

The Fires of Hell

Sabbath Afternoon, November 26

How shall we search the Scriptures? Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions? or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth? Many who read and even teach the Bible, do not comprehend the precious truth they are teaching or studying.

Men entertain errors, when the truth is clearly marked out; and if they would but bring their doctrines to the word of God, and not read the word of God in the light of their doctrines, to prove their ideas right, they would not walk in darkness and blindness, or cherish error. Many give the words of Scripture a meaning that suits their own opinions, and they mislead themselves and deceive others by their misinterpretations of God's word.

—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 36.

Oh, how deceptive is the human heart! How easy it is to harmonize with that which is evil! There is nothing more detrimental to the soul's interest, its purity, its true and holy conceptions of God, and of sacred and eternal things, than constantly giving heed to and exalting that which is not from God. It poisons the heart, and degrades the understanding. Pure truth can be traced to its divine Source, by its elevating, refining, sanctifying influence upon the character of the receiver. . . .

“Take heed, therefore, how ye hear” (Luke 8:18), is an admonition of Christ. We are to hear for the sake of learning the truth, that we may walk in it. And again: “Take heed what ye hear” (Mark 4:24). Examine closely, “prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21), “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). This is the counsel of God; shall we heed it?

—*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 78, 79.

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.

—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 56.

Sunday, November 27

Immortal Worms?

With Satan at their head, the multitude move on. Kings and warriors follow close after Satan, and the multitude follow after in companies. Each company has its leader, and order is observed as they march over the broken surface of the earth to the Holy City. Jesus closes the gates of the city, and this vast army surround it, and place themselves in battle array, expecting a fierce conflict. . . .

Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained. Said the angel, “The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon.”

—*Early Writings*, pp. 293, 294.

“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” “The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.” “In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.”

—*Maranatha*, p. 371.

To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes.

The history which the great I AM has marked out in His word, uniting link after link in the prophetic chain, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tells us where we are today in the procession of the ages, and what may be expected in the time to come. All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order.

—*Education*, p. 178.

Monday, November 28

The Fires of Hell

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion.

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. . . .

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. . . . By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 763, 764.

God does not desire the destruction of any. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11. Throughout the period of probationary time His Spirit is entreating men to accept the gift of life. It is only those who reject His pleading that will be left to perish. God has declared that sin must be destroyed as an evil ruinous to the universe. Those who cling to sin will perish in its destruction.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 123.

God is full of love and plenteous in mercy; but He will by no means acquit those who neglect the great salvation He has provided. The longlived antediluvians were swept from the earth because they made void the divine law. God will not again bring from the heavens above and the earth beneath waters as His weapons to use in the destruction of the world; but when next His vengeance shall be poured out against those who despise His authority, they will be destroyed by fire concealed in the bowels of the earth, awakened into intense activity by fires from heaven above. Then from the purified earth shall arise a song of praise: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Revelation 5:13. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." And every one who has made the heavenly treasure the first consideration, . . . will join in the glad triumphant strain.

—*Our High Calling*, p. 252.

Tuesday, November 29

The Saints in Purgatory

The advancing centuries witnessed a constant increase of error in the doctrines put forth from Rome. Even before the establishment of the Papacy, the teachings of heathen philosophers had received attention and exerted an influence in the church. Many who professed conversion still clung to the tenets of their pagan philosophy, and not only continued its study themselves but urged it upon others as a means of extending their influence among the heathen. Thus were serious errors introduced into the Christian faith. Prominent among these was the belief in man's natural immortality and his consciousness in death. This doctrine laid the foundation upon which Rome established the invocation of saints and the adoration of the virgin Mary. From this sprung also the heresy of eternal torment for the finally impenitent, which was early incorporated into the papal faith.

Then the way was prepared for the introduction of still another invention of paganism, which Rome named purgatory, and employed to terrify the credulous and superstitious multitudes. By this heresy is affirmed the existence of a place of torment, in which the souls of such as have not merited eternal damnation are to suffer punishment for their sins, and from which, when freed from impurity, they are admitted to heaven.

—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 332, 333.

God is approached through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the only way through which He forgives sins. God cannot forgive sins at the expense of His justice, His holiness, and His truth. But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner's only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free. There is only one channel and that is accessible to all, and through that channel a rich and abundant forgiveness awaits the penitent, contrite soul and the darkest sins are forgiven. . . .

The incense that is offered now by men, the masses that are said for the deliverance of souls from purgatory, are not of the least avail with God. All the altars and sacrifices, the traditions and inventions whereby men hope to earn salvation are fallacies. No sacrifices are to be offered without; for the great High Priest is performing His work in the holy place. No prince or monarch dare venture within the holy enclosure.

—*Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 912, 913.*

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.

—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 35.

Wednesday, November 30

A Paradise With Disembodied Souls

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.

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." Psalm 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.

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 545.

"For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

Peter here shows that David could not have spoken in reference to himself, but definitely of Jesus Christ. . . . David, as king of Israel, and also as a prophet, had been specially honored by God. In prophetic vision he was shown the future life and ministry of Christ. He saw His rejection, His trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

David testified that the soul of Christ was not to be left in hell (the grave), nor was His flesh to see corruption. Peter shows the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus of Nazareth. God had actually raised Him up from the tomb before His body saw corruption. He was now the exalted One in the heaven of heavens.

—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 244, 245.

Thursday, December 1

The Biblical View

Jesus has loved men, and has made every provision that the bloodbought soul shall have a new birth, a new life derived from His own life. . . . “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Those who believe in Christ derive their motive power and the texture of their characters from Him in whom they believe.

—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 299.

Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. . . . The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life. “He that believeth in me,” said Jesus, “though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” John 11:25, 26.

To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death,” “he shall never taste of death.” John 8:51, 52. To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with Christ in God, and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:4.

—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 187.

No one less holy than the Only Begotten of the Father, could have offered a sacrifice that would be efficacious to cleanse all—even the most sinful and degraded—who accept the Saviour as their atonement and become obedient to Heaven’s law. Nothing less could have reinstated man in God’s favor.

Christ gave His life to make it possible for man to be restored to the image of God. It is the power of His grace that draws men together in obedience to the truth. . . .

To the heart that has become purified, all is changed. . . . The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God. Weak and erring men and women show to the world that the redeeming power of grace can cause the faulty character to develop into symmetry and abundant fruitfulness.

—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 103.

Friday, December 2

For Further Reading

This Day With God, “Securing Our Inheritance,” p. 152;

The Great Controversy, “Can Our Dead Speak to Us?” pp. 51–562.