

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

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We come before Your Throne with thanksgiving for Your love and care this week and we appreciate Your Presence with us for this Divine meeting. We ask for a fresh baptism of Your Holy Spirit this hour in Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Elyna: Amen.

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is called "What Righteousness by Faith is Not." This might seem like something of an unusual title, and for several reasons. First, it might seem intuitive that, since the world by and large does not know righteousness by faith, we ought to be spending our time explaining what it is, rather than what it isn't.

Second, we have often taught that it is not always useful to spend time learning all the deceptive doctrines out there... if we learn the truth, we will be able to recognize any falsehood by simple comparison to what is known to be accurate.

Third, we have explained that even though the Ten Commandments are stated in a negative sense, in that they are written, "Thou shalt not," we understand that these are fulfilled in us as promises in Christ. This is true both doctrinally and linguistically, for we say, for example, "Thou shalt not kill," but more completely, "In Yahshua thou shalt not kill." By adding "In Yahshua" it becomes a promise. It is a promise that in Christ, we always do things that are pleasing to our Father, and that-by nature; not because of practice, pressure or obligation.

At the same time, there are occasions, and reasons, for expressing things from a "forbidding" perspective. At times it is right to say, "Do not do this," identifying the transgression or error directly; and Yahshua would say things at times like, "Sin not," and "Be not afraid."

The words of the 10 Commandments are among the most significant in the entire Bible, and we ought to consider prayerfully the phrasing that Yahweh purposed in eternity to use. Yah says, "Do not have other gods before me." He says, "Do not make for yourselves and worship graven images," and "Do not bear false witness." He identifies righteousness

in some places, some very important places, by revealing to us what righteousness is not. While for the nation of Israel, who was already in the faith of Yahweh, and for the Christians who are already followers of Christ, the Law read as promises of Yah have special significance, and we see them through the lens of agape, we cannot neglect the "international" nature of the Law. The Law was created for man. Like the Sabbath, its most often overlooked particular, the intention of the Law is to be a blessing to all mankind, regardless of whether or not they are sincere adherents of the Gospel.

For those outside of Christ, the Law declares what behavior the Judge of all mankind requires: You are forbidden to kill, to use the Creator's name in vain, and so on. The Law largely defines actions, and this is one of the reasons why many modern Christians downplay its importance – they see the Law the way the world is intended to see the Law, not the way that Christ's own people are intended to see it.

From its wording, it is clear that the Law has two purposes. First, as Paul said, it was "added because of transgressions." (Gal 3:19) Before there was Israel, and before there was Christianity, mankind was given the Law – a description of behaviors that teach us what "sin" is in Yah's judgment. But then, as Paul also says by the power of both inspiration and personal experience, the Law is a guide to bring us to Christ.

"Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Gal 3: 24, 25)

Some take that to mean that when we are in Christ, and justified by faith, the Law has no further bearing on our behavior since we are not "under" it. Unfortunately, they accept this because they still see the Law as the worldling does, as that system of rules that merely defines transgression and nothing more.

When the faith is come, then we are justified by faith – we are made "just" because of our faith – but (and this is the point) the definition of the word "just" does not change merely because the reason for it is glorified in Christ.

In the Old Testament, in a certain sense, mankind was justified by the Law – so it was described for the sake of general understanding. If one did the works of the Law, as best he could, that person was seen as a "good Israelite." Those who truly understood Yahweh always knew that it was a matter of faith and not works, but in Christ all these things became clearer, and so the just are more apparently made just because of their faith, and not their actions. This change in clarity does not mean that someone who is "just" in the Old Testament looks or acts differently than someone who is "just" under the New Covenant. The Law is transformed, and seen in a new way, as a set of promises, but those

promises point to the exact same behaviors that they did when they were seen as a set of definitions of sin.

Those justified under the New Testament may have a clearer view (in general) of the Father and Son, but their actions are still and equally "just" because it is Yahweh, who does not change, that determines what a "just" person is and does. In the Book of Hebrews, the "Heroes of the Faith" were all, naturally, Old Testament figures. (Hebrews 11) James and John both tell us that if you want to know who a "just" person is, you can tell by his words and actions. (1 John 3:7, James 1:26)

Today, the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church has the clearest understanding of righteousness in human history. This is a bold claim, to be sure... and yet, we know from the Book of Revelation's prophecies that the Church's understanding of faith and victory produces a group of saints that follow Yahshua's every spiritual step, who are dedicated to truth at any cost, and over whom death itself has no power. The 144,000 must therefore have an understanding of the Gospel that is perfect on every level, and we must not be ashamed to bear that testimony to the world, or else we deny the very One who gave us that Word and that understanding. It would be to the benefit of the world, if they would accept our testimony, to learn from us what we have received from our Father, for He has given to us a most precious message for mankind.

As a Church, we have spoken of "victory over sin," and "righteousness by faith." We often use these two phrases almost interchangeably, but perhaps they could be thought of this way: It is Yahshua who obtained the victory by His character and sacrifice, and has given it to us. Thus, victory over sin is a gift. Righteousness, on the other hand, is a quality, a characteristic. It is something that we may receive as a gift, yes, but it is also something that we may be, and have. We display righteousness (in that we act righteously) by (because of) our faith. Understood thus, victory is the gift, and righteousness by faith is the result of receiving that gift.

In the interest of both clarifying that concept, and pointing out common misconceptions of what this means, we may briefly consider, and examine scripturally, four things that righteousness by faith is not.

1) Righteousness by faith is not an excuse to sin.

Among some forms of Christianity, the idea exists that once we are "saved," salvation is assured despite our subsequent behavior. In a sense, salvation is indeed assured, because it is received from a most faithful source, our Father in Heaven. Yet those who would abuse Yah's graciousness have not had their hearts turned towards Him in the first place. They are not filled with the Holy Spirit, as is the case for those who are genuinely born

again, and therefore any who say, "I have faith in Christ, and having accepted Him can therefore now sin without concern for the second death," such as say this reveal that the quality of their faith is not Biblical.

Those who have righteousness by faith have precisely what I have described a little while ago. They have righteousness. The reason they have it is because they have accepted the victory in faith, and that righteousness that they have prevents the appearance of sin in their lives. As John writes to the Church, "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." (1 John 3:7) This is a fearful thing to read if one does not know "how" to be righteous. The Good News, the Gospel, is that we have righteousness, not by our efforts or our own merits, but by faith. Then, it is not a warning or a threat... it is a promise of what we already are in Him.

2) Righteousness by faith is not an elimination of the need for a High Priest.

There is one objection to the victory message that really surprised me the first time I heard it. There are those who will say, "Complete victory over sin is not possible, because if anyone could ever truly cease to sin, they would have no further need of the Savior." Those who believe this are operating under two false thoughts. First, they believe that the purpose of the Savior is to pick them up out of the ditch of sin when they (inevitably and repeatedly) fall. This is a terrible misunderstanding of Salvation. Yahshua's sacrifice was to cleanse us from the sins of our pasts, (Rom 3:25) and then to provide us with new, clean lives into which sin never intrudes anew. The Scripture says that after the universal judgment, "affliction shall not rise up the second time." (Nah 1:9) This is the ultimate and grandest fulfillment of what happens in individual souls, and John described the individual application of the same principle when he wrote, "Whosoever is born of Yah doth not commit sin..." (1 John 3:9)

The second false thought is that it is possible TO cease from sin without the continual and abiding presence of the Savior. Far from having eliminating our need for Him, we who walk in victory do so, and can only do so, because He is with us, and in us, every moment. Those who have righteousness by faith have greater need for the direct presence of the High Priest, for the old life that we had before has ended, and all life that remains is "...Christ in [us], the hope of glory." (Col 1:27)

To follow up on that very idea:

3) Righteousness by faith is not an improvement over the old life.

The Scriptures say, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) There are no exceptions, even for Yah's "favorites." John the Baptist, the greatest of prophets, was slain for his testimony. For the sins of mankind, the very Son of Yahweh endured death. There are

some who will be translated, yes, without seeing physical death, and yet even they must pass through a grave (baptism) and rise to new life. Righteousness by faith is not possible for those who are still living their first lives. Until we are born of the Spirit, we are "in Adam," the first man, and of his sinful nature. We read of this nature, which is also called the "carnal" nature, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom 8:7)

Those last four words are important. The verse does not say that those who are carnal find it difficult, or almost impossible, to fulfill the Law. It says that the carnal flesh is not subject to the Law "neither indeed can be." It is entirely impossible for the "natural man" to please Yahweh, and therefore those who are trying to be "good enough" ought rather to admit the impossibility of the task, and surrender to the Savior instead. The only proper thing the carnal man can do before the Righteous Creator is to acknowledge his doom, and submit to death. Even this is not possible unless one first sees the goodness of Yah and the love of Yahshua, and then grace gives us a "little space" to repent and pass through that spiritual grave.

If one is truly righteous, it is by faith, and it is specifically by the faith of Yahshua. That faith is not possible in the old life; in fact, the very light of that faith would destroy the old life, for when Yahshua comes as a King (into the heart as well as a second time into the world) it is written that the "wicked" is slain by His glory. (2Th 2:8) Those who will be saved rejoice that this is true, and welcome the destruction that is only for a moment, for it leaves behind a life that endures for eternity.

Adriel: Amen

4) Righteousness by faith is not a lessening of the need for self-reflection.

When Yah declares someone "righteous," this does not mean that they become immune to error. It does not mean that they have reached the peak of sanctified maturity. In fact, the declaration that one has become righteous by faith is a "birth announcement." One becomes righteous when he is born again, and the term "born" there indicates that it is the very beginning of victorious life in the world. In fact, it is only IN the born-again experience that self-reflection really fulfills its intended purpose – to allow us to locate, repent of, and forever cleanse away defects of thought and character.

New Moons, for example, are sacred times for the Bride of Christ. They would have little use, and in fact would likely be harmful, for the world, but for those who are walking in faith they are vital occasions of cleansing.

Being righteous is not merely a commitment to do "good deeds." If that were the case, then righteousness would be of the Law. True righteousness; that which comes by faith, is a change in the nature so that the works are good "naturally." That changed nature is dedicated to maintaining, and increasing, righteousness until the character of Christ Himself is replicated in sinful flesh as it was at His first advent.

Christ Yahshua is in us, and fully, at the very moment we are spiritually "conceived," and yet the manifestation of His character is done by agreement, conscious assent, for He will not force Himself on anyone either outwardly or inwardly. This being the case, self-reflection is a necessary tool that He has given us, so that we may learn to agree with perfect righteousness as it is revealed to us by increasing light and through education in the "school of Christ."

So then, we know what righteousness by faith is. It is the life that we experience when we have received victory over sin. We know what it is not. It is not an excuse for transgression. It is not an indication that we no longer need our High Priest and Savior. It is not an improvement of the old life, but a full replacement of the lives we have known in the flesh. It is not a lessening of the need to examine ourselves continually, so that we do not fall into error.

We, knowing these things, and called to be messengers of these things to the world, have much about which to pray. Let us pray indeed that we encounter souls that hunger and thirst after righteousness, so that we may share with them the faith that produces it, and thereby introduce them to the everlasting life that we have received from our Father.

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

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: If there are none, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Adriel: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel: It is good to be reminded that Yah's laws are promises – "In Yahshua Thou shalt not"... and I was struck by the thought you expressed... "...the very light of that faith would destroy the old life, for when Yahshua comes as a King (into the heart as well as a second time into the world) it is written that the "wicked" is slain by His glory. (2Th 2:8)" I had not thought of that in that way before. End

Naraiel: C.

Zahakiel: Many things that are written about the way that Yah deals with sin in the universe is also true of how He deals with it in our hearts. We read that creation "groans" because of sin, and we certainly do as well. In one part of the study, I applied the "affliction shall not rise a second time" to the human heart as well...so it seems that these principles have several fulfillments, just like the prophecies.

Go ahead, Giselle.

Adriel: (yes, that verse as well. 😊)

Naraiel: This study could be given with another one that shares a similar title. "What Victory is not." 😊 End.

Zahakiel: If there are no others, then please go ahead when ready, Bro. Luke.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the elimination of sin in our hearts, and the perfect righteousness of Yahshua you have spoken into existence in its place. We are blessed to have your righteousness both imputed and, as we progress in sanctification, imparted by agreement. We ask that your Spirit continue to guide your people, as we walk on the narrow path. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel: Amen

Barb: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

Elyna: Danielle: AMEN.