

"AS THE SERPENT BEGUILED EVE."

"I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ... Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. – 2 Cor. 11:3,13-15.

The early church was surrounded with many bitter and outspoken enemies, but against these the apostles never needed to warn the sheep. But continually they sought to put believers on their guard against false teachers, *professing* much, clothed as ministers of light, with morality etc., but teaching errors which would confuse and befog the minds of the saints, and tend to hinder them from the full accomplishment of their covenant of self-sacrifice. The great shepherd of the sheep warned them to take heed to His voice and to heed not the voice of strangers, intimating that others would seek to call the sheep in his name, and to direct them, whose leading would be contrary to his. – John 10:1-5.

The apostle Peter referred pointedly to this same evil when he said, (2 Pet. 2:1,2.) There were false prophets also among the people [Jews], even as there shall be false teachers *among you* who privily [in a subtle manner] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them."

This does not signify that these teachers will deny our Lord as a person, nor deny his Lordship or authority over the church. Such a teacher never was countenanced in the church; none would recognize such an one as a Christian at all. He would be an out and out Infidel; and so open a course would prevent any deception of the sheep. On

the contrary those whom the adversary has used to advance errors, have always been loud in their professions of faith in the Lord. They thus wear a garment of light, as Paul calls it, and the more successfully serve the error which they "privily" bring in and set before the church.

In this text Peter's words would be better translated thus: "The *having bought them* sovereign Lord denying." It is a rule in the Greek to put the important or *central thought* first in a sentence. This the translators have not generally observed in this case, not noticing that the *ransom* is the central thought. In the Greek it stands as we quote it above, showing clearly that the denying referred to by the apostle is a denying of the *ransom* – denying that our Lord gave for us and all men "*a corresponding price.*" To deny this, is to deny all: for it is the removal of the very foundation of all our hopes and of Christ's Lordship. For if we were not "bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ," then we are yet in our sins, condemned still, and without hope. If he has *not bought us*, he is not our Lord, and has no right or control, present or future. Hence those who deny the ransom, really deny the Lordship of Christ, no matter how much they may claim to acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

The seriousness of this which Peter calls "damnable heresy," is far reaching, and leads into a great variety of errors and heresies, reflecting against other truths and laying a foundation for other errors. Peter adds: "Many shall follow their destructive ways [destructive of the very foundation of hope and its corresponding *licence* in dealing with scriptures which oppose them] by reason of whom the way of truth [the true way of salvation – through the ransom – the way of the cross] will be reviled."

It is against such teachers, who, whether knowingly or ignorantly, are serving Satan and error, and are the enemies of the cross of Christ, that Paul speaks in our text. As Satan through the serpent beguiled Eve with crafty sophistry, he would now through such teachers *among you* beguile and lead astray the chaste virgin church espoused to

Christ. Of course from time to time throughout the age Satan has sought to and did test the nominal virgin of Christ, but much more so now in the end of the age, when the church is almost complete, and as he sees the plan of God unfolding, and that he has not thwarted it thus far, Satan seems to redouble his efforts; for as each new ray of light shines out for her assistance, in this the dawn of the coming day, he matches it or counterfeits it, with rays of false light to draw attention away from the true.

Various have been the delusions of our subtle adversary, but in this instance as in many others, the apostle's words seem to apply directly to our day. His words were a prophecy to us, now being fulfilled; for *now* the form of error is again presented *as* it was with Eve,

"YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE."

In Eve's case it applied to the first death, now it is applied to the SECOND DEATH.

The argument used to Eve was that she would not die at all, and when the reality of death was established beyond a question in the death of Abel, he changed the argument, and ever since he has unceasingly taught through deceived poets, philosophers and priests, heathen and Christian, that mankind does not *really* die, but only *appears* to; that when dead they are more alive than ever before. And in every age among heathens and Christians he has succeeded in gaining a majority to believe his lie, in direct opposition to God's statement, "Thou *shalt* surely die." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." – Gen. 2:17. and Ezek. 18:4.

This lie Satan started with, for he was a liar (and thereby the slayer of our race) from the beginning and abode not in the truth (John 8:44.), and he has since kept it up, and the sophistries used to back it up are truly wonderful, and worthy of such a Master deceiver. Upon this lie he has built his entire system of error with its God-dishonoring

doctrines of a present or future place of anguish, in which *the dead* are doubly *alive* and suffering. And on it he builds the further idea of the endlessness of their torture, that they not only are *not dead*, but cannot ever die; that God, though he can create, *cannot "destroy* soul and body in Gehenna" – the second death [See October 1886, Tower]. Thus for centuries he has maligned God's character and cultivated a fear and abhorrence of God which repulsed all true love, and hindered that depth of consecration in his service which can spring only from love and appreciation of God and his plans.

And not only so, but by and in support of this same lie, the adversary has warped and twisted and perverted the Scriptures so that all the exceeding great and precious and various promises of God's Word have come to mean only what might be interpreted in one sentence, thus: You must either spend an eternity in awe, fear and trembling in the presence of a fiendish God, or else in everlasting torture with devils. And of the two evils men have hoped to get the least, and dreaded almost to read the Bible whose every parable and symbol was caused to smoke and flame and to reflect the words ETERNAL TORMENT, under the lurid light cast upon it by the adversary, through hymn-books, prayer-books, and commentaries, in harmony with his original lie, "Ye shall not surely *die*."

This lie has had a long run, of six thousand years; it has served his purpose well, and yet serves in most cases. But *now* in the dawn of the morning the light of truth begins to shine unto some, showing the Scripture to be in perfect harmony with God's original declaration, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou *shalt die*" [margin]. At first he merely cast odium upon it and was content to let a few get free from this error, but it led so rapidly from darkness to light that he must do something to oppose it, and to deceive and ensnare the espoused virgin of Christ, as in the past. **[R911 : page 3]**

And what could be more taking or deceptive now, than the same lie he took at first, only newly applied, to the *second* death, instead of

to the first. Surely this would be his wisest plan; for already he had the prejudices of many and a reflected bias cast on Scripture to favor his old and popular error. Hence as Paul prophesied he has concluded to attempt to deceive the "virgin of Christ" on this line. He now again declares through some willing to deliver his message to the church, as the serpent did to Eve, the same denial of God's sentence against sinners; and now as at first declares, "Ye shall not surely die" – every human creature that God ever made, will be saved everlastingly – not one will be cut off from life.

We have not a full account of the sophistry used to Eve, but it was probably one or all three of these: Either, that God was not able to destroy as well as to create; or that he was too loving to punish and might be disobeyed with impunity by those who would take advantage of his mercy and love; or else that God had a plan arranged which would be interfered with if death were permitted, and which must not be interfered with, and that hence the threat was only a threat, and really a lie on God's part.

Whether or not those were the arguments used to Eve, Paul's words seem to indicate considerable argument, and sophistry – "As the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty." And certainly these are the arguments now being advanced by the same adversary. And as the light has begun to make the old doctrine of eternal torture unpopular, it seems as though the adversary by one bold move on the *same line* would swing the general sentiment to an exact opposite, and past the centre of truth. From thinking of God as the great monster delighting in the everlasting unmitigated torture of billions of his creatures – all except the handful of saints, the little flock – he would now have them to think of God as so loving and gentle and weak that he *could not* carry out his own just sentence of death upon *wilful sinners*, that therefore he *must* coerce all and accept an enforced obedience instead of a willing one, because he is so oversensitive and weak that he could not blot out of existence those who after having had the fullest opportunity of light and favor under the Millennial reign

still wilfully and deliberately oppose him. How weak such an argument! In view of the *past* six thousand years – when we consider what God has permitted man to bring upon himself of pain, sickness and woe, is there room for such conclusions? None; that display of God's justice and firmness should leave no doubt on this subject. The fact that God so loved all while sinners, as to redeem them from Adamic death and grant to all another, this time an individual trial for life, should not be mistaken for a weakness on his part, nor used as an argument for further trials after all have had full individual trial and opportunity. It is because we were not *wilful* sinners, against full knowledge and opportunity, but sinners through the disobedience of one who sinned without full knowledge, that God redeemed all, and has provided under the Redeemer a second trial and second chance of life for all. – See "Second Chance" in TOWER of December, 1884.

But glance for a moment at a sample of the sophistry now used to beguile the virgin of Christ on this subject. The first penalty, *death*, is denied by the claim that it referred not to the death *of the man*, but to the *death of righteousness* in the man. The same argument exactly that the adversary has used for centuries, is thus taken up again to form part of a specious argument, that the second death means the reverse of that death of man's righteousness, or the dying of the sinner to sin – the death of sin in him. Otherwise stated, the claim is that the first death was a death to righteousness making all sinners, and that the second death is to be a death to sin making the sinners all righteous. What perversion! What subtilty, as the apostle terms it, is here advanced to entrap the feet of Christ's little ones, now escaping from darkness to the light. Let us open up and examine this **sophistical*** argument.

*Sophistry is false, deceptive reasoning. Thus for instance, if we should say – (1) Food is essential to life. (2) Corn is food. (3) Therefore *corn* is essential to life. – our reasoning would be sophistical. That is it would be false, and yet, (if the subject were a deeper one) deceptive, in that it goes through a form of reasoning to establish a false conclusion, which those not accustomed to close thinking, are not quick to discern. On such *apparent* reasoning from the

Scripture, many hurtful errors are based, and accepted without investigation by the superficial and prejudiced.

We deny both claims: The second death has no reference to the death of sin in sinners, and the first or Adamic death was not the death of his righteousness. These are *figurative* uses of the word death drawn from the one great *actual* death illustrated for centuries before all mankind, namely, *ceasing to be*. We have no right to object to the proper use of any figure, but when any attempt is made to set aside the reality entirely, and put a figure, based upon it, in its stead, we seriously object. The errors into which such a course would lead are legion.

Of the first death, or Adamic death, the Apostle says: "By one man sin entered into the world and *death* by [as a result of] sin; and so [thus] *death* passed upon all men, by the one offence" (marginal reading). "As by the offence of one condemnation came upon all men [condemning [\[R911 : page 4\]](#) all to actual death] even so by the righteous act of one [by the actual not figurative death of Christ] favor has freely come to all men, justifying them to life. (Rom. 5:12,18.) Those whom we criticize claim that the *sin* (or death of righteousness in Adam) *was the Adamic death*, while we with Paul and the entire record of Scripture hold firmly that death was the *penalty for sin* inflicted after and *because* of that [figurative death to righteousness] sin.

The penalty cannot be the crime; yet these confound the crime (the sin) with its penalty, and treat the question as though the penalty of sin consisted in *becoming a sinner*.

But why pursue such a foolish and inconsistent theory? it cannot stand the least examination. The death penalty came *after* and *because* of Adam's disobedience [*figuratively* speaking, because of his death to righteousness]. Adam had all to do with the sinning [*ceasing* from

righteousness] and did it wilfully; but he had nothing to do with inflicting the death penalty which followed as its just punishment.

This penalty was inflicted by God [no matter into whose hands he commits the power of death as his executioner, Heb. 2:14.]; and it was inflicted against Adam and all his race, much against their wish, and against their every struggle. Adam had already become a sinner when God inflicted the literal penalty. It was *because* he was already dead to righteousness (or had ceased to be righteous) that God pronounced the sentence or curse of the law against him – "Dying thou shalt die." God would not permit one dead to righteousness (who had ceased to be righteous) to live on everlastingly in that condition, and hence he deprived him of life – not instantly, but by a dying process, the result of casting him out of the garden, from access to the life-sustaining trees. As it is written: "*Because* thou hast done this [become a sinner – died to or ceased from righteousness]...unto dust shalt thou return."

The apostle James, also an authority, declares that sin when it is accomplished bringeth forth death – a return to dust. Neither Paul nor James (standard theologians) confounded the sin which is a ceasing from righteousness, with its penalty, which is death actual – a ceasing to exist.

So then the death penalty is a return to dust, and is not at all the same as that implied in the figurative expression of dying to righteousness. It follows the other, and could not be mistaken for the other except under the deceptive sophistry of the original liar, who alas now works most successfully through those who have fallen away from the truth.

Nor is the SECOND DEATH, a death to sin, a making alive to righteousness again. It is never used in such a sense anywhere in the Scriptures; only the desire to uphold and advance the original lie "Ye shall not surely die," coupled with a slight respect for some who use their Bibles (and could not be led off the track without the twisting and

plausible and subtle perversion of those Scriptures which mention the Second Death,) could have induced reasonable beings to offer such a subterfuge in the name of truth and "New light."

The Second Death [See October Tower 1886.] is the same in kind as the First. It is inflicted as the penalty of the *same* law, and by the same Law-giver, and upon the very *same* class (wilful sinners fully able to have resisted, forewarned, and fully forearmed;) as the first death. The second death is the penalty of wilful sin under the second trial, as the first death was the penalty of failure in the first trial. This, when seen, establishes the fact that God's law is and always shall be the same unchangeable law; that He will always refuse the privileges and blessings of lasting life to those who, when enlightened and able, refuse to conform to his just and wise arrangements willingly.

There could be no *second death* except the *first death* had been cancelled, since so far as man is concerned, the first death's condemnation passed upon all. And since a second trial implies a second *chance* for life, it is manifest that none could be granted a second chance for *life* until the first sentence of *death* was settled. And at the same time, a second chance for life implies a chance for a second death.

As the *law* of the Creator is perfect, it can never change, hence a *second trial*, (which only a few have yet enjoyed, and which for the vast majority will be in the coming age of judgment), must be on the same conditions as the first, viz.: Obey and *live* forever, disobey and *die* forever. Not to be forever dying but to be *dead*, extinct, [R912 : page 4] "cut off from life" forever – the second death penalty for failure under trial, from which there is no redemption and no release. Such "shall be as though they had not been."

Glance at the uses of the expression "Second Death," a glance is sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind. Paul refers to it as a possibility in this age only to those who have first been *enlightened*, who have tasted of the *good* word of God, who have been sanctified

and become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and who have been able *by faith* to grasp and apply to themselves now the cleansing and justification which will belong to the age to come. He says, "If these fall away it is impossible to *renew them again unto repentance.*" Such *wilfull* sin on their part proves them unworthy of the favor of God – the *gift of life*.

John the apostle mentions the second death when he says: There is a sin unto death – I do not say that ye should pray for it. (1 John 5:16.) To pray for it would be to oppose God's expressed will, which we have no right to do. Rather, we must study his plan and will and consent thereto as the wisest and best for all concerned.

Jesus the Great Teacher spoke of the second death using Gehenna as a symbol of it. (See October 1886 TOWER.) He said, God is able to *destroy* both soul and body [being] in Gehenna (the second death), and that it would be better to sacrifice, cut off, evil desires and practices even though loved as an eye or as a right hand and (if it were necessary) enter into life maimed, than to be destroyed utterly in the second death.

Paul says that such as wilfully reject the favor of God through the *ransom* after they have once fully seen it and partaken of its benefits, have no further interest or share in the sacrifice, and for them naught remains but a fearful looking for of judgement which will devour (destroy) them as adversaries. He calls attention to the type, Moses, and to the fact that those under him who would not obey *died* without mercy, (Heb. 6:1-6; 10:26-31,38,39; Acts 3:22,23.) and asks whether a *severer penalty* is not due to wilful sin against the Great Teacher. The penalty under the type, was the taking away of a life already forfeited, and to be restored; but the *severer penalty* of wilful rejection of Christ is the second death – the cutting off forever from life without remedy or hope.

The same law or rule will apply to the world in general in the next age: All will come to a knowledge of the truth, partake of the fruits of

the ransom in restoration etc., etc., and such as *wilfully* spurn God's favor and cling to sin when able to avoid it, are fit subjects for destruction – the second death. Of such a class we read in Rev. 20:14,15: "Whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the [symbolic] lake of fire." "This is the *Second death*." Again, the same class proved unworthy of life in that Millennial trial are described (Rev. 21:8.) as the "fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars" who have their portion [reward] in the [symbolic] lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is [literally] the second destruction. Fire is always a symbol of destruction, and when brimstone is added in the symbol, the destruction is intensified; for burning brimstone is a most *destructive* agent against life in every form and degree, known to science to-day.

Now what can any sane man think of the classes here referred to as subjects of the second death – who after a thousand years of most impartial trial, under most favorable circumstances, under the judgement of him who bought them from the first or Adamic condemnation (*death*), and who in spite of all this opportunity and favor are pronounced by the judge "abominable", and whose names he refused to write among those *worthy of life*? Can any sane man think or honestly claim that the sentence of second death pronounced against these, means that they shall die to sin and live to righteousness? Surely any not totally blinded by the great deceiver must see, that it is because they have *refused* to cease from sin, and *refused* to live in righteousness, that, as the "abominable" filth – pestilential, noxious, and contagious – they are destroyed in (Gehenna) the Second death – outside the New Jerusalem, even as the literal filth was destroyed in literal Gehenna outside the literal Jerusalem.

Look again, and notice that of the holy ones it is written – They "shall not be hurt of the second death," and "On such the second death hath no power" – and ask yourself, how this could be, *if*, as this theory would teach, the second death means a ceasing from sin? If the second

death is a ceasing from sin, it is a grand thing, and *no one* could be hurt by it; all would be benefited. In that case the saints would be the first to plunge in and cease from sin. The fact that on the saints *the second death has no power*, and that its power is wholly upon the "abominable" rejectors of divine favor, proves that it is not a blessing, but a curse – the second curse – that it is not a death to sin, but a death of the sinner, blotting him from existence *because of* wilful sin.

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