

HOW WILL SIN BE ERADICATED? BY MIGHT OR BY RIGHT BY FORCE OR BY LOVE●

Truth for the Final Generation

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THE DEEP SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD MESSAGE

INTRODUCTION

Why all the controversy about the message on the **character of God**? Is it really important? Does it really matter whether God kills His opponents by the use of **violent force**? Does it matter **how** the wicked are destroyed so long as they **are** destroyed?

These are questions *some* people ask when they hear about the message on *God's character*.

These questions are seriously important even though some professed Christians may not think so.

There are some who believe that any discussion on the character of God is useless. We can perhaps understand the unbeliever's apathy to such a subject, but certainly, all believers should be interested in the character of God. And, especially Adventists, who have been blessed with the most insightful and analytical writings in history on this subject through the writings of Ellen G. White. Elementary religion simply presents Christianity within the context of "punishments and rewards". Rewards for the saved and punishments for the unsaved. But even a slightly deeper analysis than the merely superficial, reveals that there are deeper issues.

There is a **great controversy** going on between God and Satan. This controversy has to do with, Who is right? Which government is the better? Or, as a matter of fact, which government can work successfully at all.

But before we can even get into the deeper analysis, we should be reminded immediately that the scripture invites, in fact admonishes, us to know God's character. Please open your Bibles right now and read these two passages of scripture: Jeremiah 9:23,24; John 17:3.

“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” Jer. 9:23-24

“And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3

Furthermore, the advanced sanctification which is required of God’s final generation of living saints demands a greater understanding and experience than merely the understanding of “fear of punishment” and “desire for reward”. Scripture informs us that when the character of love has matured in the believer’s soul then perfect love will cast out fear. Open your Bibles and read it for yourself in 1 John 4:16-19 (note especially verse 18).

*“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that heareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.** “1 john 4: 16-19*

It is for this reason that the **fullness** of the message of the Character of God is a **last-day** message, a message essential for the Christian character perfection of God’s final generation of living saints. It is in fact a **sealing message**.

“When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” C.O.L. 69

“Those, who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the

people, 'Behold your God'. The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love." C.O.L. 415

SECTION A

DEEP ISSUE AT STAKE IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY BETWEEN GOD & SATAN

At the beginning of the great controversy in heaven Satan laid certain charges against God's government and character.

Satan set up a rival government to God's government and he claimed that God's government was **not** the best qualified to govern the creation. Satan actually **claimed** that the principles of his government were **superior** to the principles of God's government.

Here is a comprehensive review of Satan's charges against God and His government:

“Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death.” D.A. 24

“Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good.” D.A. 57

The big question is: Who is telling the **truth? Who is right?**

Along with this big question are others:

Is there any *essential* difference between the character of God and the character of Satan?

Or, does God **ultimately** operate the same way as Satan does in dealing with the opponents of His government?

But the **most** fundamental questions are these:

(i) Can Satan's government really work? Satan claims it can.

God pronounces that it cannot.

(ii) Is God's government all that He claims it is, that is, the government of **absolutely** unselfish love?

God claims it is.

Satan pronounces that it is not.

Who is telling the truth?

When we ask the question as to whether or not Satan's government can work, what do we mean by **work**?

For a proposed universal government to work successfully, **and on its own**, it must have the **ability** and **capacity**, the **power** and **wisdom** to maintain the life, the order, the peace, the smooth efficient functioning, the well-being, the happiness, joy, beauty, and **every other excellence** required for the successful running of the universe. If it cannot, the result must inevitably be total collapse of order, peace, and functional harmony resulting in chaos, destruction and death.

Satan's government can either work or it cannot.

If it cannot work then, if, and, when, it is left to itself by God, it will collapse to destruction.

If it can work at all, then Satan is right and God is wrong.

In either case there can be no question of God using physical violent force to put down Satan's government, for were God to do this, in the very act of doing it, He would lose the great controversy.

He would show Himself untruthful and the seeds of rebellion would remain to arise again.

In other words the great controversy between God and Satan cannot be settled by the use of force on God's part. It must be settled by a demonstration of the principles by which each government operates. And the demonstration must clearly show which government, left to itself, is capable of giving and maintaining life, order, peace, and efficient harmonious orderly functioning of the universe. God must answer every Satanic charge!

Let us pause at this point and find out whether our logic is, in fact, correct and based upon the word of God. Does God employ compulsory, physical force in order to put down Satan's rebellion? Or, does He allow Satan's government to run its course to the point where He, God, will give it up to itself?

Well the Word is clear,

*“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: **and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**” James 1:13-15.*

.. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. “Zech 4:6.

“The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the**

character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2." D.A. 22

"God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth: but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.**" D.A.759.

Satan's rebellion, his government of sin, **was not to be overcome by force.** The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are emphatically clear. There can be no mistaking this point. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force.

Now it should be equally obvious that if Satan's government of sin is not to be overcome by force and yet is to be overcome, it must be overcome by some other means!

Now God has a very easy and foolproof method of dealing with other "gods" and their governments. Since a god by definition must be **self-existent** and **independent** of any outside power, all God has to do to anyone or any government which claims to be a god or to be a better government than His, is to leave it completely alone. If the person and his government survives and continues functioning without God, then, that person must be a God and his government must be life maintaining.

But if the person with his government collapses to destruction, then, it is absolute proof that there is only one true eternal and infinite

God, YAHWEH, and any other pretended god or government is **self-destructive**.

So it is very easy for God to destroy. He does not have to use compelling, violent, physical, coercive force. Since God is constantly upholding the creation by His power, wisdom, and love, if He ceases His work, creation would simply collapse to destruction.

Therefore in order to destroy Satan and his government of sin, all God has to do is to completely withdraw His life-sustaining power, righteousness, wisdom and love from Satan and his government and Satan would collapse to destruction and eternal death!

Yes, friend, God has to do *everything* for the maintenance of the creation. If He *does nothing* the creation would collapse. God therefore does not have to use any compelling force to overthrow any rival government. All He needs to do is *to do nothing* in terms of sustaining, i.e. all He needs to do is to withdraw His active, sustaining energy *from those who do not want Him*. And He never *withdraws arbitrarily*. He *withdraws always in* accordance with the *absolute principles of freedom and choice*.

SECTION B

DEEPER ISSUES AT STAKE IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

If God had withdrawn His sustaining, life-giving and maintaining power from Satan and his hosts in the beginning they would have perished. But the unfallen angels would not have understood that death, permanent death, is the absolutely inevitable result of sin.

Therefore, **not only** does God **not** use force to put down rebellion, but He wants it to be known and understood and appreciated by all His creatures that he does **not** use force to destroy sinners.

Death is the absolutely inevitable end-result of sin. And God wants all of His creatures to **understand** this fact.

“At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. **Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin.** A doubt of God’s goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.” D.A. 764

God will “destroy” Satan and his hosts not by the use of violent force but by completely withdrawing from them and leaving them to reap the full results of sin. And by the time this will have been done, God would have allowed enough time for the full demonstration of the issues at stake.

“It was God’s purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. *He had claimed that*

these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe. "D.A. 759

And it has taken quite some time.

But God is patiently waiting. He moves as fast as His followers move in their understanding of the nature of sin, the character of God and how He deals with the sin problem.

Even the holy angels with their superior intellects and unfallen minds took a long time to understand the nature of sin.

"Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The arch apostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion." D.A. 758

And even though the character of Satan was clearly revealed to the angels at the cross, they did not fully understand all that was involved in the great controversy. God had to allow more time. And He is still waiting for the full development of all the issues.

"Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then

understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve... "D.A. 761

At last the great controversy will come to an end. And when Satan and his hosts are at last given up to the second death at the end of the millennium, every created intelligence will understand that it is the nature of sin to be self-destructive, and when God withdraws completely from Satan's hosts and government they will collapse to the destruction of the second death. Ellen White puts it beautifully:-

"But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law." D.A. 764

Yes, friend, it takes time to understand the character of God. It took the angels until the cross to understand some of the issues and they are still learning. So we are not surprised when people find difficulty with this subject. It takes time.

The character of God requires the longest time to be understood when compared with other doctrines. And Satan has capitalized on the difficulties.

SECTION C

DIFFICULTIES IN GRASPING THE “CHARACTER OF GOD” MESSAGE

One of the biggest difficulties in understanding this wonderful subject is the difficulty caused by tradition and traditional misinterpretation.

“Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that **tradition** and **misinterpretation** have **obscured** the teaching of the Bible concerning the **character** of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His **dealing** with sin.” G. C 492

Satan hides behind the traditional misinterpretation. Satan thrives when the people are ignorant of God’s character and ways. Jesus came to unveil the traditional deception and to reveal God’s real character.

“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, **with all the woe** that has resulted, **he charges upon the Creator**, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and **suffering**, and **death**. Jesus was to **unveil this deception**.”
D.A. 24

Here we are plainly told that it is a **deception** to look upon God as the author of **sin and suffering and death!**

Satan has been consistent and persistent in his efforts to misrepresent the character of God. And whenever this truth is presented he is stirred into a state of panic!

“Satan’s efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to

regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages.” G.C. x

Satan even hides behind Bible language. For example, the sufferings which fell upon Israel are usually called “punishments” visited upon them by the direct decree of God. Such language has to be correctly interpreted because we are told that:

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;” “for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work.** By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will.” G. C 35

Of course the Bible explains all the Old Testament punitive language in Deut. 31:16-18 and Isa. 54:7,8; 59:2.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles

shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. “Deut, 31: 16-18

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. “Isa. 54:7-8

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. “Isa 59:2

Ellen White has left on record the clearest expression of the mechanism of destruction:

“ God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God’s hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty.” G. C. 36

But tradition is not easy to eradicate. From way back in the days of the Jews God had been trying to teach them about His character, but they would not learn.

“It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God’s law, but this truth had become perverted. **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.** Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” was looked upon by the Jews as “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;” and they hid their faces from Him. Isa. 53:4, 3.

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. **The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.** But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ.” D.A. 471

Earlier, we read a statement from the book the *Great Controversy* (page 35) where Ellen White explains that the various forms of suffering of ancient Israel were expressed in language which says “God smote them” or “God destroyed them” or “God sent fiery serpents to attack them,” etc. The question is usually asked: Why does the Bible use such “destructive” language if God does not use force to destroy sinners?

To find the answer we must find out how inspiration worked in the giving of the scriptures. Follow carefully:

“The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible

must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes

“The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.” ISM:20

It is clear then that the language which seems to suggest the violent use of force by God needs to be correctly understood. Deut.31:16-18; Isaiah 54:7,8.

SECTION D

JESUS CHRIST: THE CLEAREST REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER

When we want to understand the character of God we must first look at the life and death of Jesus Christ. He came to reveal the character of God. He came to reveal the infinite love of God and to show us clearly the two dimensions of love, justice and mercy.

On the cross He suffered God's wrath for all mankind and He suffered and died the second death under that wrath for us. Therefore if we want to know the mechanism by which God's wrath "destroys" we need only to look at Calvary. And then we **must** interpret all the traditional punitive language **by the light** that streams from Calvary.

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. **In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour's atonement.** Those who study the Redeemer's wonderful sacrifice grow in grace and knowledge." SDA B.G. 5:1137

"In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ suffered in man's stead, and the human nature of the Son of God staggered under the terrible horror of the guilt of sin, until from His pale and quivering lips was forced the agonizing cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" but if there is no other way by which the salvation of fallen man may be accomplished, then "not as I will, but as thou wilt." Human nature would then and there have died under the horror of the sense of sin, had not an angel from heaven strengthened Him to bear the agony.

“The power that inflicted retributive justice upon man’s substitute and surety, was the power that sustained and upheld the suffering One under the tremendous weight of wrath that would have fallen upon a sinful world. Christ was suffering the death that was pronounced upon the transgressors of God’s law.

“It is a fearful thing for the unrepentant sinner to fall into the hands of the living God. This is proved by the history of the destruction of the old world by a flood, by the record of the fire which fell from heaven and destroyed the inhabitants of Sodom. *But never was this proved to so great an extent as in the agony of Christ, the Son of the infinite God, when He bore the wrath of God, for a sinful world.* It was in consequence of sin, the transgression of God’s law, that the Garden of Gethsemane has become preeminently the place of suffering to a sinful world. No sorrow, no agony, can measure with that which was endured by the Son of God.

“Man has not been made a sin-bearer, and he will never know the horror of the curse of sin which the Saviour bore. No sorrow can bear any comparison with the sorrow of Him upon whom the wrath of God fell with overwhelming force. Human nature can endure but a limited amount of test and trial. The finite can only endure the finite measure, and the human nature succumbs; but the nature of Christ had a greater capacity for suffering; for the human existed in the divine nature, and created a capacity for suffering to endure that which resulted from the sins of a lost world. The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to the repenting, believing sinner.” SDA B.C. 5:1103

“The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It is the knowledge that works

transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will recreate the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine.” M.H 425

The cross of Christ reveals the mechanism of wrath. We have already established that rebellion is not to be overcome by compulsive force. At the cross Jesus was punished for our sins. He endured God’s wrath for us. And how did God exercise that wrath? The mechanism is consistently the same for God changes not. (“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Malachi 3:6; “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17). The Father withdrew the beams of His sustaining power from Christ and His humanity suffered and died the second death for all sinners.

“But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour’s agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the **Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.**” D.A. 693

But even in His ministry, before He went to the cross, Jesus revealed the truth of God’s character both by precept and example. His entire life was a revelation of the Father’s gracious character of love.

One of Christ’s most striking demonstrations of the character of God is recorded in Luke 9:52-56.

“And He “sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him.” But the people refused to receive Him, because He was on His

way to Jerusalem. This they interpreted as meaning that Christ showed a preference for the Jews, whom they hated with intense bitterness. Had He come to restore the temple and worship upon Mount Gerizim, they would gladly have received Him; but He was going to Jerusalem, and they would show Him no hospitality. Little did they realize that they were turning from their doors the best gift of heaven. Jesus invited men to receive Him, He asked favors at their hands, that He might come near to them, to bestow the richest blessings. For every favor manifested toward Him, He requited a more precious grace. But all was lost to the Samaritans because of their prejudice and bigotry.

“James and John, Christ’s messengers, were greatly annoyed at the insult shown to their Lord. They were filled with indignation because He had been so rudely treated by the Samaritans whom He was honoring by His presence. They had recently been with Him on the mount of transfiguration, and had seen Him glorified by God, and honored by Moses and Elijah. This manifest dishonor on the part of the Samaritans, should not, they thought, be passed over without marked punishment.

“Coming to Christ, they reported to Him the words of the people, telling Him that they had even refused to give Him a night’s lodging. They thought that a grievous wrong had been done Him, and seeing Mount Carmel in the distance, where Elijah had slain the false prophets, they said “Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” They were surprised to see that Jesus was pained by their words, and still more surprised as His rebuke fell upon their ears, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” And He went to another village.

“It is no part of Christ’s mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, that seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederate with evil angels bring suffering upon their fellow men, in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of his love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. **There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas.**” D.A. 486, 487.

The gift of Christ has fully revealed the Father’s heart:

“Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father’s heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are “thoughts of peace, and not of evil.” Jer.29: 11. It declares that while God’s **hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death.** Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left unemployed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift upon gift. The whole treasury of heaven is open **to those He seeks to save.** Having collected the riches of the universe, and laid open the resources of infinite power, He gives them all into the hands of Christ, and says, All these are for man. Use these gifts to convince him that there is no love greater than Mine in earth or heaven. His greatest happiness will be found in loving Me.

“At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness **stood face to face**. **Here was their crowning** manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against **God**. **He made** it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.

“By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender, and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshippers of self belonged to Satan’s kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone **passes judgment on himself**.

“In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been. Every question of truth and error in the longstanding controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will be demonstrated that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin. There was no defect in God’s government, nor cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the loyal and the rebellious will unite in declaring, “Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints, who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? .. For thy judgments are made manifest.” Rev. 15:3,4. D.A. 51-58.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING CORRECT IDEAS ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER

Wrong ideas about God's character will produce wrong ideas about sanctification and defects in **character development**.

For example, the Jews believed that God loved His own people but hated His enemies. They therefore loved their friends and hated their enemies and they thought they were righteous, for, after all, a man cannot be more righteous than God.

Similarly, false religionists in the Dark Ages killed those who differed with them in belief. They thought they were righteous because they, too, thought that God used physical force to put down His enemies. Jesus, in His teachings, exposed such errors and taught the truth of His Father's character. Open your Bibles now and read Matthew 5:43-48 and John 16:1-3.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maleeth maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans say Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. “Matt. 5:43-48

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. “John 16: 1- 3

“God is love” 1 John 4:8

“Love worketh no ill to His neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. “Romans 13:10.

Love is kind, patient, longsuffering. Love is not easily angered. Love always forgives, never keeps a grudge. Love does not retaliate. Love is generous, harmless, faithful, loyal, always caring, always seeking to save, never seeking its own. God is love. Love is both just and merciful.

God’s justice is His leaving us to our own sinful choice if we persistently and irreversibly reject His salvation. “God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. G.C. 36

This is His justice.

God hates sin because sin is empty and destructive, it is a principle at war with the principle of self-sacrificing love which is the foundation of God’s government.

Yes friend, Satan and his hosts will finally be destroyed. Yes friend, God is a God of “terrible” justice.

Yes friend, there have been examples of the “outpouring of wrath” in the Old Testament and the New.

But through it all we are to understand that rebellion is not being put down by force. God simply withdraws and allows sin to self-destruct when it becomes “ripe”.

We can now more fully understand what John means when he writes in 1 John 4: 18.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. “

Yes! the wonderful truth of God’s character sets us free from being afraid of God. Rather, we should love, admire and adore Him. And we should be afraid of sin and hate it and shun it like leprosy because it kills.

“To know God is to love Him.” D.A. 22

Yes, fellow believers, yes friends, the mechanism of destruction is too clearly revealed to be misunderstood. We serve a wonderful God! How refreshing to know that our Heavenly Father does not behave like Satan in any way at all. God’s character is absolutely, completely righteous. His character is a transcript of His law!

DOES GOD GIVE HIS CREATURES A GENUINE CHOICE

To say that God has given His intelligent creatures *freedom of choice* and to also say that He kills those who choose another government than His, is absurd.

In order for *freedom* of choice to be *genuine* and absolute each creature must be free to choose and to *receive* the results of that choice without any *external* threat.

If there is death in choosing sin, that death must be the result of the sin itself.

If there is eternal life in choosing God's government, that life must be the result of God's government itself.

God wants us to know that we have a *genuine* choice. If we choose sin we shall reap corruption from sin. If we choose righteousness, by choosing Christ, we shall reap eternal life through the Holy Spirit. The scriptures are too clear on this matter to be misunderstood.

“For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. “Pro. 8:35,36

“The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness. “ Pro. 11:5-6

“In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. “Pro. 12:28

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth,

that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. “Gal. 6:7-8

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” Rom. 6:23

“We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. ***The sinner brings the punishment upon himself His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result.*** Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.”** 1 SM 235

“David had neglected the duty of punishing the crime of Ammon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and the impenitence of the son, the Lord permitted events to take their natural course, and did not restrain Absalom. When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.” p.p. 728

“God destroys no man.- Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the firstborn of all in his house and of all the families

in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Galatians 6:7. Did men realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow.” C O.L. 84

Conclusion

We close with these precious gems from Desire of Ages page 480 & 466.

“It is not fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him.”

“In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.”

May this knowledge of God’s character change your motives, your attitudes, your very life!

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