

Zahakiel: Let's begin. Pastor, since your connection seems to be ok for the moment, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven, we seek Your baptism of Spirit for this sacred hour and thank You for the Sabbath blessing that is reserved for us. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

daphna dee: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. This week, our study is about the joy of Yah's salvation, but it bears the title "Things Offered to Idols" for reasons that will soon become apparent. The phrase I am using for a title comes from this verse, "As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 21:25)

In its original context, the apostle was describing food, meats specifically, that were dedicated to a pagan god, and then sold in the marketplace thereafter. While this practice is no longer in any widespread existence, the principle underlying the instruction has many and important applications for the modern world.

As Adventists, we understand the concept of "temperance" to be avoiding that which is evil, and being moderate in our consumption of that which is good. Even things that are designed to be a blessing may become curses, for we know that the demons themselves are not creative to the degree that humans are, and have provided temptations to mankind by way of perversions and excesses of the blessings that Yah had intended for their use.

When a human being properly receives a blessing from Yah, a thing intended for his good, and uses it in its proper way, and to its appropriate degree, the result is joy, and we express our pleasure for the gift in words of thanksgiving and praise. We do not only praise our Father for the "spiritual" blessings He has provided for us; indeed, of the things that Yahshua tells us to give thanks for, they are often physical in nature. We read,

"Therefore I say unto you, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." (Mat 6:25, 32)

The idea that our Father, who loves us, knows what we need, is a comfort, for the obvious conclusion is that He provides for those needs. Peter says this, indicating that we have everything we need for both "life" and "godliness," (2 Pet 1:3) sufficient that, with our physical needs met, we have the freedom to seek the Spiritual Kingdom.

Yahshua, the express Image of the Father, ensured that His listeners were fed when He spoke to them of Heavenly matters, (Mat 14:19) and Paul writes, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (1Tim 6:6,8)

As I have said, praise is the way that we express the pleasure we find from Yah's gifts, not focusing on the gifts themselves, but on the One who is gracious enough to provide them. Thus, whether the blessing is a material one (food, clothing, furniture) or a spiritual one (wisdom, understanding, prophecy) the praise is the same. The appropriate – and the ONLY appropriate – response to the life that Yah has given us is praise.

Anything else, any other reaction, is idolatry.

Perhaps this thought has not occurred to you before, that living in an atmosphere of sadness, or frustration, or anger, or anything that would steal the praise from Yahweh that He is due for His providence toward us is an offering to an idol, but it is indeed so.

Paul says of his life, "Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil 4:11) This is a wonderful verse, and we have spoken of it before in the context of the Sabbath Rest Principle. Our peace is not dependent upon our circumstances, and this is a most precious promise from our Father. I would like to continue, however, so that we can see the full meaning of the Apostle in its right context, for this verse comes just a short space above another, and perhaps even more impressive, statement of inspiration. We read, then, a bit further, and find:

"Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil 4:11-13)

We all know that last verse very well, but how often have we read it in the context of Paul's earlier statement? The idea that we can do "all things" through Christ is often invoked before some great effort is attempted, or some great burden is to be endured, and this is a true application of the principle. Yet Paul is saying here, in context and specifically, that the "all things" is the ability to endure any condition, any tragedy, or mishap, with the perfect peace of Yahshua.

Has my boat capsized? I can do all things through Christ, therefore I am content. Have my family members fallen ill? I can do all things through Christ, therefore I am content. Has a loved one abandoned me? I can do all things through Christ, therefore I am

content... and further, because I can be content in the face of what would entirely wreck a worldling, I have reason to praise, even to rejoice, because even though I do not have what I thought I needed, I continue to have all things that I actually DO need, those things that pertain to this life, and to godliness.

This is a hard thing, an impossible thing, for the flesh to understand. The flesh knows loss; it is aware that something good has been taken away, or something bad has been added. And yet, if that thing is permitted to overcome the joy of Yah's salvation, and to sap the contentment that comes from His presence within us, we have made of that thing an idol, and are offering to it our "meat," that thing intended for our good.

Paul writes, "I have learned." It is not something natural, that is, of the "natural man." It is something super-natural, divine, and it can only be learned by experience with the divine, by reaching up and partaking of Yahshua's divinity. As we do this, we become more than the mere flesh; in fact, we are returned (as I have said in a previous study) to what we were meant to be before the entrance of sin into our lives, truly Man, truly Woman, as originally crafted before the Fall, in the image of the Father, filled with the breath of the Divine, and in communion with the Spirit of Yah as no mere human can be.

Is it not written, "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see me, and live"? (Exo 33:20)

This was said by Yah to Moses, and yet, one greater than Moses is here among us. Christ in us is the hope, not merely of salvation, but of glory. (Col. 1:27) What is this glory? It is the glory that the Father has shared with the Son from eternity, and that the Son gives to His Bride in a way that Moses could not attain in his own flesh. Moses has had his reward, and it is a glory unto itself, but we, of this generation, are called upon to see the Glory of Yahweh, and to live. We are called to stand in the light of Yah's judgment, and live.

No flesh may stand before Yahweh and live. No man, no mere human, may see Yah's face, and live... but we are not mere men; we are partakers of the divine nature of Christ Yahshua, and because we have "put on immortality," (1Cor 15:53) today by faith and tomorrow by sight, "And Jacob [who is Israel, who is our identity in the Old Testament Types] called the name of the place Peniel, 'For I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life is preserved.'" (Gen 32:30)

There is no contradiction; no man may see the face of Yah and live, and yet those who have partaken of the divine nature will see Yah because they are holy. The Word speaks of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. 12:14) and we are of the Faith of Yahshua, which teaches righteousness, holiness by that faith.

Those who praise the Father, worshipping in spirit and in truth, are holy; they are free from all idols, including the idols that their flesh seeks to create, and they shall see Yah.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Mat 5:8)

The life of a Christian, the life that is free of idols, is the life that is filled with praise. Our Father has given us things, great blessings, to make us happy even in this world. He does not wait for the world to come to give gifts to His Children. And He does this, not to increase our affection for the things of the world, but so that we may learn temperance, how to avoid the corruption of His gifts, and how to properly use those gifts. He gives us these things so that we may know that He is the source of all joy, and He is inviting us to a closer inspection of His character through the things we receive from Him.

So, why do I call a denial of this life of praise "idolatry" specifically? It is because – like the idols of stone and wood that the world has known – it robs Yah of the praise He ought to receive from men, for He is "worthy to be praised." (Psa. 18:3)

Like the idols of gold and silver, a denial of the joy of Yah's salvation robs man of the opportunity to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, and so prepare his own soul for the true and everlasting happiness.

What is an idol, but a lifeless copy of something that is real? The Israelites awaiting Moses at the foot of the mountain could have made their gold into any shape, but they chose a calf, a representative of living thing, and also an Egyptian deity that they sought to appease. It was unloving, unmoving... it was only an image, always in the same shape and in the same place, so that they could reflect on its meaning to them. In the same way they longed for the garlic and leeks, the things that they had lost in the Exodus, so they used this still image to represent the unchanging memories of what they believed to be "better days."

Now, this is a matter worthy of consideration... the gifts of Yah are life, and they give us life when we receive them and use them properly. The idols of flesh, and self, and demonism, these are death – they do not move, but are always the same, so that the ensnared focus on their unchanging nature, and become "stuck" in the sensations and memories of the flesh and its gratifications. In the misuse of Yah's good things, in the avoidance of self-control, of temperance, the carnal man seeks to focus on the pleasures, and not the Giver of the gifts. He makes an "idol" of the good.

Seeking out that which is evil is not idolatry, per se, it is merely unrighteousness... but seeking out a good thing, a thing that Yah has made, for an unlawful purpose, or to an inordinate degree, this is the spirit of idolatry, even if we do not go so far as to make a golden image of the object of our affections.

Some may say, "But you can make an idol out of a living thing, like a child, or a spouse," and that is true, but the idol is made "from" or "out of" that living creature, in the same way that the golden calf was an imitation of a true calf. It is the image in our head of what that spouse, or child, or whoever, ought to be... that is the unchanging image that diverts us from the blessing of their true selves, and their true presence in our lives... and when we do this, when we focus on what things should be, their ideal form (in our estimation) and what we "should" have, then we do not praise, we do not rejoice, and we cannot find the happiness that Yah requires of His people.

Consider that Yah has joy for His people, but like the days and the seasons, they are not designed to remain the same; rather, they change, they cycle naturally, so that we are given all we need for any given circumstance. Children grow up, and (we pray) mature in the Lord to become our brothers and sisters. Spouses become sanctified day by day, and they help one another Heaven-ward. The Church receives ever more, and ever deeper, light, and has treasures to share with Its members and the world.

Here we see, the blessings of Yah are living, growing, changing... the food of one day is not the same food as the day before. We experience them, we praise Yah for them, and then they pass on or change to make way for new blessings. This is what separates them from idols; we do not come before the same blessings day after day and bow. If we focus on only one source of joy, and seek to cling to it, we are no longer glorifying Yah, but the gift He has given us, as if THAT is the "good thing," and not the blessing of the Good Father.

The sun is good, we need it for all life on earth, but if we focus on the gift, we make a god of it as much of the ancient world did, and our affections are turned away from Yah. This is true of any gift. To make an idol of food is to enjoy its pleasure at the expense of other pleasures, to seek it to an unhealthy degree, and the sin associated with this is greed.

Affection between men and women is a gift of Yahweh, but to seek it from the wrong source, or to the discomfort of one's partner, is to make an idol of the gift, and we would not only sin in the idolatry itself, but we also deprive ourselves of the other good things that Yah would provide for us in the time we were worshipping the idol.

We must think of our lives as they truly are in Christ: a continuous stream of blessings. As such, any moment wasted in an idle word, or seeking pleasure (actively, and in the idolatrous manner I am describing) actually robs us of the gift that Yah would have had for us in that moment, had our lives been ordered perfectly after His will.

The idea here should be clear... in seeking to cling to any one gift of Yah and make it static, unchanging, we neglect the new gifts He would continually be giving us. We would have become idolaters, bowing before a golden image, rather than rejoicing before the Living Throne.

In understanding this, in learning it as Paul did, we do not become chasers after pleasure. We become ever-joyful receivers of Yah's blessings. There is a great freedom in this, because we come to realize that we are not responsible for "finding" or "causing" our own happiness; that is Yah's pledge to us, who has already said as much, in His many promises.

"Happy is he that hath the Mighty One of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Yahweh his Elohim." (Psalm 146:5)

Elyna: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: We live in the joy of Yah's salvation. Nothing has the power to take away the Sabbath experience of every moment of our lives. And this we know, as we learn to identify the lifeless idols for what they are. We do not become distraught if something from which we have received pleasure is removed from us. We let it go if Yah sees fit to deprive us for a time, for it has left us to make way for some new blessing, even as Yahshua said,

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."
(John 16:7)

Some have said, "I have felt loneliness, I have desired companionship." It is natural to desire these things; they are good without question, but, in a life that is lived by faith, that which Yah provides us is not only what is "necessary," but that which is "best." We trust His gift-giving. Fellowship and companionship are one kind of pleasure, and there is a season for that. Peaceful contemplation is another kind of pleasure, and there is a season for that as well. There is a time for eating, for resting, and for working, each with their own distinct joys. If we do not receive the blessings we desire when, or in the manner, that we want, it is not righteousness to become upset, or to feel unfairly deprived. Instead, the Mind of Christ seeks the Father:

"What is the blessing you have for me in this situation? I had desired pleasure of this good thing, but if you did not provide it for me, there is, then, some other blessing, some other source of joy that I am being taught to recognize."

To such a mind, joy is uninterrupted, and praise is its constant refrain. It should be known among the people of Yah that the word for "happy" and the word for "blessed" mean exactly the same thing in the languages of the Bible. To be blessed is, by definition, to be happy. To receive Yah's blessings, by the very meaning of the word, is to receive joy and happiness from our Father. That is what that means; and therefore it is a complete contradiction to say, as some may say, "I am blessed, but I am not perfectly happy." "I have Yah's blessings, but I still need X, Y, or Z to be content." This is the contradiction that idolatry causes; to make a copy of something good, even if it is just a mental image, and worship it. Giving the image our affection, our attention, and our time wastes the moments of this life that Yah would fill with His goodness toward us.

Perfect love casts out all fear, and perfect love brings in all joy.

To conclude, then, I will say this: It is the duty, the positive duty, of every Christian to be joyful. It is the duty, the absolute duty, of every Christian to abstain from idolatry, and ultimately, these two are the same thing, for unhappiness is only sustained, and sorrow only cherished, when those with a mind of flesh are kept away from the idol their minds have formed of whatever it is they worship.

By receiving the blessings of Yah, the food, clothing, shelter, we rejoice, not in the things themselves, but in the love of the Father for which He has provided them to us. The fulfilment of joy is not caused by anything in this world; if it were, we would not seek out the Heavenly Kingdom above all... and would be content with idols.

But there, with the Father and Son, there is our heart set, there are our treasures, and there is our joy truly found.

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

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: In the portion about contentment and peace while under distress, I was reminded of Yahshua sleeping in the boat during the storm... Mrs. White offered some helpful commentary on the event that I think is relevant:

"When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the "Master of earth and sea and sky" that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, "I can of Mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God. As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help." [DA 336]

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Very good, yes 😊

Elyna: Amen

Lucan: Now, it would seem to the flesh that in the boat, with the waves filling it with water, there would be cause for some distress. It would seem that the most urgent thing would be to deal with the water and the oars. And, dealing with the spiritual matters may come after the emergency. But, for the disciples, the spiritual matter was the emergency. And, the storm was allowed to become every bit as violent as it needed to become for them to realize it. Yahshua loves us dearly, and would have us purged of every idol. It is to our blessing to cooperate as soon as the first drops of rain begin, rather than having to "hit rock bottom" in the midst of a stormy sea to realize it. <End.>

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Thank you for sharing that. Are there any others that would like to add something? All right, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Elyna: Amen

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the many blessings you have poured upon your people, and the happiness that is synonymous with them. As we return praise to you for your love shown in provision, our hearts are lifted to you in responding love. And, as that love is shared abroad and among one another, we are known by it, for it is unknown to the world. May we continue in your perfect rest, as you rest and work within us unflinchingly. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Elyna: Amen.

Barb: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Nattie: Amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen