as a preacher. He had no fears of his final acceptance with God; he was certain of his entrance finally into heaven; but he was fearful that some of those in the church who had questioned his authority as an apostle would bring to bear the weight of their influence and cause the churches to reject him – cast him away.

Paul was not discussing the possibility of being misunderstood, nor of being misrepresented, and, as a result of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, being rejected by his brethren; but he was careful to conduct himself in such a way that he would not be rejected at the last day. He was alive to the necessity of buffeting his body, bringing it into subjection and keeping it into subjection.

In the Christian race, which Paul and all other Christians are

running, it is necessary that we strive lawfully. One is not to allow the body full swing and meet its every demand, but to bring it into subjection, beat it down, lest the Judge, the Judge who awards the crown, finds fault and rejects you. But the Judge who is to reward the man striving in the Christian race makes no mistakes. Under him you are to train for the continued contest, and by him you will be rewarded at the last day. Paul declares he was making the effort to keep his body in subjection, lest he become a reprobate, lest he be rejected at the last day. Surely if one who saw the Lord, one who served as an apostle, preached so extensively, could become a "castaway," it is necessary for you also to take care.