

Zahakiel: Let's begin. Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. Thank You for Your provision and protection. Thank You for perfect laws that support us in life. Bless our convocation by Your Spirit's inspiration. In YAHSHUA's holy name, AMEN.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Pastor Chick: Barb: Amen.

daphna: Amen

Ruthline16: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Peter: Amen

Zahakiel: Tonight, I have given our study the relatively long name, "A Rewarder of Them that Diligently Seek Him." It is taken, of course, from the verse: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)

I would like to explore the ideas that this verse presents, but first I believe it is necessary to discuss what a "reward" is, within the context of the Christian faith.

Unfortunately, many who claim the cross of Christ are unclear about the distinction between a "reward" and a "goal." While the Scriptures do not use the actual word "goal," it does use the equivalent term "purpose," and of this it says: "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." (Acts 11:22, 23)

"And [Saul] said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Yahshua whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.'" (Acts 26:15,16)

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Dan 1:8)

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2Cor 9:6, 7)

The way that the Scriptures describe goals, by means of the word "purpose," indicates an intended course of action, freely chosen. We see that Yahweh has His goals for mankind, both overall (that all men should be saved – 1Tim 2:1-4) and specifically as in the case of Saul, who became Paul.

In terms of what He has expressed to us, Yah has one primary goal – to save mankind from sin. All that we pray for – whether it is for the healing of the sick, for a safe journey, or for a blessing on our meals – must be requested in harmony with this overarching goal.

We have spoken in the past about praying "in the Lord's will," and how we may know whether or not we are asking for the right things. This is actually quite simple. If our goal, if our purpose, is to redeem mankind from sin, then it is in harmony with His will. Prayers for forgiveness, when coupled with repentance, are for the redemption of the self. Intercessory prayers are for others. Even prayers for our "daily needs" are really for the salvation of others, because we are asking for the things that we need (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) so that we can continue to do Yah's will, which involves evangelism and other work associated with the Gospel ministry. Nothing is beneath our Father's notice, but for those filled with the Holy Spirit, even the small things, even the ordinary things of life, will be toward the Almighty's ultimate goal.

Some years ago I was asked, by an SDA that I met online, why we were friends. He was actually a member of the Shepherd's Rod movement – a group we haven't spoken about in a while – but he was fairly unusual for a Davidian SDA. Most of these that I have met have been pretty outspoken about the problems with the mainstream Church as they see it, and they are quick to give voice to their particular take on Adventist doctrines. This individual, an older gentleman, was actually a very "gentle" man. He had a meek spirit, and was willing to discuss doctrinal issues with me in a calm, inviting way. He never did agree with me on the CSDA view of last day events and the Mark of the Beast, because his own doctrines were very different. When I would point out an inconsistency, he was honest enough to say he didn't understand why the doctrines he accepted said certain things, but that he had chosen to receive them as inspired anyway.

During the course of one of our conversations, we were speaking about human relationships, and I told him that, for the Christian, all of our relationships are ultimately about converting people to Christ, or sanctifying them further if they are already born again. He said that, since he had no intention of renouncing Davidian Adventism and accepting what I was saying, he didn't know why we were friends. I replied that, even though my goal (which is really Yahweh's goal) is the salvation of souls by converting them to the truth, this does not mean that the relationships I form along the way are not "real."

Yahweh's purpose is for all men to be saved, but He loves and cares for even those whom He (fore) knows will not be with Him in eternity. Yah's love is not conditional on acceptance, just as His forgiveness (which we discussed last week in some detail) is not conditional on our repentance. The relationships are genuine, "even though" they are founded in Agape. In fact, all our relationships, from friendship, to employer/employee, to marriage, are founded in the principles of Yahweh's perfect Law and character. This is true for every human relationship, whether they are converted or not; but we, who know the Law and Yah's character, can understand it better than those in the world. This is what gives our connections everlasting value, despite the fact that it is built on moments in time, shared experiences, and so on.

Now, the reason I bring this up, and in fact the reason why this relatively straightforward topic has been in the back of my mind for a few weeks now, is because often, when you ask some nominal Christians what their "goals" are, they may say something like, "To get to Heaven." I think that many more would say this if they were honest, although some will realize that it sounds a bit selfish, and perhaps state a more noble purpose instead. But is entrance into "Heaven" really the goal of Christianity?

We actually read relatively little of Heaven in the Bible, at least, the spiritual Heaven that does not just indicate the sky. Of that little, we may read this: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance." (Hebrews 10:34)

Peter calls the final state of the believer "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you." (1Pet 1:4)

The Gospels are very clear on the nature of the relationship of Heaven to the Christian: "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven, for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (Luke 6:23)

"Now when Yahshua heard these things He said unto him, 'Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow me.'" (Luke 18:22)

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven." (Mat 6:1)

Simply put, a reward is something that one obtains as a result of achieving a goal. Heaven, clearly, is not the goal of the Christian life. Even everlasting life is not a goal, a status to attain.

The purpose of the Christian life is salvation, redemption of the individual, and then the dedication of that redeemed individual to the salvation of others. But even this is not the full picture, because "salvation" and "eternal life" are not, actually, the same thing on a spiritual level. Similarly, redemption is not the avoidance of hell. Redemption is not the absence of punishment. It is a much more active idea than that.

Redemption means to be "taken back." It means to be restored to what one was originally intended to be and, as I shared in a previous study, a CSDA Christian is simply a human being in his or her intended state – free from sin, committed to Yah's righteousness, and representative of the wisdom and glory of the Creator. Redemption means to be restored to a relationship with the Father and Son. This relationship, based on a true knowledge of Their character, is spelled out clearly in John 17:3, which explains that the knowledge becomes, in us, "life eternal." The result of this unity, of this relationship, is that the new life is one that is not destined for destruction, but life in harmony with the Divine.

The "reward" in Heaven is, actually, what our Father had intended to give us all along, for why would He (a loving God) create intelligent creatures for the purpose of having them endure the least bit of suffering? We have become so used to infirmities, even those of us who are relatively "healthy," that it actually takes faith to accept what our Creator intended for us.

When we understand that "Heaven" is not the goal, is not the aim of some long, strenuous task, then the main idea underlying all false religions falls away. We do not see the "goal" of our lives as an escape of damnation and entrance into Heaven. We repent of that viewpoint, that our religion is based on works, on earning a prize. Our goal, our sure purpose, is unity with the Father and Son, and in that unity we and others are saved. That is the result, the "reward," as it were, of that unity.

Now, what about those Adventists who say, "Inspired literature tells us that we must 'strive' to be among the 144,000, who follow the Lamb perfectly. Doesn't this indicate that inclusion in that group is a goal?" The "goal" of the Christian may be seen this way, certainly... to be among the redeemed, and in this generation in particular, the goal may be considered as a place among those who have repented of all sin, are pure in the Father's perfect eyes, and follow in the spiritual footsteps of the Savior to the degree that death has no power over them. These are the Priests of restored humanity.

And yet, none of these things are "attainable." None of these things are, indeed, "things" that can be given to us. They are things that we become, not things that we obtain. Qualifications for being among the 144,000 are qualifications of the spirit, of the character. To be among the 144,000 means that one has fully perfected the character of Christ, and this is actually just the same as I was describing above. It is a unity with Him. It is knowledge of His character, and a uniting of our personality with His.

Lest this become too theoretical, the New Testament describes it this way quite simply: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11)

This is an echoing of Yahshua's own invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

The wording is slightly different, to reach different people, and different minds, but the Word is speaking to us of the Sabbath. There is a Day appointed unto holiness, yes, but it is appointed as a holy one for a purpose. All our Father's gifts have purpose, and that of the Sabbath is to teach us that it is not by our labors, not by our efforts, that we accomplish our eternal goals. Labor, strive, work hard... to understand. Struggle, with fear and trembling, to come to know the Father and Son. It requires earnest self-reflection, honest evaluation of one's motives and purpose. And, ultimately, it requires a surrender, so that the majesty of Christ overshadows us – just as the Holy Spirit overshadowed young Mary, and a sinless life is produced. (Luke 1:35) When we understand Yahshua's character, when we come to know Him, then we follow Him perfectly.

If any among us are perplexed with issues of anger, or suspicion of the motives of others, or neglect of duty, or forgetfulness of daily affairs, or learning how to develop spiritually beneficial habits, or anything that impedes the process of our sanctification, let us come to the realization that failure in the Christian life is not the result of not trying hard enough. Failure in Christianity is not about a lack of effort, it is about misunderstanding the goal.

The goal is to be like Christ. The goal is to forget self, and all its infirmities, and to reveal Christ who dwells within us since the moment of conversion and baptism. The goal is to claim, and live out, the precious promises that the Father has made to us.

As I said last week or the week before, the difference between the faith of the true Bride and that of the false women is that our claims, our expectations, are based on the actual promises recorded for us in the Word. When we understand this, then we have all we need. Understanding is the preventer of spiritual failure in those who have the mind of Christ. When we have understanding, then failure has no part in us, just as sin and darkness have no part in us.

Yahshua, who is the Light, and who is perfectly separate from sin, is also the Word in us that says, "I shall not fail, nor be discouraged." All these things are One, just as the Father, Son and Their Spirit within us are all One. When we understand this, we do not fail in either the simplest matters of life, or the grand matters that attend the Gospel ministry. To the refinement of the soul, these things are also One.

Tonight, then, we have an invitation before us, whether members, regulars, visitors, or those who will read the transcript thereafter. Yahshua is calling us to the goal. He is calling us to Himself, and to the Sabbath Rest. He is saying, "I have accomplished it, and what I have begun to accomplish in you, I will bring to completion." (cf. Phil 1:6)

Tonight we are invited to trust in the Savior as perhaps we have not understood how to do before. We submit our thoughts, our actions, our emotions, and our destiny, to His loving care... and we bear witness to the miracles.

We are blessed to follow Yahshua. We are blessed to have attained the goal of His character, for He has given us His character already, and we say to others, "The goal is attained. The reward, the crown of life awaits. "Life in joy and glory awaits. Who will come with us to our Father's House?"

Let us take this question with us to as many as will hear us. The joy of bringing a longing soul to Christ... this also is our wonderful reward.

Are there any comments or questions about tonight's study?

Peter: C:

Adriel: Amen!

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Peter: Thank you for this study. I am happy to be here this even to partake of the blessings that Yah has given unto you to share with his children. I find that this study is a very digestible to even a young child. I would also like to share this study with a Sabbath keeper that I have met a few weeks ago. I believe that it is a message that can touch the hearts of all who are seeking to be in bonds with Yahshua. End.

Pastor Chick: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Pastor Chick: Many will go to their ruin via the idolatry of "Heaven-worship". I am pleased by the principles of this study which take up said idolatry by the roots. END.

Zahakiel: Amen. Any others with thoughts to share? All right, then if not I will ask Bro. Luke to close the meeting with a prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for a clear understanding of the true goals of your faith. We are blessed that they have been accomplished in us by that same faith

already. That we are like Yahshua, that self is dead, and its infirmities crucified. That Yahshua is revealed in us, and the promises you have given us are ours to claim and live out. As we enter into the hours of the Sabbath rest, may the blessings of your spiritual rest be evident in us to those we encounter. And we ask that your Spirit draw them also to lay down their burdens and enter into your rest. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: PC: Amen, Barb: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Adriel: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Peter: Amen.

Ruthline16: Amen

daphna: Amen

.gadriel: Amen, Amen

Naraiel: Amen