

## **IS THE SECOND DEATH A BLESSING!**

**„The wages of sin is death.”—Rom. 6:23**

**„He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”—Rev. 2:11**

Many are the ingenious devices of our great adversary for overthrowing the faith of the saints in the foundation principles of the Gospel of Christ. Among them is the widely accepted notion that death is really part of an evolution by which mankind must reach perfection. The thought is clearly expressed in the following lines of a popular hymn:

„Death is the angel God hath sent  
To bear us to the sky.”

Out of this theory, as a starting point, many grievous errors have grown. The fact that death is the penalty of sin is ignored, and the necessity of a ransom is denied by many; and even the second death, notwithstanding the plain Scriptural teachings and warnings with reference to it, is represented as a blessing.

In harmony with this error is the idea now prominently advanced, that the first, or Adamic death, is merely a death to righteousness, and that the second death is a death to sin. Thus it is said, Adam and all mankind died to righteousness and became alive to sin; and that a man's conversion is the second death—a death to sin and a becoming alive to righteousness.

On this unscriptural hypothesis a theory is built which, to the undiscerning, has an appearance of plausibility; and it is a sad fact that only the few *search* the Scriptures, and still fewer „try the spirits” (doctrines) by comparing scripture with scripture, and therefore, error has always found it expedient to quote the Scriptures in its support.

In our Lord's temptation in the wilderness the same deception was attempted: Satan quoted, saying, „It is written ...”; but Jesus answered, „It is also written. ...” So should the disciple be as his Lord, and endeavor to rightly divide the word of God—to apply it as the Spirit designed, and not as

every wind of doctrine might twist it out of harmony with its context.

Before proceeding to examine any theory the careful student will first inquire, How strong is *the foundation* on which it rests? for if the foundation of the theory be wrong, all that can be built upon it must be wrong. This is a short, sure, and safe test; the theory must stand or fall with its foundation.

In carefully examining the foundation of this view, it will be found first, that it has no Scriptural basis; and secondly that it is directly opposed to the clearly expressed statements of the Scriptures on the subject. The Scripture quoted above shows that death is always the wages of sin; but this theory would make it sometimes the reward of righteousness, when it claims that to become righteous is to die to sin. This alone is clear proof that the theory is based upon an interpretation of death out of harmony with the Scriptures, and hence unworthy of further consideration.

The passage relied on to prove the position, is Rom. 6:10—"In that he [Jesus] died, he died unto sin." And as he was our example, therefore it is argued, that all mankind must likewise die unto sin and become alive unto God, or become righteous. But let us see if the harmony of the Scriptures will warrant such an interpretation of this passage. First we ask, Can that which is not alive be said to die? Certainly not. Then unless Jesus was *alive to sin*, that is, a person *living in sin*, he could not in that sense *die unto sin*. And just here we call to mind the question of Jesus himself, „Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

If those Scriptures are true which say that Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and knew no sin, does it not prove that the theory which makes this passage teach that Jesus died unto, or ceased from sin, is a false application of the passage, since he could not cease from that which he never began, never knew, but was always separate from?

That this is a misapplication of this Scripture is made positive by a glance at the preceding verse, which refers clearly and pointedly to the actual death of Jesus, and his actual resurrection—"Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

But let us see how this text may be interpreted in harmony with the context. In this verse the word *unto* expresses the idea much less clearly than the word „*by*," as given in the Diaglott translation. The thought is that Jesus died by or on account of sin once. His death was „the wages of sin" as all death is, but not by reason of, nor on account of, nor as the wages of sin which *he committed*; but as elsewhere stated, „Christ died for *our* sins according to the Scriptures" and „Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity *of us all*." (Isa. 53:6, and 1 Cor. 15:3.)

The Apostles' reasoning in verse 11, can only be grasped by one who has clearly in mind his reasoning preceding, as presented in the fore part of the Epistle. Chapter 1 begins the subject away back before the Deluge, when men knew God but glorified him not, but yielded to their own vain imaginings and their foolish heart became darkened. (ver. 21.) Chap. 2:1 shows that all men have come into some measure of the same darkness, and that the Jews as well as the Gentiles, are all *worthy* of condemnation, and *are all condemned*, because „There is none righteous, no not one.” (Rom. 3:9,10,19,20.)

Having thus proved that „*all the world*” has „become guilty before God,” Paul introduces the work of Christ as the remedy for all this guilt; for though „*all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” he has JUSTIFIED them freely by his favor, *through the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood [the life he gave to *redeem* ours], to manifest God's righteousness in condemning to death, and to accomplish a *remission* of sins. vs. 24,26.

In chapter 4., the Apostle continues to further emphasize the justification from sin and death, to life and a condition of righteousness, accomplished as he has shown by Jesus' death, saying, „Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (vs. 7,8), and repeats his testimony that the forgiveness and covering of our sins was through him „who was *delivered* FOR OUR OFFENCES and raised again for *our justification*. (v. 25.) Chapter 5. carries the topic further and shows the result of *justification*, that it brings the condemned sinners back to a standing where they can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). And yet more, not only are we justified, but through Christ and through the justification which he accomplished for us, we have access into a still further favor of God—access into *this favor* wherein we stand and rejoice, in hope of the glory of God. (vs. 1,2.) Not only then was our *human* nature justified, and a right to the *glory of manhood* restored, but a door was *thereby* opened to us by which we may have a hope of reaching the *glory of God*—the Divine nature.

And not only have we obtained a hope of future glory, which causes rejoicing, but as we realize that that „glory of God” is promised as a reward for the sacrifice of the justified human nature, it enables us to rejoice in the tribulations by which alone that heavenly glory can be obtained. (v. 3.)

After showing that the sacrifice of Christ was a full settlement of all condemnation and imperfection resulting directly and indirectly from Adam's transgression (vs. 15-21), he inquires (chap. 6:1) What shall we say then? If the sin of Adam has brought forth so much favor from God, shall we continue to sin in hope that still further favor would be manifested on our behalf?—and answers: God forbid. How shall we who have *died by sin* live any longer therein?

The we here mentioned is the same class mentioned in Chap. 5:2,3, and 1:7 a class of saints who not only have been *justified* by faith in Jesus, the Redeemer, but have obtained by consecration, *sacrifice*, access into „THIS GRACE”—the begetting and promises of the *divine nature*—“the glory of God.” This class had *died*, that is, had consecrated to death, and now reckoned themselves dead indeed. This was as a payment for sin, as death always is the wages of sin. But in this case it was not a payment of the wages of their *own* sin. No; they had been justified from their own sin by the death of Jesus, and had afterward consecrated to death, and that death was to apply for the *sin of others* just as Jesus had died, not for sin of his own, for he had none, but „for our sins.” So these *saints* consecrated to die, not for *their own* sins, for they *had none*, since justified from all sin by Jesus death.

But, says some one, does not the death of *Jesus alone* constitute the redemption price for the sins of the whole world?

We answer, the *merit of Jesus* is the only merit which cancels the sin of the whole world; but whether that merit is applied directly to the world, or indirectly *through „the Church*, which is his body,” is the question. This is the *favor* which is specially offered to the Gospel Church, viz.: to share with Jesus in making the *sacrifice for sins*, being first ourselves *justified* through HIS SACRIFICE. This is the Apostle’s teaching when he speaks of *filling up* that which is BEHIND of the afflictions of Christ, (Col. 1:24,) and it was the teaching of Jesus when he said to the disciples: „Ye shall drink indeed of my cup [suffering] and be baptised with the baptism that I

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am baptised with” [death] (Matt. 20:23.) And that the Apostle is carrying out this same line of thought in the epistle we are now considering, is evident. How [with what consistency] can we that have died [consecrated to death] by sin [on account of or as sin sacrifices], how could we consistently live any longer in sin, or have any fellowship with that which we are dying to destroy or remove. „Know ye not that *so many* of us as were baptized INTO Jesus Christ [*into* membership in that body of which He is the head] were baptized [plunged, swallowed up, buried] into HIS DEATH?” His death was not Adamic death, but a ransom or substitution for it, and we share in *his death*, and hence share in the results of his death—the putting away of the sins of the whole world.

„We have therefore been entombed with him by the immersion into *that* DEATH [*in order*], that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in a new life.” Our condition is a *reckoned* one, and if we reckon ourselves justified *by* Christ and then dead *with* Christ, we should go yet further and reckon ourselves *as though* we had been resurrected and were now actually spiritual beings, as Jesus now is, and we should act accordingly, abstaining from

sin and rejoicing in communion and glory, *as though* we had been made already perfect as spiritual beings. „For [this is the reason why we should so reckon] if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death [or, in the like kind of death—*sacrificial*], certainly we shall be also in that of his resurrection” [we shall share a like resurrection; that is, a resurrection to spiritual perfection]. „Knowing this [Remembering in this connection], that our OLD man [our departed, sin-inclined selves, when under condemnation] was crucified with [more properly „*in*,”] him [that is, was *represented* in Jesus when he was crucified], so that the body of sin might be destroyed [Jesus in his own person represented sin as a whole, and as such he was „made a curse for sin”], that we may no longer be enslaved to sin; for he who died [and *only* he who died *thus* representatively in Jesus death, that is, who accepts of the divine statement that Christ died for *his sins*, only such an one] has been *justified* from sin” (vs. 6,7).

„And if [after being thus as sinners represented in Jesus’ sacrifice, and justified thereby] we [as justified persons] died *with* him, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer lords it over him. For the death which he died, he died by sin [our sin imputed to him], but the life which he lives he lives by [the favor and reward of] God. Thus do you *account* yourselves dead indeed unto sin [as sharers with Jesus of the penalty of the world’s sin], but [as] living by [the favor or reward of] God in the anointed Jesus.” (vs. 8-11—*Diaglott.*)

In view of these facts, „Let not sin therefore *reign* in your mortal body, that ye should obey its desires; neither present your members to sin as instruments of iniquity; but [according to your consecration, and in the carrying out of that *death* which you already *reckon* accomplished] present yourselves to God as if alive from the dead [just as though you were risen actually, and possessed your promised immortal, spiritual body complete], and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness” that you may be used of him as his agents and mouthpieces.

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