

1 Corinthians 9:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But 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.

Analysis

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: Paul concludes with stark honesty. The Greek hypopiazō (ὑποπιάζω, "strike under the eye, bruise, discipline severely") is the boxer's term for delivering punishing blows. Paul "blackens the eye" of his flesh—subduing bodily desires through rigorous self-discipline. Doulagōgeō (δουλαγωγέω, "enslave, bring into bondage") means to enslave his body, making it a servant rather than master.

Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. The Greek adokimos (ἀδόκιμος, "unapproved, disqualified, rejected") refers to an athlete disqualified for violating training rules or a metal failing assay. Paul fears not losing salvation but forfeiting reward, being set aside from ministry, or failing to finish the race (2 Tim 4:7). This is not works-righteousness but sober recognition that hypocrisy disqualifies witness. If Paul preaches self-denial but lives self-indulgence, his ministry is invalidated. He must practice what he preaches.

Historical Context

Athletes who violated training regulations were disqualified—beaten publicly and barred from competing. The disgrace was profound. Paul uses this imagery to express his urgent concern: having called others to disciplined Christian living, he

must not disqualify himself through moral failure or undisciplined living. Ancient umpires (brabeus) strictly enforced rules; violators were rejected as adokimos.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's severe self-discipline challenge contemporary comfort-driven Christianity?
2. What does it mean to "keep under" the body without falling into ascetic legalism or body-hating dualism?
3. How does the fear of being "disqualified" motivate perseverance without undermining assurance of salvation (Rom 8:38-39)?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ'	ὑπωπιάζω	μον	τὸ	σῶμα	καὶ	δουλαγωγῶ
But	I keep under	my	G3588	body	and	bring it into subjection
G235	G5299	G3450		G4983	G2532	G1396
μήπως,	ἄλλοις	κηρύξας	αὐτὸς	ἀδόκιμος	γένωμαι	
lest	to others	when I have preached	I myself	a castaway	should be	
G3381	G243	G2784	G846	G96	G1096	

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:13 (Parallel theme): For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

1 Corinthians 9:25 (Parallel theme): And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

1 Peter 2:11 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

1 Corinthians 8:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Luke 9:25 (Parallel theme): For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

2 Corinthians 11:27 (Parallel theme): In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

2 Timothy 2:22 (Parallel theme): Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Peter 2:15 (Parallel theme): Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

Psalms 50:16 (Parallel theme): But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?