

Talking with Devils

With the earliest history of man, Satan began his efforts to deceive our race. He who had incited rebellion in Heaven desired to bring the inhabitants of the earth to unite with him in his warfare against the government of God. **Adam and Eve had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God, and this fact was a constant testimony against the claim which Satan had urged in Heaven, that God's law was oppressive and opposed to the good of His creatures.** And, furthermore, Satan's envy was excited as he looked upon the beautiful home prepared for the sinless pair. He determined to cause their fall that, having separated them from God and brought them under his own power, he might gain possession of the earth and here establish his kingdom, in opposition to the Most High.

"The woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." *Genesis 3:2-5.*

Immortality by Obedience

In the midst of Eden grew the tree of life, whose fruit had the power of perpetuating life. **Had Adam remained obedient to God, he would have continued to enjoy free access to this tree, and would have lived forever.** But when he sinned, he was cut off from partaking of the tree of life, and he became subject to death. The divine sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," points to the utter extinction of life.

Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that

which he did not possess; and **there could have been no hope for the fallen race, had not God—by the sacrifice of His Son—"brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"** (*Rom. 5:12; 2 Tim. 1:10*). **And only through Christ can immortality be obtained.** Said Jesus, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (*John 3:36*). Every man may come in possession of this priceless blessing if he will comply with the conditions. All "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality" will receive eternal life (*Rom. 2:7*).

No Immortal Sinner

The only one who promised Adam life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden,—"**Ye shall not surely die,**"—was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from the pulpits of Christendom, and is received by the majority of mankind as readily as it was received by our first parents. The divine sentence, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die**" (*Eze. 18:20*) **is made to mean, The soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally.** We cannot but wonder at the strange infatuation which renders men so credulous concerning the words of Satan, and so unbelieving in regard to the words of God.

Had man, after his fall, been allowed free access to the tree of life, he would have lived forever, and thus sin would have been immortalized. But cherubim and a flaming sword kept "the way of the tree of life" (*Gen. 3:24*), and not one of the family of Adam has been permitted to pass that barrier and partake of the life-giving fruit. Therefore there is not an immortal sinner.

"Ye Shall Not Surely Die"

But after the fall, Satan bade his angels make a special effort to inculcate the belief in man's natural immortality; and having induced the people to receive this error, **they were to lead them on to conclude that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Now the prince of darkness, working through his agents, represents God as a revengeful tyrant,** declaring that He plunges into hell all those who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and that while they suffer unutterable anguish and writhe in the eternal flames, their Creator looks down upon them with satisfaction.

Misrepresenting God's Character

How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell; that for the sins of a brief, earthly life they are to suffer torture as long as God shall live. Yet this doctrine has been widely taught, and is still embodied in many of the creeds of Christendom. It is urged that the infliction of endless misery upon the wicked would show God's hatred of sin as an evil which is ruinous to the peace and order of the universe. Oh, dreadful blasphemy! As if God's hatred of sin is the reason why He perpetuates sin. For, according to the teachings of these theologians, continued torture without hope of mercy maddens its wretched victims, and as they pour out their rage in curses and blasphemy, they are forever augmenting their load of guilt. God's glory is not enhanced by thus perpetuating continually increasing sin through ceaseless ages.

The Opposite Error

A large class to whom the doctrine of eternal torment is revolting are driven to the opposite error. They see that the Scriptures represent God as a being of love and compassion, and

they cannot believe that He will consign His creatures to the fires of an eternally burning hell. But, holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they see no alternative but to conclude that all mankind will finally be saved. **Many regard the threatenings of the Bible as designed merely to frighten men into obedience, and not to be literally fulfilled.** Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God, and yet expect to be finally received into His favor. Such a doctrine, presuming upon God's mercy—but ignoring His justice—pleases the carnal heart, and emboldens the wicked in their iniquity.

The Wages of Sin Is Death

God has given in His Word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves, that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that "the wages of sin is death," that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin. And **every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement provided at such a cost must bear, in his own person, the guilt and punishment of transgression.**

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." *Revelation 21:7*. Here, also, conditions are specified. **In order to inherit all things, we must resist and overcome sin.**

Life or Death

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." *Romans 6:23*. While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel: "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." *Deuteronomy 30:15*. The death re-

ferred to in these Scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. **It is the "second death" that is placed in contrast with everlasting life.**

In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." *Acts 24:15*. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." *1 Corinthians 15:22*.

But a distinction is made between the two classes that are brought forth. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." *John 5:28-29*. **They who have been "accounted worthy" of the resurrection of life are "blessed and holy." "On such the second death hath no power" (*Rev. 20:6*).** But those who have not through repentance and faith secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression,—**"the wages of sin." They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, "according to their works," but finally ending in the second death.**

Since it is impossible for God, consistently with His justice and mercy to save the sinner in his sins, **He deprives him of the existence which his transgressions have forfeited, and of which he has proved himself unworthy.** Says an inspired writer, "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." And another declares, "They shall be as though they had not been" (*Ps. 37:10; Obad. 16*). **Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion.**

An End of Sin

Thus will be made an end of sin, with all the woe and ruin which have resulted from it. Says the psalmist: "Thou hast destroyed the wicked, Thou hast put out their name forever and ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." *Psalm*

9:5-6. John, in the Revelation, looking forward to the eternal state, hears a universal anthem of praise undisturbed by one note of discord. **Every creature in Heaven and earth was heard ascribing glory to God (*Rev. 5:13*).** **There will then be no lost souls to blaspheme God,** as they writhe in never-ending torment; no wretched beings in hell will mingle their shrieks with the songs of the saved.

A Second Error

Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death—a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity. **According to the popular belief, the redeemed in Heaven are acquainted with all that takes place on the earth, and especially with the lives of the friends whom they have left behind.** But how could it be a source of happiness to the dead to know the troubles of the living, to witness the sins committed by their own loved ones, and to see them enduring all the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? How much of Heaven's bliss would be enjoyed by those who were hovering over their friends on earth? And how utterly revolting is the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body, the soul of the impenitent is consigned to the flames of hell! To what depths of anguish must those be plunged who see their friends passing to the grave unprepared, to enter upon an eternity of woe and sin! Many have been driven to insanity by this harrowing thought.

The Bible Says

What say the Scriptures concerning these things? David declares that **man is not conscious in death. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." *Psalms 146:4*.** Solomon bears the same testimony: **"The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything."** "Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge,

nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." *Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, 10.*

When, in answer to his prayer, Hezekiah's life was prolonged fifteen years, the grateful king rendered to God a tribute of praise for His great mercy. In this song he tells the reason why he thus rejoices: "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day." *Isaiah 38:18-19.* Popular theology represents the righteous dead as in Heaven, entered into bliss, and praising God with an immortal tongue; but Hezekiah could see no such glorious prospect in death. With his words agrees the testimony of the psalmist: "**In death there is no remembrance of Thee;** in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." *Psalms 6:5; 115:17.*

And said Paul: "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." *1 Corinthians 15:16-18.* **If for four thousand years the righteous had gone directly to Heaven at death, how could Paul have said that if there is no resurrection, "they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished?"** No resurrection would be necessary.

The Truth of the Resurrection

It is an undeniable fact that **the hope of immortal blessedness at death has led to widespread neglect of the Bible doctrine of the resurrection.** But when about to leave His disciples, Jesus did not tell them that they would soon come to Him. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." *John 14:2-3.* And Paul tells us, further, that "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." And

he adds, "Comfort one another with these words" (*1 Thess. 4:16-18*).

Paul points his brethren to the future coming of the Lord, when the fetters of the tomb shall be broken and the "dead in Christ" shall be raised to eternal life.

The Investigative Judgment

Before any can enter the mansions of the blest, their cases must be investigated, and their characters and their deeds must pass in review before God. All are to be judged according to the things written in the books, and to be rewarded as their works have been. This Judgment does not take place at death. Mark the words of Paul: "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." *Acts 17:31.* Here the apostle plainly stated that a specified time, then future, had been fixed upon for the Judgment of the world. Jude refers to the same period (*Jude 14-15*), and so does John in the Revelation (*Rev. 20:12*). **But if the dead are already enjoying the bliss of Heaven or writhing in the flames of hell, what need of a future Judgment?** The teachings of God's Word on these important points are neither obscure nor contradictory; they may be understood by common minds. But what candid mind can see either wisdom or justice in the current theory?

Glorious Awakening

The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to Heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection (*1 Thess. 4:14; Job 14:10-12*). In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken (*Eccl. 12:6*), man's thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun (*Job 14:21*).

Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep, they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible . . . So

when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." *1 Corinthians 15:52, 54.* As they are called forth from their deep slumber, they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death, the last thought that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (*1 Cor. 15:55*)

Preparation for Spiritualism

The doctrine of man's consciousness in death, especially the belief that the spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. Here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. **While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.**

Satanic Counterfeits

He has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of Heaven; and without suspicion of danger, they give ear to "seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

When they have been led to believe that the dead actually return to communicate with them, Satan causes those to appear who went into the grave unprepared. They claim to be happy in Heaven, and even to occupy exalted positions there; and **thus the error is widely taught, that no difference is made between the righteous and the wicked.** The pretended visitants from the world of spirits sometimes utter cautions and warnings which prove to be correct. Then, as confidence is gained, they present

doctrines that directly undermine faith in the Scriptures.

A Supernatural Power

Many will be ensnared through the belief that spiritualism is a merely human imposture; when brought face to face with manifestations which they cannot but regard as supernatural, they will be deceived, and will be led to accept them as the great power of God.

These persons overlook the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the wonders wrought by Satan and his agents. It was by satanic aid that Pharaoh's magicians were enabled to counterfeit the work of God. Paul testifies that before the second advent of Christ there will be similar manifestations of satanic power. **The coming of the Lord is to be preceded by "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,** and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9-10). No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.

Something for Everyone

The prince of darkness, who has so long bent the powers of his mastermind to the work of deception, skillfully adapts his temptations to men of all classes and conditions. **To persons of culture and refinement he presents spiritualism in its more refined and intellectual aspects, and thus succeeds in drawing many into his snare.**

Satan beguiles men now as he beguiled Eve in Eden, by flattery, by kindling a desire to obtain forbidden knowledge, by exciting ambition for self-exaltation. It was cherishing these evils that caused his fall, and through them he aims to compass the ruin of men. "Ye shall be as gods," he declares, "knowing good and evil." *Genesis 3:5*. Thus, in place of the righteousness and perfection of the infinite God, the true object of adoration—in place of the perfect righteousness of His law, the true standard of human attainment—Satan has substituted the sinful, erring nature of man himself as the only

object of adoration, the only rule of judgment, or standard of character. This is progress, not upward, but downward.

To the self-indulgent, the pleasure-loving, the sensual, spiritualism presents itself under a less subtle disguise than to the more refined and intellectual; in its grosser forms they find that which is in harmony with their inclinations. When the people are thus led to believe that desire is the highest law, that liberty is license, and that man is accountable only to himself, who can wonder that corruption and depravity teem on every hand? **Multitudes eagerly accept teachings that leave them at liberty to obey the promptings of the carnal heart.**

None Need Be Deceived

But none need be deceived by the lying claims of spiritualism. God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare. As already shown, the theory which forms the very foundation of spiritualism is at war with the plainest statements of Scripture. **The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth.**

Furthermore, **God has expressly forbidden all pretended communication with departed spirits.** In the days of the Hebrews there was a class of people who claimed—as do the spiritualists of today—to hold communication with the dead. But the "familiar spirits" (as these visitants from other worlds were called), are declared by the Bible to be the "spirits of devils." (*Compare Num. 25:1-3; Ps. 106:28; 1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 16:14.*) The work of dealing with familiar spirits was pronounced an abomination to the Lord, and was solemnly forbidden under penalty of death (*Lev. 19:31; 20:27*).

The very name of witchcraft is now held in contempt. The claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirits is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages. But spiritualism, which numbers its

converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions—which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival, in a new guise, of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old. **If there were no other evidence of the real character of spiritualism, it should be enough for the Christian that the spirits make no difference between righteousness and sin,** between the noblest and purest of the apostles of Christ and the most corrupt of the servants of Satan.

A Terrible Power

There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism and the danger of coming under its influence. Many tamper with it merely to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it, and would be filled with horror at the thought of yielding themselves to the spirits' control. But **they venture upon the forbidden ground, and the mighty destroyer exercises his power upon them against their will.** Let them once be induced to submit their minds to his direction, and he holds them captive. It is impossible in their own strength to break away from the bewitching, alluring spell. Nothing but the power of God, granted in answer to the earnest prayer of faith, can deliver these ensnared souls.

For More Information

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