

## **DISOBEDIENCE, PENALTY, HOPE**

– GENESIS 3:1-6,13-16. – JANUARY 20. –

**"As all in Adam die, so all in Christ shall be made alive."**

– 1 Cor. 15:22.

IF THIS LESSON were properly taught in all the Sunday Schools and Bible classes of Christendom it would of itself revolutionize all the theology of Christendom. The wonder is that reasonable, thinking people can con over this lesson without apparently getting the least ray of light therefrom. Our own past experiences along the same line enable us to sympathize with others in their blindness, stimulating us to render them all the assistance in our power, to the intent that their eyes of understanding may be opened, that they may be able to discern the fundamentals of the divine plan, and thus come into a better understanding thereof and closer harmony with the Lord every way.

From Genesis to Revelation the serpent is set before us as the synonym of Satan. The introduction of sin is charged to the great Adversary of God, who, following his ambition, sought to secure our first parents and their posterity as his subjects under the new empire which he hoped to establish, that he might be like the Most High. This sinful, disloyal ambition not only wrought havoc in a cherub, degrading him and making him an adversary of God, but through him it wrought havoc to our race – divine condemnation to death, with all the attendant miseries of sickness, pain – mental, moral and physical – deteriorating, culminating in death. We all are witnesses of the penalty; the doctors' signs, no less than the crape and the cemetery, assure us that the sentence of death still rests upon our race – the most awful calamity that could be imagined.

## **MOTHER EVE'S TEMPTATION**

That a serpent was used in Mother Eve's temptation there can be no doubt, but whether it spoke with audible voice or only by its actions we cannot know – it was quite probably the latter, as we sometimes say, "Actions speak louder than words." Satan merely used the serpent as the instrumentality of his temptation. His desire was to alienate the affections, love and respect of our first parents from God to himself. He attempted to do this by passing as their friend and giving the insinuation that God, although the Creator, was the transgressor, who desired to hinder their best and truest advancement and prosperity. The Lord had placed our first parents in the Garden of Eden, which was highly favored every way, and entirely fitted for the perfect pair to enjoy their human perfection to the full. In it were all kinds of trees, some beautiful to look upon and some good for food – trees of life – the eating of whose fruit would perpetuate life in full degree. But amongst the trees of life in this orchard was one tree of very marked peculiarity, which our Lord had called the tree of knowledge and of whose fruit he forbade our parents to eat. This restriction would not necessarily have been perpetual. In due time, after the test of obedience had demonstrated the loyalty of our first parents, no doubt they would have been granted full liberty in the use of the tree of knowledge, but partaking of it before the Lord's time would mean not only their disobedience but their injury, and would bring upon them the divine sentence, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" – margin, "Dying thou shalt die."

This restriction on the tree of knowledge became the channel of temptation. Satan was aware of that trait of nature which leads everyone to be interested in and to have more or less desire for anything that is forbidden – to wonder why it is forbidden, etc. Such thoughts had undoubtedly passed through the minds of Adam and Eve, and had been set aside as improper,

because surely their Creator, who had done so much for their blessing and joy, would not withhold from them anything really to their advantage; hence in appreciation of his goodness they settled the matter [R3925 : page 23] that they would be obedient to the Lord and would not taste the forbidden fruit. Now came Satan's attack: posing as their best friend he intimated selfishness on God's part as the basis of their restriction. More than this, he suggested that they never could be happy without the valuable knowledge which the fruit of that tree would bring them, and, further, that God had lied to them in saying that death would surely follow the eating of the forbidden fruit.

Had Satan appeared and held personal conversation with them directly or through the serpent, they seemingly should have been on guard, and would probably have wondered why any of God's creatures should speak disparagingly of his wisdom and his love. Our conjecture is that the whole matter was done by signs – that under Satan's guidance the serpent partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and when mother Eve saw that no harm came to the serpent, but perceived that it was one of the most cunning of all the animals of the earth, the operation of her mind was, "Has God deceived us? Has he an object in deceiving us? Why did he tell us that we should die if we ate of that fruit, whereas we see that the serpent eats of it and does not die? Quite probably it is because of the partaking of this fruit regularly that the serpent is the wisest of all the living creatures under our control." And when the woman perceived by this process of reasoning that the tree was good to make one wise, her desire for wisdom entrapped her into disloyalty to the command of her Creator. She ate, and as a result did indeed get a great increase of knowledge, with condemnation, sorrow, pain, tears – because the knowledge came not in God's time and order, but in violation of his command.

## **"A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING"**

In thus entrapping mother Eve, and through her bringing upon Adam and his race the death penalty, Satan became the great murderer of the race, as our Lord Jesus declared, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." His counsel, and indeed the counsel of all who are out of harmony with God is evil, injurious, and whosoever heeds or agrees therewith is not wise. The Apostle says, "The serpent beguiled Eve," and this is his general procedure in all of our temptations. He does not come out into the open, but everywhere seeks to put darkness for light – to deceive, to mislead. We are to remember, too, that mother Eve had no experience with sin, nor with any adversary of God and of righteousness, and hence was the more easily misled in this temptation. Coming from her the temptation was an hundred-fold what it otherwise would have been, for we are informed by the Apostle that "Adam was not deceived." He was aware, fully convinced, that death would be the penalty for his partaking of the forbidden fruit, irrespective of its effect upon the serpent. His temptation, however, touched him upon his most vulnerable point – his love for his wife.

There are intimations that the fall took place one and a half years after father Adam's creation, but for what portion of that time he had his beautiful and loved companion, Eve, we are not informed. It is clearly intimated, however, that he was alone for a sufficient period to realize that there was no companion suitable for him amongst all the beasts, cattle and creatures under his dominion; and when, finally, the Lord gave him a wife of his own flesh and bones, of his own nature, he evidently found in her that complement to himself for which he had so greatly longed. And now, when he perceived that Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit and that she must die, the poor man evidently felt that without her life would lose its charms, and determined that whatever the cost he would share it with his bride – therefore he

partook of the fruit at her instance, with the full knowledge that it would mean his death. He not only knowingly [R3926 : page 23] and willingly disobeyed the divine command, but did it intentionally – he suicided.

### **SATAN'S DECEPTIONS STILL PREVAIL**

We must not censure our first parents too severely, but remember that, although they were perfect in their capacities, created in the image of God, they were not perfect in knowledge. They should have been wise enough to know, to realize, their limitations of ignorance and to have trusted to the Lord. Lack of faith was mother Eve's difficulty, and had father Adam possessed a sufficiency of faith and maintained his obedience no doubt God would have arranged some way for the recovery of his companion, but for their undeveloped condition the trial was too strong; they succumbed, as no doubt nearly all of their children would have done under similar circumstances. We blame them not, yet we see that God, foreknowing what course they would take, preferred to allow them to take that course rather than to interfere with them, intending to ultimately overrule their disobedience for a higher and wider development of his own gracious purposes through the redemption and ultimate blessing which the divine plan centers in Jesus.

What do we see today but similar disobedience, notwithstanding the fact that we have larger experience than our first parents as respects contact with sin and its penalty? In how many instances today does ambition, love of knowledge, lead to disobedience of divine restrictions to the serious injury of the disobedient one? One would think that the lesson before us would be so powerful, so convincing, that all who have a knowledge of it would flee from temptation in such directions and resolve that at any cost they would be obedient to the Word of the Lord. How many today, like Father Adam, would be

willing to sacrifice their eternal interests for the joys and pleasures of earthly companionship, even to the extent of disobedience to the divine requirements.

### **WHOM SHALL WE BELIEVE?**

Whoever may be inclined to condemn mother Eve for hearkening to the voice of the serpent should reflect that the great majority of the world today are believing Satan's lie, rejecting God's message. The heathen, numbering 1,200,000,000, almost without exception believe Satan's lie, "Ye shall not surely die," so that when their friends die they claim that they are not dead but more alive than ever. Nor is this the worst of it: so-called Christendom, representing 400,000,000 of our race, have very generally accepted the same lie, and similarly believe that none are dead – that all in the moment in which they appear to die really become more alive than ever before. How can we blame mother Eve on this score while we see the deceptions spread abroad far and near, notwithstanding all the lessons **[R3926 : page 24]** which she learned and which her children should have learned through her example. As to believe God always leads us in the right direction and brings blessings, so to reject God's counsel, to receive the serpent's counsel, always means to bring injury in some sense or degree.

Look about over the world today – see the heathen worshiping their ancestors, and imagining that they hold communion with those whom the Scriptures declare are dead and know not anything, and never would know anything had it not been for the redemption accomplished at Calvary by Jesus, and who would not in any sense of the word be conscious until awakened by our Lord at his second coming in resurrection power. Look at Christendom, and perceive that two-thirds of these believe in the doctrine of a present purgatory, in which their relatives and friends are suffering from the moment of

death. See them praying for the dead and paying for masses for their relief from pain. Think of the thousands of injurious superstitions that are built upon this error, and reflect that Spiritism, which is already having a great influence and, according to the Scriptures, will shortly have still wider and more baneful effect; and note how it has all its power from this false doctrine which the Adversary originally started in Eden – that the dead are not dead, but alive, and ready to communicate through mediums, etc. Consider how Satan has used this error all the way down through the ages, and how, through the fallen angels, the demons, he has personated the dead and sought thus to entrap the living. Let us learn the lesson; let us say, with one of old, "Let God be true, though it make every man a liar." – Rom. 3:4.

## **CURSING AND BLESSING**

Let us realize that every one who opposes or denies the divine testimony is a liar and the truth is not in him; but let us set to our seal that God is true, and realize that the penalty of death is real, that the redemption price paid by our Lord Jesus was his death, also real, and that the blessed provision of the divine plan for the future is the awakening of mankind from the sleep of death, from the unconsciousness of death, for the very purpose of bringing them to a clear knowledge of God and his truth and releasing them from the superstitions and evil influences, degradation, etc., which came upon them through disobedience, through the fall, through the following of Satan's original lie.

The curse that rests upon the race, upon the earth itself and upon the serpent and Satan is a condemnation, a penalty, a reprobation. The serpent, under divine reprobation, experienced some kind of a change of form and locomotion, and became to mankind a synonym, a representative, of everything evil, loathsome, vile – the synonym of sin and Satan. Not only in our

lesson is this brought to our attention, but also in the typical system of natural Israel. Fiery serpents were sent upon Israel as a curse or penalty for sin; and when, through their doubts, the people were perishing, under the Lord's instruction Moses raised upon a pole a copper serpent, looking to which in faith the Israelites were recovered from the poison of the serpents. Thus the Lord early intimated that Christ would be made a curse, a sin offering for us, and that we would be healed through looking to him in faith.

### **BRUISING THE SERPENT'S HEAD**

In pronouncing the curse against the serpent – against evil – the Lord declared, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Scriptures show us clearly that this divine prophecy is to be fulfilled, that our Lord Jesus is the seed of the woman through whom the blessing shall come, and that his Church, his Bride, is to be joint-heir with him in the suffering incidental to the attainment of the honorable position of joint-heirs with him also in the great work of delivering mankind from all the evils that have come upon us through Satan, through the serpent. The head and the heel are referred to symbolically as representing vital and non-vital portions of the body.

Thus the Christ, Jesus the Head and the Church his members, throughout this Gospel age have all suffered something from the serpent, from evil, from Satan, but under God's providences their sufferings are not serious, not deadly – they are wounded in the heel, so to speak. This seed class is begotten of the holy Spirit, New Creatures; hence nothing that can come to them in their earthly, human experiences can prove injurious to their spiritual welfare. All the bruising of the heel, under the Lord's supervision, shall work together for good to the

development of character, to the preparation of the injured members for the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory by and by. Thus it has been with our dear Redeemer, who being wounded for our transgressions has been highly exalted of the Father. We also who are sharers with him in his sufferings, ignominy, death, are to be sharers in his glory.

As for the serpent, his head shall be crushed, all evil shall be utterly destroyed in God's due time. Not yet, however; evil is still rampant, not only as much as it has ever been in the world's history, but more so, and this is in full accord with the divine record that "evil men and leaders astray shall wax worse and worse," and a few short years ahead will fully demonstrate the power of Satan over and in those who are his subjects. But victory is coming to those who are now wounded. The Christ shall by and by bind that old serpent, the devil, Satan, and cast him into the abyss and set a seal over him that he may deceive the nations no more until the thousand years of the Millennial reign of Christ be passed – until all mankind shall have had a full opportunity of coming to a true knowledge of God and of accepting and using the grace provided through the great Redeemer's sacrifice.

As for the Church, we also will have to do with this work of crushing evil – as the Apostle expresses it, "The very God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." – Rom. 16:20.

### **OUR GOLDEN TEXT**

Our Golden Text fits the subject well, especially in the better translation which we have given. All of Adam's posterity, all who are in him, are dying as a result of his disobedience. Failing to maintain his hold upon the gift of God, eternal life, he has also failed to transmit that character and degree of life to his children. The six thousand years of crying and dying have been an awful lesson to the world of the exceeding sinfulness of sin,

but thank God the [R3927 : page 25] time of this groaning of creation is nearly at an end, the new dispensation is near at hand. He that gave himself a ransom for Adam, and who thus incidentally purchased not only him but all of his race who had lost life in him, this great Redeemer is about to establish the rule of righteousness in the world and to inaugurate that era of blessing, the Golden Age, for which the whole creation waits and longs, whether intelligently or unintelligently.

The blessing of life in its full, everlasting, complete sense is coming to "all in Christ" and to none others. Now is the opportunity for coming into relationship with him as his Bride and joint-heir. Blessed are we whose hearts of understanding and ears of appreciation have recognized this grand opportunity, so that we have been glad to accept the Lord's proposition at the cost of every earthly interest. Surely the faithful shall be like him and see him as he is and share his glory. Then in the time of his presence the world of mankind in general will be granted an opportunity to see and to hear and to accept of divine mercy in him – not by becoming the Bride, for that class will have then been filled, but they will be granted the privilege of coming into relationship with the Christ as children, receiving of his life, being begotten again to restored life – to a restitution of all that was lost in the first Adam and restored in the second Adam. He that hath such a hope in him may well purify himself and strive to come into relationship with Christ, and thus to as quickly as possible attain to the joys and blessings of the divine favor. He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son shall not see life eternal. – 1 John 5:12.

### **THE SHADOW OF GOD'S HAND**

Bright and fair the sun was beaming  
O'er my smooth and easy way,  
And my soul moved lightly onward;  
Fear and care were far away.

Hope was bright and winged my footsteps,  
Eagerly I pressed along,  
And the joy of heavenly favor  
Filled my heart with praise and song.

I could see my Father's wisdom,  
Loving care and sheltering arm,  
Leading me through pleasant places,  
Guarding me from every harm.  
I could feel love's flame arising  
High and higher in my breast,  
And my lips o'erflowed with gladness,  
All was joy and peace and rest.

When at once a voice within me  
Seemed to thrill my very soul:  
Could I stand if joy departed,  
Sorrow flooding all my soul?  
In an arid desert lonely,  
Would my faith endure the test?  
Would my spirit, still undaunted,  
Praise him then as when at rest?

This one thing my soul pursueth,  
To attain thy perfect love,  
Love, unwavering and loyal,  
Rising all things else above;  
I would have the faith enduring,  
Stronger when most sorely tried,  
"Spare me not, but prove me, Father,"  
Anxiously my spirit cried;

When across my clear horizon  
Suddenly a cloud arose,  
Spreading wide and lowering darkly,

Threatening my soul's repose.  
Stranger voices sounded near me,  
Scarce a step was plain before,  
But my Father's arm sustained me,  
What, then, could I ask for more?

And, while leaning hard upon him,  
His sweet peace was given me,  
By the Spirit's gentle whisper,  
"This is his great love for thee;  
Well he knows thy deepest yearnings  
To reflect his image bright –  
All thy prayers come up before him,  
And are precious in his sight.

"And this darkness come upon thee  
Is the shadow of his hand,  
Never raised except in blessing,  
Though thou mayst not understand."  
Then my heart grew strong and trustful,  
And with joy my soul was stirred;  
"Teach me, Lord, to trust thee fully,"  
This my prayer so soon was heard.

Fearless then, I started onward,  
Compassed by the gloom of night,  
For, by Father's love surrounded,  
Darkness is as safe as light!  
Still I pray, "O, lead me, Father,  
By thy goodness and thy might,  
Till, beyond time's misty shadows,  
Dawns the pure, eternal light."

– *Bessie P. Lockerbie.*

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