

Delivered Over to Satan?

1 Corinthians 5:5

It seems extreme.

A Christian in Corinth was involved in a sin that the Apostle Paul said was not even practiced among the Gentiles. His instruction:

“Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

The idea of ‘delivering someone over to Satan’ sounds just as extreme as God hardening Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 9:12; 10:1), or God sending ‘strong delusions’ to the wicked (2 Thessalonians 2:11), or giving the ungodly over to a ‘depraved mind’ (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). What does it all mean? What happens when someone is ‘delivered over to Satan’?

The example of Job may help us understand Paul’s instruction to the Corinthian Christians. In short, Satan brought misery into Job’s life.

From Satan’s perspective, Job was a challenge. He was trying to tempt Job to sin by speaking against God. However, from God’s perspective it was a test. He already knew Job’s integrity and allowed Satan’s activity to ‘prove’ the integrity that already existed.

As for Job, it was simply miserable. More important than answering the question, “Why,” Job needed to make a proper response. In his testing/temptation he did not curse God. He did not sin with his mouth.

So, why instruct a congregation to ‘deliver a brother over to Satan’?

If Job teaches us anything, it is that Satan will bring misery into a person’s life. While it is Satan’s objective to cause sin, God has a different purpose.

Trials can heighten one’s awareness of dependency on God. Trials can awaken the sinner from his spiritual sleep and bring about a response of repentance. It was *because of his misery* that the prodigal son came to his senses and turned his heart, then his feet, toward home.

Just as God used Babylon to discipline Judah through exile, you might say that God can use Satan to affect discipline by bringing misery into the life of a wayward Christian. It seem counter to the thinking of man, even radical, but for those

who have intentionally turned away from the Lord, this extreme instruction stands as a ray of hope. The destruction of the flesh is a strong motivator to turn back to God.

Should there ever be a time in which this action must be taken, trust in the Lord, be courageous and pray accordingly.