

in it? Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham did not regard the Lord as one who was fixed and finished and all decided. He spoke to the Lord because he believed the Lord would listen, consider, even change his mind. Just as we pray believing that words we speak may cause the Lord to turn to a new course of action, believing that he listens, believing that our small words enter into the very heart of God. So Abraham spoke to God, ~~spoke to him~~ ^{the} about ~~is~~ barrel, rotten apples, good apples. At what point is the barrel lost? Is it worth saving for fifty apples?

And the Lord said yes.

For forty - yes, for thirty - yes, for twenty - yes for ten - are ten good apples in a barrel full of rot, ~~will they be~~ significant enough to save the whole barrle, the whole city? And the Lord answered, "Yes."

Not only evil would have weight in the Lord's judgements, but also good. He would see not only the wicked, but also the righteous, not only sin, but also good deeds.

Yet Abrahams whole discussion with ~~God~~ the Lord proved academic. Ten were not found, only Lot, ~~his~~ ^{two} his wife, his daughters and sons in law.

So the Lord plucked the good apples out of the barrel, though the sons-in-law stayed behind, refusing to ~~go~~ go, the Lord rushed Lot and his wife and daughters away from Sodom, and then utterly destroyed the whole valley.

But even the good apples had been tainted with the rot, Lot's wife looked back though she had strickt orders not to do so, When she looked back, longing for life in the barrel, she was turned into a pillar of salt. And the daughters? With no men left around, save their father, they saw no hope for them of offspring. So they got their father drunk, and became pregnant by him. For all of the Lord's efforts, the whole barrle had been lost.

The so called experts tell we parents in these days, watch your children's friends. It is not the home in which ~~is~~ a child is raised they say, that will

determine whether he gets into trouble, but the friends he keeps. Not the city, not the school, not the church, not the parents, but the friends, the others apples in the barrel that will determine health or rot.

But the Lord did not listen to the experts.

He could have sent his son to the group up by the dead sea. Qumran, the community that has left us the dead sea scrolls. The Lord who had seen enough barrels thrown out through flood and fire and war to last him an eternity ~~could have sent his son~~ could have sent his son to Qumran, those holy men gathered around God's law ever vigilant to cut out every little piece of rot. Only for the righteous ~~for~~ was that community, but the Lord sent his son to dwell in the valley below. Among all the sinners and tax collectors, rotten apples of every ~~kind~~ ^{variety}. Yes the Lord could have said I will send my son to be with the good to preserve them, but not he took the most precious apple and placed it in the barrel of stench.

The Lord was doing something new.
bad

One ~~rotten~~ apple spoils the whole barrel. The whole old testament is testimony to that. And all of life as we see it around us. The barrel is the world, do what we may evil spreads, finally every apple rots. But the Lord said, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do ~~not~~ you not perceive it.

What happens when one good apple, one truly good apple is tossed into the ~~rot~~ spoiled barrel. Can the good infect the evil? Can rotten apples by touching the good apple be granted health and freshness and wholesomeness?

God sent his son. Those whom he touched were made new in body and in spirit. The blind saw, the deaf heard, sinners were forgiven, declared righteous. Apples restored, rot overdone.

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Seeing what was happening, how its steady march was being threatened, the rot gathered ~~not~~ around Jesus, smothered him with its stench, choked the very life from him.

Dead. But not spoiled. Covered with the stinking mess of evil ~~all~~ <sup>all the world's evil
leave you here!</sup>
~~around~~ but not himself tainted.

^{Then} ~~So~~ ~~and~~ the Lord raised him up. The good apple, the ~~last~~ Son of God.

Now we are joined to him. Touched by him. Granted his freshness, his health through our contact with him.

What happens when one good apple, one truly good apple is tossed into the barrel? ~~That question is not being answered~~ We are seeing.

Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Christ makes us new.

And we are sent out into the barrel to do the same, ~~making~~ having the ministry of reconciliation in Christ name, that the whole ~~r~~ world might be restored. Then the whole world and all creation will witness and proclaim God's true proverb: One good apple has made new the whole barrel. Amen.