

## "ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED?"

EMERGING from that blackness of error called Calvinism (with its heaven of blessing for the "little flock" and its eternal torment for all others, as taught by good but sadly deceived men – John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Charles H. Spurgeon and others – ) into the glorious light of the goodness of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord and revealed in the divine Plan of the Ages, the writer was subjected to the same attacks of Satan (the great Enemy of God and man) to which all others seem to be exposed. Coming as an angel of light, he seemed to welcome us into the light out of the gross darkness which he himself had brought upon the world. And while our heart trembled with joy, and yet with fear also, lest after all we should find some evidence that God would do some terrible and unjust thing, to some of his creatures, at least, the suggestion came, God will not permit any to be lost.

At this time the word *lost* still had associated with it that unscriptural, wicked and awful meaning of eternal torment; for, although we had gotten rid of that misbelief, and saw that lost means *dead, destroyed*, the influence of that old error still gave a false coloring to the words formerly supposed to teach it. Hence the greater force in the suggestion that God would not permit *any* to be lost; – for surely no enlightened mind can candidly imagine the eternal misery of a solitary individual in all of God's universe.

Reason and judgment swayed for a time, first to one side and then to the other, according to circumstances and moods, until we learned that our reasoning powers are not to be relied upon to settle such questions; that they are imperfect as well as liable to be prejudiced; and that for this cause God had given us his inspired Word to guide our reasoning faculties into proper channels. Then, appealing to the Scriptures, we found abundant proof that unless God therein trifles with his children's confidence (and as men would say "bluffs" them,

with suggestions and threats which he knows he will never execute) there surely will be some *lost* as well as some *saved*.

Among these Scriptures are not only those similes which speak of the salt which lost its value, and was thenceforth good for naught, but to be trodden under foot, and of the *destruction* of those servants which would "not have this man to rule over" them (Matt. 5:13; Luke 19:14,27), etc., but the following plain statements: –

Some "wrest...the Scriptures even to their own *destruction*." – 2 Pet. 3:16.

"Pride goeth before *destruction*." – Prov. 16:18.

"The Lord preserveth [saves] the souls of his saints." – Psa. 97:10.

"The Lord preserveth all them that love him, but all the wicked [not the ignorant] will he *destroy*." – Psa. 145:20.

"False teachers...bring in damnable heresies, ...and bring upon themselves swift *destruction*." – 2 Pet. 2:1.

Some are "vessels of wrath fitted to *destruction*." – Rom. 9:22.

"Them that walk after the flesh...shall *utterly perish* in their own corruption." – 2 Pet. 2:10-12.

"The *destruction* of the transgressors and of the [wilful] sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." – Isa. 1:28.

"The Lord will "*destroy* them that corrupt the earth." – Rev. 11:18.

"The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but *destruction* shall be to the workers of iniquity." – Prov. 10:29,30; 21:15.

Some fall into "many foolish and hurtful lusts [desires], which drown men in ***destruction.***" – I Tim. 6:9.

"For ***many*** walk,...the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose ***end*** is ***destruction.***" – Phil. 3:18,19.

"Who shall be punished with ***everlasting destruction.***" – 2 Thess. 1:9.

"If any man defile the temple of God, him will God ***destroy.***" – I Cor. 3:17.

"The judgment of God [is] that they who do such things are ***worthy of death.***" – Rom. 1:32.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." – Heb. 4:1.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Spirit,...***if they shall fall away,*** to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." – Heb. 6:4-6.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escape not who refused him that spake on earth [Moses, the typical teacher], much more shall not we escape, if ***we turn away from*** him that speaketh from heaven."

"Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." – Heb. 12:25,15.

"The soul that will not hear that prophet shall be ***destroyed*** from among his people." – Acts 3:23.

"By one offering he [Christ] hath perfected forever ***them that are sanctified....***Let ***us*** [therefore] draw near with a true heart, in full

assurance of faith. ...Let *us* hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,...exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the [Millennial] Day drawing on. For if *we sin wilfully*, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more [part for us in the] sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversaries." – Heb. 10:14,22-27.

If "he who [in the typical nation] despised the law of Moses [the typical lawgiver] died without mercy, of how much sorer [more serious] punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot [disgraced] the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the [New] Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy [ordinary] thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Surely the wages of such conduct would be everlasting, while that in the type was not, but was covered by the great sacrifice for sins *once* for all. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." – Heb. 10:28,29,31.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see [R3083 : page 295] life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." – John 3:36; I John 5:12.

"His servants ye are to whom ye render service; whether of sin unto *death*, or of obedience unto righteousness." – Rom. 6:16.

"The end of those things is *death*." – Rom. 6:21.

"To be carnally minded is [to reap the penalty] death; but to be spiritually minded is [to reap the reward] life and peace." – Rom. 8:6.

"Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." – Jas. 1:15.

"There is a [kind of] sin unto *death*;...and there is a [kind of] sin not unto death." – I John 5:16,17.

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill [destroy] the soul [being]: but rather fear him which is able to *destroy* both soul and body in Gehenna [the second death]." – Matt. 10:28.

"The wages of sin is *death*." – Rom. 6:23.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" – Ezek. 18:32; 33:11.

"All the wicked will God *destroy*." – Psa. 145:20; 147:6.

What could be more explicit than this testimony of God's Word? And how reasonable it all is! Torment might properly be objected to as unjust as well as unmerciful; but taking away life from those who will not conform their lives to the just and holy and kind regulations of the New Covenant which God has opened to our race, through Christ's great atoning sacrifice, is reasonable, just and merciful.

It is reasonable: why should God continue his blessings, of which life is the chief, to those who after knowing and being enabled to conform to his just requirements, will not do so?

It is just: because God is under no obligation to man. Man is already his debtor ten thousand times; and if he will not render loving respect to his Creator's wise and good commands, Justice would demand that those blessings be stopped.

It is merciful on God's part to destroy the incorrigibly wicked – those who, after *full* knowledge and opportunity have been enjoyed, refuse to be conformed to the lines of the law of God's Kingdom – the law of love. **(1)** Because all who will live ungodly – out of harmony with God's law of love – will always be like the restless sea, more or less discontented and unhappy. **(2)** Because such characters, be they

ever so few, would mar the enjoyment of those who do love peace and righteousness. And to these God has promised that the time shall come when sin and its results, weeping and pain and dying, shall cease (Rev. 21:4), when he will destroy out of the earth those who corrupt it. (Rev. 11:18.) (3) Because God has promised that there shall yet be a clean world (Isa. 11:9; Rev. 21:5), in which the unholy and abominable and all who love and make lies shall have no place. (Rev. 21:8.) "Thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall not be." – Psa. 37:10.

Only such as have preferred their own wisdom to that of the Bible can read the foregoing words of God, and yet believe that all men will be everlastingly saved. [R3084 : page 295]

Only such as are puffed up with a sense of their own benevolence can hold that God never would be satisfied or happy if one of the race perished. God has gotten along very well without the sinners thus far, and could do so forever. It was not for selfish reasons that he redeemed all, and is about to restore all who will accept his favor in Christ.

But some attempt to evade the foregoing statements of Scripture with the claim that they refer to wickedness, and not to wicked people; that they mean that all wicked people will be destroyed by their conversion – by having their wickedness destroyed. We ask those who so think to read over these words of God again, carefully, and see that they *could not*, reasonably, be so construed. Notice that even though the Word mentioned nothing about the destruction of wicked *doers*, but merely mentioned the destruction of wickedness and wicked *things*, this would nevertheless include wicked doers; because, of all wicked things, *intelligent*, wilful evil-doers are the worst. But the Word does specify wicked persons; and all who are familiar with rules of grammar covering the question know that when the person is specified the destruction of his wickedness merely could not be meant.

"The wicked shall be [re] turned [back] into hell [*sheol*] and all nations [Gentiles, people] that *forget* God." (Psa. 9:16.) "The lake of fire, which is the second death" (Rev. 20:14), is "prepared for the devil

and his angels [messengers or servants]." (Matt. 25:41.) And all who, with Satan, serve sin are his servants or messengers. (Rom. 6:16.) For such, yes, for *all* such, and for such only, God has prepared the penalty of everlasting *destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." And from Satan their chief down to the least one of his children who, notwithstanding knowledge and opportunity to the contrary, cling to evil and choose it rather than righteousness, this tribe will be blotted out to the praise of God's justice, to the joy and welfare of the holy and to their own real advantage.

It will not do to judge others by ourselves, in all respects. The fact that God's *saints* do not feel opposition to God's will, and cannot understand how others can entertain such sentiments, sometimes leads to the false conclusion that if all others enjoyed a similar knowledge of God they too would delight in his service. That such a conclusion is false is evident, from the fact that Satan, who knew God thoroughly, "abode not in the truth," but became "the father of lies" and "a murderer." And, after six thousand years' witness of sin and its results, he is still the Adversary of righteousness. After nearly two thousand years' knowledge of the love and mercy of God manifested in Christ's sacrifice for sin, he is still as unmoved by that love as he is unmoved by pity for human woe. And more than this: God, who knows the future as well as the past, shows us, unquestionably, that after being restrained (bound) for a thousand [R3084 : page 296] years by the power of Christ's Kingdom, and during that time witnessing the blessings of righteousness, he will, when granted liberty at the close of the Millennium, still manifest a preference for the way of sin and opposition to God's arrangements. Surely this *proves* that intelligent beings, and perfect beings, too, can know God and yet choose a way of disobedience, – whether or not our minds can grasp the philosophy of their course.

But the philosophy of the matter is this: A perfect being, angel or man, is a blank page upon which *character* must be engraved. Knowledge and a free will are the engravers. Pride, Selfishness and

Ambition may be engraved, or Love, Humility and Meekness. The latter is the blessed or God-like character, the former is the sinful or devilish character. According to which are engraved will be the character. If the will decide for sin and cultivate the wicked character, the result will be a wicked being. If the will decide for righteousness and God-likeness, the result will be a holy being.

The same principles in a general way apply also to fallen men. No matter how fallen and weak they may be, they have *free-wills*. They can *will* aright, even when they cannot *do* aright. And under the New Covenant God accepts, through Christ, the imperfect deeds where the *wills are perfect*.

For some who are now evil doers and lovers of sin, our hope is, that they are such because of blinding of the devil (2 Cor. 4:4), which leads them to make a choice they would not make if they had a full, clear knowledge. God's guarantee to *all*, through Christ, is that all shall come to an accurate knowledge of the truth, and thus to a full opportunity to *choose* between righteousness and sin. We have no hope for any who, after coming to a clear knowledge, choose sin, wilfully: neither in this age nor in the next is there hope for such, according to God's Word.

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