

Knowledge of Evil



It was not the will of God that man should have a knowledge of evil. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." --Gen. 2:17. God withheld the knowledge of evil in mercy, and offered man knowledge of good from the tree of life. Yet Satan convinced man that God was withholding from him great good, and that the knowledge of evil along with the good would result in man's becoming like God.

Man distrusted God, believed the words of Satan, and ate of the forbidden tree. The great wisdom obtained was "the knowledge of sin and a sense of guilt." (Story of Redemption, p.37.)

The Guilt of Sin.

The consciousness of disobedience brought to Adam and Eve an experience in the guilt of sin. When angels instructed the guilty pair concerning the love and condescension of Jesus to save the lost race, they were brought to repentance toward God's law. (See Story of Redemption, pp. 42-51).

"Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ." Desire of Ages, p. 322.

As with every repentant, believing sinner, we must assume that the guilt of sin was removed from Adam and Eve, transferred to Jesus, their substitute.

Now, it would be appropriate to ask: Since Adam and Eve had committed only one act of disobedience, and since their guilt had been removed by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, why could not they have been reinstated to the Garden of Eden, and face-to-face communion with God?

The reason is that they had obtained a knowledge of evil, something which is more difficult to remove than the guilt of sin.

The Knowledge of Evil.

"It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority that made our first parents transgressors, and that brought into the world a knowledge of evil."
Education, p. 25.

A knowledge of evil is not a knowledge about evil. Adam and Eve were told of the history of Satan's rebellion before they sinned. This gave them a knowledge about evil. But a knowledge of evil is what they gained when they experienced evil through their own rebellion against God. A knowledge of evil is an experience in evil. (See Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 504; S .D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. I, p. 1084).

This knowledge of evil has brought to the human race a bent to evil (see Education, p. 29). Before he sinned, man was in a state of holiness; since he sinned, he is in a state of sin, and in this state, he cannot approach into God's presence.

Cursing the Ground.

"God cursed the ground because of their (Adam's and Eve's) sin in eating of the tree of knowledge, and declared, 'In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' He had apportioned them the good, but withheld the evil. Now He declares that they shall eat of it, that is, they should be acquainted with evil all the days of their life."
Story of Redemption, p. 40.

"The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil" Education, p. 29.

God has decreed that man shall bear this knowledge of evil all the days of his life, and will "eat of it"—experience it--during his probationary time on earth. Man does not regain the state of holiness instantaneously. He is not released from the fearful struggle with his sinful nature in one act of sovereign grace.

"Man has fallen; and it will be the work of a lifetime, be it longer or shorter, to recover from that fall, and regain, through Christ, the image of the divine, which he lost by sin and continued transgression."— Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 448.

"The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a life-long struggle."
Signs of the Times, June 8, 1904.

The apostle Paul knew in his own experience the results of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Every day his will and his desires clashed with duty (see Ministry of Healing, p. 453).

The holy apostles and prophets confessed the sinfulness of their nature.
(Acts of the Apostles, p .561)

The apostle John did not claim to be sinless. He was seeking that state of sinless perfection (see Sanctified Life, p. 69), a state which must be sought for as long as probationary time shall last.

Life Through Dying

We should carefully notice that the ground was cursed in order that it might become a blessing to man. God said: "Cursed be the ground for thy sake." Eden was designed to be a school for sinless man. But when he lost his state of holiness, a perfect garden could not teach man the lessons which were now essential for him to learn. Only the earth, cursed with the knowledge of evil, could teach man those lessons essential to his regaining the lost state of holiness.

"Although the earth was blighted with the curse, nature was still to be man's lesson-book. It could not now represent goodness only; for evil was everywhere present, marring earth and sea and air with its defiling touch. Where once was written only the character of God, the knowledge of good, was now written also the character of Satan, the knowledge of evil.

From nature, which now revealed the knowledge of good and evil, man was continually to receive warning as to the results of sin." Education, p. 26.

"Though marred by sin, it (nature) speaks not only of creation but of redemption. Though the earth bears testimony to the curse in the evident signs of decay, it is still rich and beautiful in the tokens of life-giving power. The trees cast off their leaves, only to be robed with fresher verdure; the flowers die, to spring forth in new beauty; and in every manifestation of creative power is held out the assurance that we may be created anew in 'righteousness and holiness of truth.' Eph. 4:24, margin.

Thus the very objects and operations of nature that bring so vividly to mind our great loss become to us the messengers of hope."-- Ibid, p. 27.

The lesson of nature is wonderfully clear. The knowledge of evil is written on every living thing. All bear the seeds of death. Nature can only continue to live by a continual process of

dying. So it is with those who desire to be robed in the new life of Christ. Life can only be gained through death.

In every man's nature is this knowledge of evil, the sinful nature, the bent to evil. His will and his desires clash with the will of God. Life in Christ can be achieved only as the believer in Jesus will confess the sinfulness of his nature, choose to do the will of God, however crucifying it is to his nature, and by faith take hold of divine power that he may live in the Spirit, and not in the flesh (Romans 8 :8).

He may walk in the Spirit only as long as he continues to die to selfishness and pride. As he partakes of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing are cut away from his character, and he is made a living power for good.

"Man may grow up into Christ, his living Head. It is not the work of a moment, but that of a lifetime. By growing daily in the divine life, he will not attain to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ until his probation ceases."—
Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 367.

The Blotting Out of Sin and the 144,000.

Inspiration reveals that the last community of saints will regain a state of spiritual holiness which Adam lost because of transgression. In their mortal state, they will live without a Mediator in the sanctuary, and then stand face to face with their Creator. This means that before Jesus comes, their character becomes pure and holy. (See *Our High Calling*, p. 278).

While they will not have holy flesh, they will have holy hearts. No trace of sin will be buried in their minds, for the fountain of evil will have been completely cleansed. This means that before Jesus comes there will be a special work of grace performed for those who will be prepared for the great day of God.

Such a work is now in progress in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus is there to perform the work of special atonement for all who can be benefited by His mediation (see *Early Writings*, p. 251).

Sin is to be blotted out forever, not only from the books of record, but from the natures of God's people. Through the special outpouring of the Spirit, God's people are to be perfected in the moral character. The worshippers must be purged, having "no more conscience of sin"-- Heb. 10:2.

This is the finishing of the mystery of God (Rev. 10:7); the sealing of the saints (Rev. 7:2-4); the development of the firstfruits of the harvest (Rev. 14:4) which all answer to Daniel's

great prophecy of the cleansing of the sanctuary. Concerning this final ministry of Christ, Inspiration declares:

"For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord."-- Lev. 16:30.

"But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."-- Mal. 3:2, 3.

"In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely, for them that are " escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense (or covering--margin)"-- Isa. 4:2-5.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. . . . And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you."-- Joel 2:15, 16, 25.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."-- Acts 3:19.

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifice which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write

them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sins."-- Heb. 10:1-3, 14-18.

"And He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and spoke unto those that stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by."-- Zech. 3:1-5.

No More Knowledge of Evil.

With sin blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ and by the power of the baptism of the perfecting latter rain, God's people will have no more knowledge of evil. They will have, and ever have, a knowledge about evil, but the defilement of the knowledge of evil will be blotted from their minds. They will have no more conscience of sins (Heb. 10:2).

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."— Jer. 50:20.

"O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us : but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast Thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish."— Isa. 26:13, 14.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."-- Zech. 13:2.

"The righteous [in the time of trouble] will not cease their earnest agonizing cries for deliverance. They cannot bring EVIL to mind any particular sins, but in their whole life they can see but little good. Their sins had gone beforehand to judgment, and pardon had been written. Their sins had been borne away into the land of forgetfulness, and they could not bring them to remembrance." Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 135.

" . . . while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 202.

. . . in the final atonement the sins of the truly penitent are to be blotted from the records of heaven, no more to be remembered or come into mind, . . . "

--Ibid, p. 358.

"But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment, and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance." --Great Controversy, p. 620.

Only when sin is blotted out will God's people be ready for face-to-face communion with their Creator.

"When John in his mortal state beheld the glory of God, he fell as one dead; he was not able to endure the sight. But when mortal shall have put on immortality, the ransomed ones are like Jesus, for they see Him as He is. They stand before the throne, signifying that they are accepted. All their sins are blotted out, all their transgressions borne away. Now they can look upon the undimmed glory from the throne of God." --Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 467. .



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