

Zahakiel: Pastor, please offer the opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. Thank you for your presence with us for this meeting. May we receive all that you intend for us. Thank you for answering our prayer. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

daphna: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight, our study is called "Objects of Worship." I recall that I've given a study that covered some of this concept some months ago; nevertheless, recent events have reminded me of the principle, and I thought it good to revisit it from an alternative angle.

A question we sometimes get, and perhaps consider for ourselves, is, "Why isn't sincerity enough?" In other words, is it "fair," that we are judged largely according to what we learn in this life? After all, the Scriptures tell us that "knowledge," of the Father and Son is everlasting life, (John 17:3) and in another place that Yahweh's commandment is everlasting life. (John 12:50) This is an interesting parallel for those of us who love the Creator's Law – and so far so good, as far as doctrine goes. But then we read the following, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14)

Now, we might wonder if salvation is a game of chance... for what if we never encounter a preacher of the Gospel? Or what if we encounter one of the many counterfeits, rather than one of the few genuine messengers of the Almighty? Shouldn't people be rewarded for their faith, regardless of how that faith is directed? In answering this question, we know two Biblical facts from which we may draw our conclusion.

First, in regard to the nature of our Father, we know this, "Thy mercy, O Yahweh, is in the Heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." (Psa. 36:5)

"For Yahweh is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psa. 100:5)

Second, we know this, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols; worship [Yahweh], all ye gods." (Psa. 97:7)

Yahshua said, "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'" (Mat 7:21-23)

So we see, then, that Yahweh has great mercy, and inspiration tells us that He will exercise infinite mercy, infinite pity, in extending salvation to mankind. On the other hand, those who worship idols rather than the true God will be confounded, confused, and will fall short of life everlasting. The Messiah even extends this principle to Himself – those who worship an idol of Him, an image of Him that may drive them to good works, but not to a knowledge of His Person and character, will not be sanctified unto salvation.

So, we have received a simple answer to our question – no, sincerity alone is not sufficient. But how do we reconcile this with the Bible's descriptions of Yahweh as One who excels in mercy? We have said, in other studies, that this highlights our own responsibility as those who know the Gospel. And this is a true word – we who know Yahweh will also have His agape-love toward all; therefore, the truly converted soul is invariably engaged in evangelism of one type or another at all times. And yet, it is Yahweh who calls the evangelists. It is Yahweh who places them on the earth where they may be found by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Bible says, after all, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Mat 5:6) It does not say, "They shall be filled IF one of Yah's servants happens to be nearby and available."

This is about Yahweh. This is about the relationship between the Father, and those who seek salvation. This is about the quality of the faith that human beings hold, whether it be of a divine quality, or merely the result of human intellect.

In considering this matter, let me illustrate the principle with a rather unusual example. I'll begin by making a few disclaimers. First, I don't really like to talk about politics, not that of my own country, or that of others. Second, I try to avoid mentioning too many current events in our studies, since it "dates" them a bit, and also because I'm not big on "reactionary" type teaching that depends on circumstances. I prefer to provide studies that reveal principles, and their applications, but every now and then a current event does give us an example to work from, and our discussions following the formal studies will occasionally go into these things.

Having said all that, I've found that the US presidential election this year is quite an interesting study in humanity. The news cycles surrounding the candidates touch on everything from psychology, to religion, to sociology, and the followers of one candidate in particular have caught my interest. This candidate, who recently lost the nomination for

the party of the Democrats, seems to have inspired a particularly powerful current of devotion among a large number of people. There are various reasons for this, which I don't really want to go into tonight; but in examining the devotion itself, I don't think it would be unfair to compare its dynamics to that of a religious movement. This candidate's chances of winning his party's nomination declined steadily over the past few weeks and months; even so, the fervor of those supporting him seemed only to increase proportionally. Even when it seemed all hope was lost, clung to the idea that he could still win, to the degree that some commentators described it as almost cult-like in nature.

Now that the nomination process has ended, the followers have fallen into three main camps. Some have become angry, some have continued to believe that something could happen in the future, and some have compromised their positions and turned their support for another candidate. Perhaps you might see some parallels here that you can appreciate – without, of course, necessarily accepting the policies or positions involved.

Adventists, perhaps to a greater degree than most religions, have gone through "disappointments." When they have occurred, the believers have tended to split into the same three sub-groups: rebels, compromisers, and die-hards.

Now, IF the religion is a true one, then the die-hards have the right of it. They remain, despite all appearances, and work to continue supporting the principles on which their faith is based. Adventists, and CSDAs in particular can, I believe, see themselves to a degree in this "little group," the die-hards that cling to principles despite all odds, and some might say all reason.

But... there is a difference, and of course I remind you I am not talking about policies or personality, merely the quality and type of the faith itself. Although outwardly, the faith of individuals will look exactly the same whether they are worshipping Yahweh, or a graven image, or a false idea, or just a man... it is the object of the devotion that determines whether or not that faith will be rewarded. In terms of the example I've shared with you, the faith of these individuals, these die-hards, was not rewarded. Their candidate did not win the nomination, and in fact attempted to bring his followers into line in support of his victorious counterpart. For all of his charisma he is, after all, just a man... and as a result of his actions, some of his devotees became frustrated, depressed, or defiant.

The world might look at a little Church like ours, under attack by the world and those whom we would consider fallen from the faith, and say, "Don't you think the same thing might happen to you?" In fact, I can tell you that this has happened. Some years ago one of our members, a Canadian brother recently baptized, fell away from the faith. While he became hostile to some of us, he remained friendly with me for a while. I asked him, one day, "Why do you speak with me so pleasantly, when you have such a sharp conflict with

others?" He replied that he believed the CSDA Church would inevitably fall apart very soon, and that I would "need a friend" when it did.

Now, this was many years ago, and here we are still...but we are still very small. We are still very persecuted. We are still, to the eyes of the world, about to "fall apart" or fade into obscurity. So it was prophesied of us; but because of this very thing, we have reason for our faith. This, after all, is the real difference between the true and the false religion, whether that "false" religion is the result of corrupt doctrines, demonic influences, or just based on secular principles and the ideas of men.

The faith of the Christian will be rewarded, because our hope depends, not on the actions of any individual or group of people. The reason why the Bride of Christ will endure, although it may look (outwardly) like a small, insignificant, all-but-defeated group, is because our faith is based on the promises of One who cannot lie. That is the single factor, and it is as simple as that. The Bible says that the faithful will be few, and that they will go through a time of trouble before the end, so severe, so tempting, so apparently hopeless, that all but the most committed, the most settled-into-the-truth, will be sifted out. Only those who endure to the end, it is written, will be saved. In fact, let us read that verse in full: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Mat 10:22)

Not only will there be trials, brethren... and people treating us like fools for believing this "old fashioned, outdated, irrelevant" religion. Not only will we be ridiculed and pressed to compromise on every precious point of our faith... but the emotions stirred up will cause us to be "hated of all men..." How many of us are prepared to face this? In Yahshua, we may endure all things.

Let all who name the name of Christ, and let all who bear the banner of our faith, "Creation Seventh Day Adventist," hide themselves in the Rock that is Yahshua. It is a greater storm coming than flesh alone can bear. We need this ark of safety, this Sure Covenant that our Father has provided. But let us be hopeful, for unlike these groups I have mentioned, with followers that cling to a hope long after it appears to have passed them by... the Object of our worship, the Person of our worship, is not a man, that He should lie or fall short, and is not a rock, or a tree, or a graven image. Yahweh is a living God, who answers prayers, and who is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

This is something that I focused on in that previous study I mentioned, that Yahweh knows those who seek Him, and does His utmost to draw them near. This is the difference between the Bride of Christ, the CSDA Church, and every other religion – even those religions that may not seem to be "religions" at all. That in which one has faith determines

the quality of the religion; and in fact, that which is worshipped is the ONLY thing that determines the quality of that religion.

Now, as CSDAs, when speaking of Victory over Sin and the importance of Church membership, we will often quote the Spirit of Prophecy writings, particularly the one that tells us (I paraphrase) that when the religion we accept kills sin in our hearts, then we have found the right one. I submit this is the same thing. Is the same indicator of the true religion, that it kills sin in the heart, and that the true and living God is the One at the center of its faith. Only Yahweh can overcome sin, only through the Savior can we overcome sin, for He has said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

The quality of the CSDA faith is perfect, although not because of those who hold it. The believers, the saints, may still be in the process of being perfected in the fear of Yahweh. There may be unknown, objectionable traits to discover and overcome in some individuals... but the faith itself is perfect. It is that which transforms the heart, and sanctifies the soul, because the faith is not based on the degree to which its followers are "faith-ful," or sincere and fervent.

Sincerity is about us, but the quality of the faith to save, that depends entirely on the One who is worshipped. Because we trust in Yahweh, we are saved. He is the Savior, the One that saves us. If we had the SAME trust, to the SAME degree, in a false god... that sincerity would be without power, regardless of how fervently we believed it to be true.

This is what it means to be saved by faith, and not by works. Now, this does not mean the followers do not have a part to play. We are not speaking of Gnosticism here, where only the belief matters, and nothing else. By our actions, we are known. By the things we do, we reveal our beliefs, and also the One to whom we direct our worship, for we honor Him by our actions. By our actions we evangelize, by our actions we fulfill our beliefs, and show them to be genuine, preparing our own souls and those of others, for judgment.

I would conclude, then, this way... do not look even to your own faith, for comfort. Do not be tempted to think, "I am very devout in my personal beliefs, therefore I am Ok before Yahweh." No... our work is to "know" Yahweh, and then we will naturally respond with worship. Our work is to learn of Him, by nature, by study of the Scriptures, by prayer, meditation, in song, in acts of mercy we extend toward others, and any other thing that we have learned. Do not look to your own works, or even the strength of your own belief, for courage, or for reassurance.

Look only to Yahweh.

Realize that faith itself is a gift, and the only reason we are able to hold unto Him is because He is holding on to us. Many in the world have great faith, great fervor. We know this... we see members of false religions spending great sums of money building churches, or funding evangelism efforts just as we do. We see people spending their lives walking the streets and talking to people they hope to convert. We see some so devoted to their false beliefs that they will do violence to others in support of their goals... But we may say, as Paul wrote of himself at the very end of his long and blessed walk with Yahshua, "I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2Tim 1:12)

That is our defense, and our high tower, against all the doubts, and temptations,

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: and falsehoods, and compromise, and hatred that the world will seek to draw us into.

I know Whom I have believed." I have not just believed, however sincerely... but I know the One I believe in. That is another thing... that is a greater thing, for while our faith saves us, in the sense that it is our connection to Yahweh, ultimately Yahweh saves us; ultimately Yahweh is the One that answers our prayers, and gives our faith, our sincerity, its everlasting value.

We began by speaking about Yahweh's mercy; therefore, let us end on that. It is the mercy of Yahweh that underlies everything good and pure about our current lives, and that assures us of our everlasting salvation. It is the mercy of Yahweh that fills us with the joy of His salvation, and that drives us to seek out others with whom we may share that great joy. We know, therefore, that all things are for Yah, and of Yah; "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom 9:16)

Are there any comments or questions about the study tonight?

Elyna: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: If there aren't, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father...

daphna: Amen, praise Yah in all his ways.

Lucan: As we enter the Sabbath day and approach the New Moon, we are thankful for the reminder of our position before you. We know that you are infinite, in knowledge, in love, and in righteousness. We know that our own understanding must be brought into full subjection to the truth of your Person, as revealed in your Word and your people. We know that anything less than this is an idol, however closely it may resemble you. We ask that your children be found in such unity that even the world, looking in, may realize that you have loved us, and that we have loved one another. And we thank you for hearing us, as always, as we walk with you. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

daphna: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Barb: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Elyna: Amen

Naraiel: I couldn't make a comment about the study, but something interesting happened this week, related with how Yahweh brings those who are looking for Him. I had an experience that made me feel like I was an angel or messenger to a specific family. I was looking for a repair shop to fix the muffler and pipe of the car that was in bad condition. And despite all appearance I found a very humble garage that fixed these kind of things. I found out at the beginning that the family was Colombian, but after the owner left to get me something done in another store (40 minutes away from his shop), I began to talk to his son, and nephew. I asked them on which days they worked or were opened. And the nephew told me all except for Saturday. And I asked him if they were Seventh Day Adventists and they were. Then Pedro's son (the owner) told me about his father and how discouraged he is with his church, and how the church has been ignoring him on preaching or sharing things. I had more than 1 hour to talk about the lawsuits, and I had FOD book in the back of my car, so I gave him the book. It was a very interesting experience. I couldn't talk to the father because he was fixing the car, but I want to call him tomorrow. End.

Zahakiel: Very nice

daphna: Amen

Lucan: Thanks for sharing that. 😊

Adriel: Amen

Barb: Thanks for sharing

Elyna: Amen

Pastor Chick: We pray for fruit.

Barb: Amen

Pastor Chick: Sis Jody has a good potential also.

Adriel: Amen

Naraiel: Thank you, yes especially for Pedro, the owner and father of that family. I also had an opportunity to talk to his wife. But I perceived Pedro is the one who is more serious and alert.

Adriel: (My Amen was for praying for fruit. 😊)

Kim: Amen