

Spiritual Death.

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Moses says: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Gen. 2, 7. The expression "living soul" is employed in Gen. 1, 20 in describing a "creature that hath life" in the waters and in Gen. 1, 24 in describing a "living creature" on the earth. Gen. 7, 22 we have this description of man and beast: "In their nostrils is the breath of life." However, twice

Scripture makes the assertion that man was alive. God "breathed into" man's "nostrils the breath of life," and "man became a living soul." Luther considered this repetition significant. And may we not — by assigning for this repeating of the statement that man was alive the same reason which Joseph assigned for the doubling of Pharaoh's dream — consider this repetition as a divine indication of the certainty of man's living? By virtue of God's "breath of life" man's life differed from the life of the brute. In the primeval state man's life was of a higher order; man possessed a higher degree of life than the lower animals. Fresh from the hand of God, man had a natural life and a spiritual life.

However, man's life of righteousness and true holiness was of brief duration. As a flower of the field, which in the morning fills the air with its fragrance, but already in the evening fades and withers, so was man's life. The ancient Jews believed that "according to the literal rendering of Ps. 49, 12 (in Heb. v. 13), man did not remain unfallen one single night." (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. II, 711.) The passage reads: "Adam in honor abode not a night." Persuaded by the Serpent, Adam transgressed the sole command by eating of the forbidden fruit and immediately forfeited the dignity and preeminence of being called a "living soul" in the full sense of the expression. While the grace of God, which has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, stayed the penalty of Adam's physical death for 930 years, Adam, nevertheless, was dead in God's sight. He was dead in the sense in which Ephraim was dead "when he offended in Baal." Hos. 13, 1. This state of our first parent after the Fall the Scriptures call being "*dead in trespasses and sins.*" This latter state of man's heart is the subject of this paper.

- I. Spiritual death may be defined as the separation of the soul from the Fountain of Life.
- II. By nature all men are spiritually dead.
- III. Manifestations of the state of the heart.
- IV. Spiritual death is a state of wrath.
- V. Vivification.

I. Spiritual death may be defined as the separation of the soul from the Fountain of Life.

The classical passage on spiritual death is Eph. 2, 1—6. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "*You . . . were dead in trespasses and sins.*" In this passage the term "dead" is not employed in its

every-day meaning to denote the separation of the soul from the body physically. The Ephesians were by no means corpses. These Greeks were educated and highly civilized people. No doubt Paul applied the word "dead" to these wide-awake Ephesians, not only for the purpose of arousing and holding their interest and attention, but primarily to present the truth concerning their total depravity so vividly and forcibly as to leave an indelible impression on their minds and memories. If a comparison of things divine is permissible, we are constrained to admit that the sentence, "You were dead in trespasses and sins," has more power than the pure and naked truth, "The *natural man* receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." As soon as the term "dead" enters the ear, the mind associates the state of men dead in sins with the state of men physically dead and spontaneously makes comparisons. By searching the Scriptures, we may carry out the resemblance into great detail.

Physical death may be defined as a separation of the soul from the body. James says (2, 26): "The body without the spirit is dead." A more elaborate definition is given us by the Preacher, who was king over Israel in Jerusalem, when he writes:—

"The silver cord (is) loosed;
The golden bowl (is) broken.
Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was;
And the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it."

Ecc. 12, 6. 7.

In the primeval state man's soul was fastened to God with the silver cord of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Rom. 13, 10. But man, acting as a free moral agent, broke asunder this band and cast away this cord. Man severed the tie by sinning. Sin is the sword which cuts the silver cord. Isaiah says (59, 2): "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God."

God is the Source of life. Jesus says: "I am the Life"; "I am the Bread of Life." John 14, 6; 6, 35. Peter calls Him the "Prince of Life." Acts 3, 15. "With Thee," says the psalmist, "is the Fountain of life." Ps. 36, 9. St. John says (1, 4): "In Him was Life; and the Life was the light of men." The same truth is presented Col. 2, 19 under an imagery eminently fitting our subject. Christ is there represented as the "Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." In

John 15 Jesus says: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

Separation from Jesus, the Fountain of Life, is the essence of spiritual death. Therefore Jesus gives utterance to these sad words: "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." John 5, 40. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." John 15, 6. In Eph. 4, 18 we read that the Gentiles are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." Eph. 2, 12 Paul explains the expression "dead in trespasses and sins" by saying: "Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

Physically the spiritually dead Ephesians still lived, moved, and had their being in God. But that is true also of the brute beasts. Accordingly, Scripture says of men apart from God that they are like beasts. Prov. 28, 15 we read: "As a roaring lion and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people." Again we read: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto thee." Ps. 32, 9. Solomon says: "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men that God might manifest them, as that they might see that they themselves are beasts." Eccl. 3, 18.

Moreover, men, when separated from the Fountain of Life, have fallen to a lower level than brutes. The prophet Isaiah says (1, 3): "The Lord hath spoken: The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." In Eph. 4, 19 the spiritually dead are spoken of as men who are "past feeling." By the mouth of Ezekiel (11, 19) the Lord says that such have a "stony heart" in their flesh. "They have made their faces harder than a rock," says Jeremiah, chap. 5, 3. "I knew," says the God of Israel, "that thou art hard, and thy neck is an iron sinew and thy brow brass." Is. 48, 4. That state of the heart St. Paul meant when he wrote to the Ephesians (2, 1): "*Ye . . . were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

(To be continued.)
