

“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”.

The Truth is always defined both positively and negatively. These are two sides of the same coin. Without having both aspects it is not possible to have a complete coin only something masquerading as a coin but lacking the substance of appropriate depth. In this way the idea of love being expressed only as something that refuses discipline is not only short-sighted but dangerously wrong and doomed to implode catastrophically at some point not of our choosing.

In the same way the character of God is expressed both positively and negatively, the Eternal not only makes something good but also creates evil, Isaiah 45 v 7. He is both the vengeful judge and also full of compassion and mercy. To have a different understanding of God and His character is to show both ignorance of what the Bible teaches and of refusal to accept the reality of our own experience.

The verse we are considering for the Bible class today, highlights not only the action which needs to be taken but also explains the underlying motivation behind that action. The purpose of taking the harsh but necessary step leading to the destruction of the flesh is that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The hard action leading to destruction is in anticipation of a benefit in the future not for the individual themselves but on behalf of another whom we are seeking to save from themselves.

What does it mean to deliver unto Satan? The notion of delivering anyone into the corrupt perversion of a mind of immortal evil such as is popularised by the understanding of Satan the anti-god today is perverse ridiculous and blasphemous to the God of love of the Bible. If Satan is the sworn and perpetual enemy of the God of the Bible, then delivering someone into his jurisdiction in order to save them, not only makes no sense but would imply that Satan is doing God's work. However, when we correctly understand this the term Satan is a Hebrew concept meaning adversary then the idea of letting a Sinner reap what they have sown by putting them out of the camp of the truth and abandoning them to the camp of this world is understandable. This would mean that making it clear to someone that they have stepped beyond the mark and that their relationship of association with the things of the truth has now been compromised, maybe the only way to get them to wake up to the value of the things they have compromised by their wanton disobedience.

It does no good to leave anyone we're trying to help and have spiritual concern for, to leave them under the possible delusion but what they have done or are doing is acceptable to the almighty by keeping quiet giving them tacit support or even openly condoning their sinful actions. If the limited well-being of the individual outside the divinely revealed status of us all being under righteous condemnation will not assist them in their own individual destruction of the flesh. Jesus who shared our nature and was tempted in all points like as we are, and was yet without sin, that is without personal transgression, destroyed his flesh by willingly participating in the divinely required sacrifice of himself on the cross. Disciples will be known because they also take up their cross and follow him. The flesh needs to be destroyed not literally but metaphorically.

This destruction is achieved by taking certain actions as highlighted in other passages by the apostle.

1 Corinthians 9 verse 27 *"I keep under my body and bring it into subjection"*.

Romans 12v2 *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"*

Titus 2 verse 12 *"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly."*

James 1 verse 21 *"wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word"*.

Do we actively seek to do these things; keeping under, bringing into subjection, transforming, denying, laying apart? If they are not part of our spiritual activities, then they should be! The old man needs to be killed or destroyed. this will not be done in totality until the power of the Holy Spirit completes this after passing through the judgement seat of Christ. If there is any spirit inside us which is been energised by the new man begotten in Christ Jesus and that it has been not only allowed but encouraged and cultivated to grow inside us, then we will have spirit worth saving because that spirit is not limited to our selfish selves, but flourish is under the light and direction of the principles of righteousness.

There are those you argue that we should never judge and that we should live and let live, not interfering in any way with the moral choices which people make in their lives. The disciples of Christ are to judge amongst themselves as this particular chapter makes clear, see verse 12. *"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not you judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges."* the standard of judgement within which the disciples of Christ must apply is the standard of judgement which the word highlights based on the jewel principles of both righteousness and mercy.

Taking action against a wanton Sinner in an attempt to bring him to his senses is what is enjoined here. Delivering unto Satan in context is equivalent with the concept expressed in verse 2 *"that he that is done this deed might be taken away from among you"*. leaving the fornicator in their midst even if censored by his fellows was not acceptable. It was not necessary for the apostle Paul to be personally present in order to sift the circumstances and evidence for himself in order for him to be able to pass judgement. *"I have judged already"*. The situation was not that complicated there were no mitigating circumstances no excuses nothing that justified his behaviour he had blatantly and outrageously sinned in a way that was apparent even among the gentiles. There was no alternative than to deliver such a one over to Satan, in an attempt to get the sinner to realise the dangerous predicament they had put themselves in.

The chapter opens with the phrase *"it is reported commonly"*. Matters had gone beyond containment; it was not a question of making diligent inquiry at that stage. the matter had been put into the public domain and the good name of the Ecclesia was being jeopardise by their blindness to the seriousness of the situation and what was at stake.

Failure to take this action would not only prevent that individual from having hope of any repentance after waking up to the seriousness of his situation, but it would also

compromise those who refused to take such action. The Ecclesia in Corinth actually thought that they were showing mercy to the individual by not taking action. Perhaps they thought that by refusing to condemn him they would escape personal condemnation themselves. But that is not how Divine Mercy works. We can be merciful towards those that have offended us and transgressed against ourselves, but we have no right to extend mercy to those who offended God and transgressed his laws. The Apostle Paul told them off in no uncertain terms.

"Your glorying is not good." They believed that they were being compassionate by refusing to mourn. They did not mourn because the seriousness of the situation was not only lost on the individual but was also lost to themselves. The Apostle therefore had to wake them up with his strong censure of their inaction. He points out this was not done through meekness on their part but the very reverse, they were acting or rather not acting, through pride. *"And ye are puffed up"*. This spirit of pride and false glory we should be able to recognise and expose as a warped position. It was through their proud inaction that censure came, and it has sadly been seen many times subsequently in others. Are there not too many examples of such behaviour today which abounds and is the majority view of those who thereby falsely call themselves followers of Christ? Such people do not follow Christ, but instead follow their own opinions and they redefine love and compassion in a different way to that revealed by scripture. Such a class is known because of their inability to mourn when obvious transgression is exhibited in their midst.

How does this "delivering unto Satan" work? In one Timothy one verse 20, the apostle here speaks of two former brethren who upon losing faith had become shipwrecked. The Apostle delivered these two Hymenaeus and Alexander, unto Satan in order that they might learn not to blaspheme. By expelling them from the company and community of the Truth the apostle was making it clear to them that their actions were unacceptable. It was their actions that separated them from the body of Christ, because their actions were inconsistent with those who constituted the body of Christ and by refusing repentance which is always encouraged and offered to a Sinner in their plight, they put themselves outside of the orbit of Truth. This is not speaking of those who through weakness had collapsed internally and were struggling with their faith because such are not help by pushing them away. This is dealing with that more brazen class of those who are convinced that they are right in their error, in their sin, and thereby blaspheme. The person who gives up through weakness rather than pretending to be strong and adopting a perverse position will not be brought under the sensor of the apostle in these contexts.

The time to help an individual who is struggling is not to wait until they have left the meeting and then withdraw from them formally. But rather to seek to intervene before they get to that polarised position. It is not always easy to do this early, but it is obviously more helpful to them to do so before it is too late. Delivering unto Satan is therefore not in itself the act of disfellowship, but it goes beyond that to the identifying of such individuals as being now distinct from the Truth and in a separate camp outside of Christ.

Only if this action of associating the unrepentant Sinner with the incorporation of Satan, the adversary, any adversary to the ways of God, can the demarcation between the way of the Truth and the broadway which leads to destruction, be maintained. Those that maintain that disfellowshipping individuals merely dissociates the Truth from their error,

miss the potential reformatory influence such an action has on the individual who is in need of being saved from death. James 5 verse 20. There needs to be a clear delineation between these two camps and any muddying of the waters by saying that other communities can contain the faithful, distracts from this being a delivering unto Satan.

It should be noted that this verse has been used in an attempt to justify the physical torture and persecution of heretics whom the priests of the Roman Catholic Church thought in their warped way they were helping by literally destroying their flesh in order that they might save their spirit. This distasteful perversion can only come about in an environment where they have convinced themselves that they are in control of more than mere moral and spiritual censorship. We must be grateful to be able to see with clarity how abhorrent such reasoning must be to the Almighty and His son. Withdraw yes, have no company certainly, but to physically hurt the wayward is not what is being taught here!

The note contained in the NET Bible under this verse is worth highlighting.

Or perhaps “turn this man over to Satan for the destruction of your fleshly works so that your spirit may be saved”. Greek for the destruction of the flesh so the spirit may be saved. **This is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament** and there are many different interpretations regarding what is in view here. 1 many interpreters see this as some sort of excommunication turn this man over to Satan which in turn leads to the man's physical death (the destruction of the flesh) resulting in the Man's ultimate salvation (that his spirit may be saved). 2 others see the phrase destruction the flash as referring to extreme physical suffering or illness that stop short of physical death thus leading the offender to repentance and salvation. 3 a number of scholars (for example GD Fee first Corinthians (NICNT) 212-13) Take the reference to the flash to refer to the offender's sinful nature or carnal nature which is destroyed by placing him outside the church back in Satan's domain. Exactly how this destruction is accomplished is not clear and is one of the problems with this view. Thor more recently some have argued that neither the flash nor the spirit belongs to the offender but to the church collectively thus it is the fleshly works of the congregation which are being destroyed by the removal of the defence offender reference fivers 13 so that the spirit the corporate life of the church lived in union with God through the Holy Spirit may be preserved reference 5 verses 7 to 8 see for example be Campbell flesh and spirit in one Corinthians 5 verse five an exercise in rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. JETS 36(1993) 331-42. The alternative translation for the destruction of your fleshly works so that your spirit may be saved reflects this latter view.

Other verses from the same chapter which highlight the need to take negative action:

Verse 7 “**Purge out** therefore the old lump”.

Verse 9 “I wrote unto you in an epistle **not to company** with fornicators”.

Verse 11 “But now I have written on to you **not to keep company** if any man that is called a brother be.....”

Verse 13 “Therefore **put away from among yourselves** that wicked person”.