

The Severed Branch



*“Thy Word
Is
Faith”*



The Apostolic Faith

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THE SEVERED BRANCH

Is there hope for the backslider?

JESUS Christ said to His disciples: “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” “Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, this is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:54-66).

Those were such tremendous words that even the disciples said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” Jesus knew that it would test the genuineness of their faith in Him. He knew, too, that no one ever takes a stand for Him but that sooner or later he is going to have his faith tested and tried. He knew that His disciples would be called on to fight an incessant battle against the satanic influences which make a persistent attack upon the spiritual life. God’s children cannot be hot-house plants, sheltered from the blasts of sin.

How much it must have grieved the tender heart of the Master when He saw that they went back and walked no more with Him! How much it still grieves His loving heart when one of His disciples today walks no more with Him! In His infinite love and mercy He has provided His children with the means of grace which would enable them to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. But if they neglect to fortify themselves with this

means of grace, they will go back and walk no more with the Christ.

All will be tempted to sin, but all do not yield to that temptation. "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin."

There are many ways by which one may let the love of God slip out of the heart. A repeated lack of faithfulness in the things that may seem small will keep one from securing the strength that will be needed for the more serious things of life. Little by little he severs his attachment to the true Vine, and complete separation must follow. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tended grapes" (The Song of Solomon 2: 15).

Divided Allegiance

When a man is saved, God expects him to cast out of his heart all rivals, giving to God an undivided heart. God will not share allegiance with another. Failure to make a full committal of himself, his past, his present, his future, and all he has, to the control of Christ, will make him an easy prey for the wily tempter.

The Barren Branch

There are those whom God has saved who felt no need of using their lives in the service of the Lord, though the Word of God tells them what God wants them to do, and gives them the power and wisdom with which to do it. But the life which is centered wholly in self, centered wholly in a family, centered wholly in worldly affairs, in everything but the work of the Lord, cannot be acceptable to God. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matthew 25:45). Personal work in

winning souls must be fundamental in the life of every child of God. He will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the way he used his salvation.

Neglect of Worship

Another powerful means of grace which the Lord has provided for spiritual strength is the blessing of worshiping the Lord with other saints in the house of God: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). If one fails to assemble with the worshipers to give praise and glory to God, if he has the opportunity to do so, he is disobeying the direct command of God who said through His Word: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24, 25). The one who remains a child of God will say with the Psalmist, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psalm 122:1).

Broken Vows

Many a person has lost fellowship and communion with God because he failed to pay the vows he made to God when he was in trouble. He promised God that if He would forgive him and save him, he would serve Him; he would make his past crooked path as straight as possible; he would make restitution to those whom he had wronged; he would give the Lord of his time and of his talents. But he did it not. Then his heart began to condemn him; his confidence became doubting; a guilty

feeling soon overwhelmed him, and he found himself outside the pale of God's fellowship.

Unused Armor

Every Christian can have all the weapons he needs for the particular kind of battle with the evil and for the good. When a man is born again he becomes a soldier in the forces of righteousness, and there is opened up to him a whole armory of powerful weapons. He has the whole armor of God to draw on: the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and he is expected to learn how to use it. He is expected to use it for his protection. If he meets with defeat, it is not the fault of God's armor. It is his own faults. He failed to put the whole armor on and use it.

Strength Unsought

God has given man the inestimable privilege of communion with Him through prayer. Through prayer he finds grace to help him in the hour of need: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Psalm 61:2, 3).

Our sinless Savior spent hours and nights in prayer. The measure of a Christian's victory and success in God's service will be the measure of his prayer life. Although his attitude is constantly to be that of prayer, nevertheless, there must be a stated and definite time set aside for it.

A saint who could speak from experience once said: "Beware, in your prayer, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you

know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, above all that we ask or think.” And then know, too, that God meant what He said: “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: 6).

Power Ignored

The neglect of the Word of God is the quickest and most certain way to lose one’s connection with God. It means that one has put himself outside the power with which God finishes His work of complete redemption. Through His Word God tells him all he needs to know for a victorious life. God has given him this Bread of Life, and it is his privilege to feed on it. Without feeding on that Eternal Bread there can be no spiritual health, no strength, and no growth.

It is his responsibility to study the Word and to obey it. If he spends more of his time on newspapers, books, magazines, or even on Christian reading, he will soon find himself to be – or rather, Satan will find him to be – lean and easily susceptible to Satan’s death-dealing virus. If he does not daily read the Word of God prayerfully and faithfully, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he has no protection from the enemy. To be safe, one must have God’s guidance and protection, for often he does not know the way he should take, nor the dangers which threaten him. King David said, “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word” (Psalm 119:16). If a man’s heart is thoroughly saturated with the Word of God it will not wander from God’s commandments.

The Unpardonable Sin

The Holy Word gives a solemn warning against crossing the dead line, sinning against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness. From the Scriptures we have the example the Lord has given. He healed a man possessed of the devil. The Pharisees saw the work of God manifested, but they attributed it to the devil. They said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Jesus rebuked them and said, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12: 31, 32).

Seekers sometimes come to the altar of prayer with fear and trembling, saying they fear they have committed the unpardonable sin. Yet they feel a drawing within their soul toward God and toward salvation. Such a person need not feel that he has committed the unpardonable sin. His sins may be many, but so long as there is the operation of the Spirit of God working in the soul, God has not cast him off forever.

Eternal Security

There is eternal security for the one who keeps under the Blood and out of sin. God has made provision for victorious living. When a man is born again he is lifted to a high plane, and he can draw grace from God every moment. But the one who sins has lost the "seed" from his heart. He has lost his sonship with the Father. His sins has separated him from the Father He is spiritually

dead: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). “When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby” (Ezekiel 33:18). But if he turns from his sin and will do “that which is lawful and right; . . . walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die” (Ezekiel 33:14, 15).

The Way Back to God

The Christian has three powerful enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. It has been said that in this world of sin it is not always easy to keep from having mud splashed on one, but it is not necessary to wallow in it. If one has permitted the enemy to overthrow him, and has nothing to look back to but broken vows and the betrayal of his God, still God wants him to be reconciled to Him. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). He stands pleading: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jeremiah 3:22). “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God” (Jeremiah 3:13).

The backslider must come as a sinner; must repent of his sin, and accept the Blood of Jesus Christ to blot out his sin.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:4, 5).

“A broken and a contrite heart” God will not despise. He has said that His mercy “endureth for ever” (Psalm

136). God will forgive, and restore the joy of salvation, and make one a victor over sin. There is an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, to whom the backslider can go for help (I John 2:1).

But how much more pleasing it is to God, and how much stronger one's faith becomes, if he daily keeps close to the Master's side; and as he goes along he presents all his difficulties, fears, and temptations to the Lord, who is always ready to do great things for those who trust Him, and will bring him through the hard places. God's holy power is always at work to provide for and to protect those who put their trust in Him. One can keep close to the Savior through the Scripture, prayer, and obedience.

There are those who have lost the love of God out of their heart, but when they repented of their sins, and sought God's mercy, they were forgiven.

God's Grace Sufficient

"How I thank God for the precious Blood that redeemed my soul! I was backslidden from God, and heavy condemnation was on my soul. But one day God told me to repent. I told Him earnestly that it was impossible – I never could make it. I said, 'Lord, I have tried and I can't make it'; but He said, 'My grace is sufficient.'

"He would talk to me, and courage would grip my soul, and the tears would flow down my cheeks. I thank God for that courage! For two weeks I wrestled with God. I knew if God had really called me He would make His Word good.

"I went out to the Campmeeting, and I put everything on the altar. I prayed to God with all my heart,

and that night He saved my soul. I thought: ‘This is wonderful! I have been forgiven and all my sins are under the Blood.’ I said, ‘Right now, Lord, You can sanctify me’; and the mighty power of God sanctified my soul. I thought: ‘I’ll never be any closer to God for my baptism than I am now’; and there my Lord baptized me with the mighty Holy Ghost and fire. He surely has kept me with my feet upon the Rock of Ages.

“I was stricken with a heart ailment, and could scarcely walk. The mighty healing power in the precious Blood of Jesus has healed me completely. I am a hard-working woman these days, and God receives all the glory for all He has done for me.” – M.C.