

## For Our Sake Also

In these days, so close to the end, “the faith” is everything. Now, what do I mean by “the faith?” In the language of the CSDA Church, the phrase “the faith” can mean three different things (at least) depending on the context – but they are all tied to the same central idea.

The first meaning of the phrase refers to the religion itself. We may speak of “the CSDA faith,” which is to say the set of beliefs associated with the covenant established between Yahweh and mankind through the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church. It is “everything” in the sense that it requires our utmost dedication, attention, care, and talents in order to function properly. In several works, such as the book *The Two Temples*, we speak about believers being as “stones” in the walls, and if any are not standing firm, this results in a gap, a weak point, where the surrounding stones must undergo extra strain in order to keep the building standing. Thus, each has a role to fulfill that is vital to the success of the Gospel work.

The second refers to “the faith of Yahshua.” This is the invincible, perfect mindset that Yahshua had, a knowledge, without the least shadow of doubt, that the Father was guiding His steps, and that His responses were according to the Father’s will. This is “everything” in the sense that this is the example we emulate, the standard that is the result of our sanctification, and the reality that we claim based upon our confidence in the Almighty’s promises toward us. Our nearness to this ideal is revealed in the “two questions” we sometimes ask those with whom we are speaking during evangelism. The first is, “Are you happy with the life Yahweh is giving you?” This reveals the first part – whether or not we believe that Yah is guiding our lives, and how much we appreciate that. The second is “Are you happy with the life you are giving Him.” This reveals the second part – whether or not we believe that our reactions are what He would desire us to have based upon His leadings.

This brings us, actually, to the third meaning of the word. “The faith” refers to our reaction to the Gospel. As I mentioned, the faith of Yahshua is the perfect standard of our character, and we claim it based on our confidence in Yahweh. Another way of saying that is that we claim it by “our faith.” We claim it based upon our personal and individual trust in Yah’s word, and our actions that manifest that trust outwardly.

These things are connected, because the faith (in the first meaning) is designed to refine our faith (in the third meaning) so that matches the faith of Yahshua, which is the second. To clarify that, and to hopefully simplify it, Yahweh has given us the “CSDA faith” to guide the development of our “personal faith” toward the “perfect faith” of Yahshua. This is what the Scriptures reference when they tell us that “All scripture is given by inspiration of Yah [...] that the man of Yah may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Tim 3:16, 17) Also “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph 4:11, 12)

These things: the Scriptures, the apostles, the prophets, the Church structure itself, these are all essential – necessary – for the perfect character of the believer, for the perfect faith of Yahshua, to be formed.

Because faith is such a grand concept, and worthy of infinite study, the Scriptures have given us many examples of faith in action, faith that works, living faith – these are all the same thing. The study that we are looking at today, one called “For Our Sake Also” by E. J. Waggoner, looks briefly, but deeply, at one

of the Bible's premier examples of the faith-filled life, that of Abraham. Let us begin, then, with this study, and see what it has to teach us.

[quote]

The fourth chapter of Romans is one of the richest in the Bible in the hope and courage which it contains for the Christian. In Abraham we have an example of righteousness by faith and we have set before us the wonderful inheritance promised to those who have the faith of Abraham. And this promise is not limited. The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles as well as on the Jews; there is none so poor that he may not share it, for "it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."

The last clause of the seventeenth verse is worthy of special attention. It contains the secret of the possibility of our success in the Christian life. It says that Abraham believed "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." This marks God's power; it involves creative power. God can call a thing which is not as though it existed. If a man should do that, what would you call it? A lie. If a man should say that a thing is, when it is not, it would be a lie. But God cannot lie. Therefore when God calls those things that be not, as though they were, it is evident that that makes them be. That is, they spring into existence at His word. We have all heard, as an illustration of confidence, the little girl's statement that "if ma says so, it's so if it isn't so."

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One of the reasons I really like this study is because that verse that Waggoner references has always been fascinating to me as well. Yah speaks something, and because He is Truth, and He is Creator, whatsoever He speaks IS. When Yahshua spoke to His apostles, and to His disciples and said, "You are clean," where they clean? We would say, "Yes," because that is our faith (in both the first and – hopefully – third meaning of that phrase). But the very instant before He said those words, were His disciples clean? No, they were not, and the Biblical record shows that as well. It is in the instant that Yah speaks something, it becomes so. Not a moment before. This is the very reason why we tell those who are coming to understand the Victory over Sin message – you cannot base your belief in your own ability to live without sin on anything you have experienced so far in your life. People fall short of perfect faith because they (like evolutionists, interestingly enough) believe that the way things are happening now, and will happen, are the way that they have always been happening "for millions of years."

Specifically, they say, "My whole life, I have lived with the knowledge that I am a sinner. How can I suddenly now claim to be free from sin?" And the thing is, they have been told THIS as well: "Jesus sets you free from sin." How can they really come to love and appreciate the Savior if they try to believe both these contradictory messages at the same time? The faith we are talking about here, that Yah can speak something and it IS, is wonderful, because it is an invitation to cut away from yourself that contradiction, and believe either one thing or the other, consistently. We may ask, Are you going to be a sinner your whole life, OR does Jesus really set people free from sin? The Victory over Sin, the teaching we bring to the world, invites all who hear it to deny the first, and believe (without the voice of conflict) the second.

Yah says, "You are free from sin." Yah says, "Go, and sin no more." If we truly worship Him as Creator, and as Truth, our only response should be, "Amen," and "Hallelu-Yah." And why? Because at that instant that He says it, He causes it to BE.

We must be as little children to enter into the Kingdom. This is exactly what Waggoner is talking about here, because if a little child's parent tells him or her something, that child has no reason at all to doubt that word. If it is said to be so, it is so indeed, and anyone who dares to speak against that parent is immediately labeled as untrustworthy, and to be avoided. We must be just like little children in this sense.

We continue, with that image in mind:

[quote]

That is exactly the case with God. Before that time spoken of as "in the beginning," there was a dreary waste of absolute nothingness; God spoke, and instantly worlds sprang into being. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . for he spake, and it was; he commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:6-9. This is the power which is brought to view in Rom. 4:17. Now let us read on, that we may see the force of this language in this connection. Still speaking of Abraham, the apostle says:

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Rom. 4:18-22

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Let us think about a sinner, but one who desires to be righteous. Let us think about ourselves speaking to this person, and saying, "The Bible teaches that if you become born of God, truly born again, you will cease to sin. If you are born again, you CANNOT sin, because Christ lives in you, and there is nothing in your spirit, nothing in your mind, that would ever cause you to desire or do something you know to be wrong."

Now, that person becomes a type of Abraham in the moment of decision. Abraham, who had been without children his whole life, is being told, "You and your wife, who is also past the age of bearing, will have an heir." What a statement! Who ever even heard of such a thing? To that sinner, the crisis of faith is the same. "I am too old to have a child." "I am too much a sinner to be free from sin." Hopefully, you see the clear parallel. It is outside, entirely, of that person's experience. There was nothing in Sarah's womb that had the power to bear. There is nothing in the sinner's life that can "help" him to become a saint, to overcome sin. Only the miracle of Yahweh, the power of Christ, can bring forth life out of a place where there is no life, nor any hope of life coming into being. Sarah could, of her own power, no more bear a child than we – without Yahshua – could live without sin. It is a "new life" that is entirely beyond us. And yet, just as Yah said to Abraham, "You will have an heir," so He says to the

hopeful sinner, “You will have everlasting life.” Will he believe it? Will he trust in Yah, and have it “imputed to him for righteousness?”

We continue:

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Here we learn that Abraham’s faith in God, as one who could bring things into existence by His word, was exercised with respect to His being able to create righteousness in a person destitute of it. Those who look at the trial of Abraham’s faith as relating simply to the birth of Isaac and ending there, lose all the point and beauty of the sacred record. Isaac was only the one in whom his seed was to be called, and that seed was Christ. See Gal. 3:16. When God told Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, He was preaching the gospel to him (Gal. 3:8); therefore Abraham’s faith in the promise of God was direct faith in Christ as the Saviour of sinners. This was the faith which was counted to him for righteousness.

Now note the strength of that faith. His own body was already virtually dead from age and Sarah was in a like condition. The birth of Isaac from such a pair was nothing less than the bringing of life from the dead. It was a symbol of God’s power to quicken to spiritual life those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Abraham hoped against hope. There was no human possibility of the fulfillment of the promise; everything was against it, but his faith grasped and rested upon the unchanging word of God, and His power to create and to make alive. “And therefore it was imputed unto him for righteousness.”

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Would we be like Abraham? Would we teach others to be like Abraham? If so, we must also be willing to endure the cost of faith. Abraham desired an heir for many years, and Yah did not see fit to grant him that desire. Why? It is not because Yah did not wish Abraham to be a father – in fact, we know that Abraham was the father of the covenant, the one chosen to bring forth generations of faithful believers. But if Yah had granted Abraham’s prayer on the first “Amen,” we would not be having this study now. We would be without this example, a dramatic one, of Yah’s ability to bring forth life from lifelessness. We would be unable to show this example to those who are tempted to doubt the Gospel we bring them, and to say, “You are no less precious to our Father than Abraham was. Yah desires you to bring forth a new life, and He will give you the power to do it.”

This should teach us... several things. First, if you desire something, and if you are certain that it is according to His principles in particular, pray for it – and keep praying. Do not be discouraged if your prayers are not immediately answered. There may be a blessing for you, and for others, that Yah replies to your prayer with, “Wait a moment longer.” It does not mean we should cease to ask.

Second, always seek the blessings in your own trials. If things are not going your way, and I mean this both as individuals and as the Church collectively, let us always be asking, “What is the blessing we are to gain by this? How does this set an example of faith before the world?” This is a worthy exercise for the Children of Yah.

We continue:

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Now for the point of it all:

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Rom. 4:23-25

So Abraham's faith was the same that ours must be, and in the same object. The fact that it is by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ that we have the same righteousness imputed to us that was imputed to Abraham, shows that Abraham's faith was likewise in the death and resurrection of Christ. All the promises of God to Abraham were for us as well as for him. Indeed, we are told in one place that they were specially for our benefit. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Heb. 6:13, 17, 18. Our hope, therefore, rests upon God's promise and oath to Abraham, for that promise to Abraham, confirmed by that oath, contains all the blessings which God can possibly give to man.

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As I mentioned, we can hold this example up to those whom we are evangelizing, and we can tell them, with assurance, "Yahweh has not changed at all from that day to this, and further, there was nothing in Abraham that Yah should love him more than you." The "problem," if I can call it that, with reading the Bible is that people have been spoiled, maybe by internalizing too much fiction, maybe by just living in this cynical and faith-killing generation, and so they think, "That's a great story, but it doesn't reflect reality." Now, the terrible truth is that even the people who actually believe the Bible may have that little voice telling them that, or some more subtle version of that, such as, "Enoch, Elijah, etc., were very special people. Nothing like that happens to me," or perhaps, "Nothing like that happens today." And their senses will justify this way of thinking, for "When's the last time we have seen water turned into wine?"

All the belief in the world, all the trust in the Biblical record, won't help us one bit, not even one little bit... there is NO merit in it at ALL, if we do not apply it to our very own personal, ordinary and modern-day selves. But Waggoner is about to say more about that very thing, so I will return to his quote and continue:

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But let us make this matter a little more personal before leaving it. Trembling soul, say not that your sins are so many and that you are so weak that there is no hope for you. Christ came to save the lost, and He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him. You are weak, but He says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9. And the inspired record tells us of those who "out of weakness were made strong." Heb. 11:34. That means that God took their very weakness and turned it into strength. In so doing He demonstrates His power. It is His way of working. For "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are

despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.” 1 Cor. 1:27-29.

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We MUST make every study personal. Even if you think, “This message is for brother X, or for sister Y,” Yah did not bring them alone into a room and give them counsel. Everyone is invited to the growth of the harvest. Everyone partakes in the feast laid out before us, and everyone must learn more of the character of Yah from every example, from every study, and this example of Abraham is a perfect teaching tool. We may learn more deeply of our own faith and, going beyond the basics, we may use him as a ready example before those who are having difficulty accepting victory over sin. The questions we may ask them, to reveal the state of their faith, are many. “Which is harder, for a 90+ year old woman to have a child, or for you to cease from sin?” “Were the promises made to Abraham greater than the promise we are inviting you to believe today?” “Do you believe that Yahweh cannot do these things, and greater, since Christ has come to give the sacrifice on our behalf?” These are just examples that reveal, if the questions are honestly answered by those who are resisting victory, that even their long-held beliefs are not, yet, “the faith of Yahshua.” When they see the state of their personal faith, they have an opportunity to accept Yahshua’s faith instead, and to unite with those who are all of a common “faith.”

We conclude Waggoner’s study:

[quote]

Have the simple faith of Abraham. How did he attain to righteousness? By not considering the deadness and powerlessness of his own body, but by being willing to grant all the glory to God, strong in faith that He could bring all things out of that which was not. You, therefore, in like manner, consider not the weakness of your own body, but the power and grace of our Lord, being assured that the same word which can create a universe and raise the dead can also create in you a clean heart and make you alive unto God. And so you shall be a child of Abraham, even a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

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We could well make this paragraph above a banner over our Church house, or an introductory note to any study involving righteousness by faith. Paul said, “Consider yourselves dead.” Waggoner says, “Don’t consider the deadness of your own body.” Although the symbolism and imagery is slightly different, the meaning of both are exactly the same – don’t look inside yourself for the power to accomplish the life of faith. This message is in strong contrast to the message of popular stories and fables that say, “Believe in yourself.” The Gospel says, “Believe in the Savior, and do NOT consider ‘self’ at all.” One idea is merely emotional, but the other is spiritual. The only role of the self is to receive the promise, and cry out for the strength to accept it. After that, self is laid in the grave, and a new life, like Isaac, comes forth from that dead, empty shell. Consider yourself dead, or this can never happen. And then, consider your dead self not at all, for it is left behind in the watery grave of baptism. This is the gateway to the life that Yah intends for EVERY man. Everyone you know... everyone you have ever met or even heard of, Yah desires that person to experience this Gospel, and to stand with the saints in glory. Let us, therefore, commit to understanding this simple, but powerful, message fully, and then sharing its principles and its

promises... and its hope, with others to bring about a life of faith. The experience of Abraham was for our sake also, and our acceptance of it is for the sake, also, of others.