

Rights

Happy Sabbath, or coming Sabbath, to all. Today's study is called by the simple title of "Rights."

Brethren, this is an extremely spiritually significant weekend. One of our number is making a very public stand for the faith of Yahshua, and for the loyalty of the Bride to the instructions of Yahweh, whether they are great or small in the estimation of the human mind. The rest of us have also all received calls to action. For some of us it is making sure that the media have been alerted, so that those who have ears to hear may have an opportunity to do so. For some it is to make plans to travel. For some it is to examine themselves to see if there are any worldly attachments keeping us from doing Yah's perfect will. In fact, there is an element of that involved in the mission to which we have all been called.

The work of the Gospel must continue, whether there be a hundred of us, or only one. And what I wanted to do for our study this week was something different than looking over a pioneer document with commentary. Those are important, of course. Inspiration has told us to keep those writings before us, because they have much to teach us, and we will do so again, but this week, I wanted to open up a new topic before us.

As I mentioned, this study is called "Rights," and it came forth, after much internal consideration about a topic for this week, while I was on the bus considering the events that are unfolding around us even now. There is a question that I have asked others several times, and in different ways, and it is this, "What is the fundamental difference between us and the General Conference Seventh-day Adventists?"

Answers to that question are very easy to give. We could say, "Doctrines." We could point out specific doctrines, primarily that of Victory over Sin/Righteousness By faith, and the impact that this has on our characters. We could talk about the New Moons, and Feast Days, and the Trinity. We could talk about the way we handle tithes differently, both in their collection and what we use them for. We could certainly talk about the use of secular power to enforce ecclesiastical policy. But these things, these doctrines and practices that are misused and corrupted by the nominal church, would never have been accepted into practice without Satan first laying the ground work.

Satan is a bit of a "farmer." He grows bad ideas. The ideas he grows are not necessarily "original;" as you know from my writings and other places, demons are not particularly creative. Nevertheless they are effective if received into an unwary mind, but they do not arise without a lot of work. The enemy must first prepare the soil before corrupt vines can take root. For example, Satan did not just come up to the General Conference president and say to him, "You should trademark the name 'Seventh-day Adventist,' start suing people, put pastors in jail, and that will make the work of winning souls and minds to the Gospel easier."

No, that did not, and could not, have happened that way. First, he had to prepare the soil. He had to create a spiritual environment in which such a thing could eventually come to pass, and that involved changing the mindset of Church members in both high and low places.

One of the fundamental differences between nominal Seventh-day Adventists and ourselves, which has laid the ground work for the vast difference between us in terms of the use of civil power, involves the issue of rights.

Recently, the United States celebrated its independence day. It values freedom. It truly does value freedom for itself, and for those like itself. As long as one follows its policies, and its ways, it will defend your right to be free. But that is not really a perfect expression of freedom; and the spirit of liberty that made that nation great has been betrayed, and in the most subtle yet symbolically significant ways. And that could not have happened by accident, or in a moment, either.

National apostasy has paved the way for national ruin, and this took decades of work for the tempters of mankind. What Satan had to do, and what distinguishes the carnal from the heavenly-minded Christian, involves our understanding of “rights.”

What are “rights?” They are the principles of freedom. Rights are the actions, beliefs and practices to which all humans are entitled as long as they do not destroy the freedoms of others. But the question at stake here is this: Where do these rights come from?

We must ask this of ourselves, to see where our understanding is, to see if we truly understand the principles of our faith. This is not an arbitrary question, and the reply that we give means much.

The world, which is subject to carnal policies, will say, “Rights come from the king, or the government.” This seems like a logical answer, after all, the king or the government makes the laws, and lays out penalties for violating those laws. In this mindset, which is a primary tenet of “Humanism,” the human mind is the highest authority, and therefore a duly elected or appointed official has the authority to determine what the people under his sway have the “right” to do or not do. We have heard individuals with whom we have discussed our own legal situation adopt this standpoint fairly often.

This is the basis, the sole basis, under which a Seventh-day Adventist may defend the actions of the General Conference. They will say the Conference has a “right” or a “duty” to defend “its” name. But where do rights come from? They cannot show that Yahweh has even given such an instruction as this. They must accept that the “rights” involved in matters of religious freedom (among other things) come from the government; and, if the Conference merely points us out to the government as being violators of their “right” to be the sole possessor of God’s particular gifts (in this case the name of the Bride of Christ) then the government is only doing its job in prosecuting us, and they are only doing their duty as good citizens.

Seen from the standpoint of humanism, this makes perfect sense, and this is why, when we explain our situation and our stand based upon convictions and protestant principles, we meet a “wall.” We are speaking to carnal minds. We are not just differing on a point of doctrine, but an overall view of how we see the world. We are speaking to minds who will tell us, though not often in these words, “You do not have the RIGHT to call yourself a Seventh-day Adventist, because the Government (I capitalize the G intentionally) has not granted you that right. The Government has, actually, granted the General Conference Corporation the SOLE RIGHT to that name.”

You see, the Government has the power to give the General Conference rights, according to this Humanistic view. This is the heart of the conflict... where do “rights” come from? We need to see how the principle of religious liberty, on which the United States government was initially founded, has been betrayed.

I know I have not used a lot of Scriptures so far. I am getting to that. For the moment, I would just like to establish one of the key differences between the Christian mindset and the mindset of the world.

The men who drafted the U.S. Constitution centuries ago were not all Christians as we would use the term today. Nevertheless, they understood that Scriptural principles form the best basis for a successful government, for a prosperous nation. They stated, and we would agree with them, where human rights truly come from. We read from the second paragraph of that most famous document, the United States Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Such language is here employed that we must not wonder that Yahweh, the Creator here named, has blessed the United States with untold blessings, and even now, at the darkest point of its spiritual history, where all manner of perversion and rebellion are being made lawful, and where men are made prisoners for their sincere and faithful convictions, mercy yet lingers for a moment upon its shores.

But let me draw your attention to a very Christian principle. All men are created equal, under Yah’s love, and are endowed by Yah with rights. Simply put, for the humanist, and the atheist, and the rebel, and the corporate-minded, rights come from the minds of other men. For the Christian, and the Protestant, and the free-minded, rights come from the Creator, and governments exist only to defend – not to grant – those rights. If a man has not a right granted by Yahweh, the government has no authority under Heaven to grant new rights, nor (and this is relevant to our case) has it the authority to strip a man of rights that Heaven has declared him to have.

When a government takes it upon itself to grant rights, particularly when those rights touch upon religious liberties, the people (this document further states) have the right to rise up and abolish that government, and form a new one that better reflects these righteous principles.

But I am not advocating revolution here; at least, not a revolution of natural men. Satan has done his work too well, and too many people believe that the government is the one that grants rights. And so, while they may complain about the abuse of power, and the misuse of wealth, few will do anything about it beyond making those complaints, and none save those who are Christ’s will do anything about it according to Biblical principles.

Despite how that sounds, this is not an expression of hopelessness. The governments that are destructive to the rights granted by the Creator will indeed be overturned, and every knee shall bow because it will be done on principles that both Yah and man understand to be “just.” A new Government, based upon most perfect and righteous principles, will indeed take its place. It is a Government that is not merely “most likely to effect [our] Safety and Happiness.” It is a Government that is guaranteed to ensure perfect joy for all its citizens, allowing them the freedom to achieve their loftiest goals, and wiping away every tear.

This is a Government to which I willingly submit all my highest loyalty, and look forward to its establishment upon this earth with eager expectation. I am speaking of our coming Home.

We read: “This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” (Dan 2:32-35)

This is a prophecy of the establishment of that Government of which we are already citizens by faith, and of which we shall – very soon – be citizens by sight.

So, let us speak of the rights that we have, because once we KNOW what rights we have, then we will know to speak out, to resist, when others, including human governments, and laws, and authorities, seek to tell us differently. Once we know what rights the Creator has given us, then we will be better equipped to teach others the Gospel, for I tell you this, which may be new light to some of you... the Gospel message that we bear, as Creation Seventh Day Adventists, this Gospel is THE declaration of human rights that our Father has given to His people.

People here and there speak about “human rights” in the defense of the sick, and the hungry, and the underprivileged. We do the same, for the Scriptures tell us that our work is to defend the widows and orphans; but we understand that we cannot separate the issue of human rights from the issue of salvation, for, as the Scripture asks, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)

There are those among us who have things to learn from this Scripture. When we seek to “help” others, let us remember that any aid we can offer to men’s bodies must never be allowed to eclipse what assistance we can offer their souls. Christ said, and it may sound “cold” to the carnal mind, “Ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.” (Mat 26:11)

There will always be people who are poor, and starving, and sick, and ready to die, until the Day of Judgment comes. We love them, we pray for them, we do what we can to assist them. But we must never forget – for even an instant – that our first priority is the salvation of souls, the work of the Gospel, the teaching men of their spiritual and human rights. And if any worldly or secular entanglement would hinder us in the execution of our duties, let us understand and realize that it is Satan, seeking to take away (or prevent our use of) our right to be ambassadors for Yah’s Kingdom.

So, let us speak of our rights, not in a spirit of pride or entitlement, but with an understanding that all that we have, we have been given. And all that we have been given, we have been given for a reason.

The document I quoted above states that our rights from the Creator include, “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” I have heard that this was originally, “Life, Liberty and Property,” but I think we can make a case for all four of these from the Bible.

What rights do we have from Yahweh? The Scripture does not, itself, use the term “rights,” but we are told that we have blessings, and gifts, and promises. These declarations of Yah, let us understand this clearly, are our true rights.

We do, indeed, have the right to life. The Scriptures tell us that the life that our Father has given to us is sacred, and this is nowhere made more apparent than in the commandments themselves, which say, “Thou shalt not kill.” (Exo 20:13) The word there for “kill” does not refer to cutting down trees, or stepping on insects, or killing animals for sacrifice or food. It means specifically this, “Thou shalt not murder a human.” If anyone deprives another of this right, the Scriptures have this to say, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.” (Gen 9:6)

Why is life sacred? Why do we have the right to life? It is because we are created in the image of Yah, who is the Source and Cause of all life.

We also have the right to liberty, to freedom. The phrases “freedom of religion” and “freedom of speech,” which are so dear to us, do not appear in the Scriptures, but the concepts that form the foundation of these things are found there indeed. “The Spirit of the Adonai Yahweh upon me; because Yahweh hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” (Isa 61:1, 2)

These two verses are worthy, brethren, of our special meditation this weekend. Every word of it is meaningful to us, and may comfort and bless us as we understand the blessing therein. The people of Yahweh are to be free. Now, this is not an arbitrary freedom. Remember, “rights” are only rights as long as they do not deny the rights of others. Even the humanists understand that we cannot be “free” to make others “bound” ... at least, on paper. Our very present situation is such that others have abused their freedoms, and are now seeking to bind us despite the protests of our conscience.

The proper and perfect boundary, the only proper boundary, of human freedom, is the Covenant we have with Yahweh. If we are free according to the “Law of Liberty,” (James 1:25, 2:12) then we shall do whatsoever we truly please, and never have to worry about harming another. But, and if, our freedom should ever cause harm to another, this is a call to examine ourselves to see where our understanding of our rights is in error.

You may recall Paul speaking of having the “right” to eat whatsoever he wished (within Biblical guidelines), but that he would forego this freedom, if it meant that he was risking the harming of others.

If we wish to find some contemporary examples of a somewhat different nature, people may speak of “gay rights,” and the right to free healthcare, and various other things to which they believe they are entitled by the mere virtue of being a human being... and not to get political, but if we believe that rights are truly granted by the Creator, then this makes our standpoint on what is – and what is not – a right very clear-cut. Yahweh tells us what our rights are; it is when we forget this that we run into all kinds of problems that may not even seem, at first, to be related to this matter. An unjust government may make something “legal” (as it has in the case of the SDA Trademark Lawsuit) and defend it as if it WERE a right, but if the Scriptures do not declare it the will of Heaven, such a law is injurious to true freedom, and

ought to be rejected, ignored and resisted as a Christian duty. This is precisely what the Third Angel of Revelation 14 tells us.

We are also told, interestingly enough, that we have the right to property. The Scriptures say, “And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” (Lev 25:10)

Property held against a debt, or some other financial problem, was to be returned to the “rightful owner” under Heaven every fiftieth year. This was to ensure that the property given to Israel and its people under the inspired guidance of the patriarchs would remain distinct, and not all come under the control of a few, powerful, individuals. This is also a relevant principle for our consideration.

We have the right to be happy. Now, this is a wonderful, but (again) interesting, promise. We have the right, under Heaven, to seek out that which makes us happy. And again, this must be understood according to the boundaries of the commandments, and the covenant. If committing crimes makes us “happy,” then we have a deviation, and other citizens have a “right” to be protected from our spiritual and mental illness. But the Scriptures tell us plainly, “O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.” (Psa 67:4)

And again, “And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.’” (Luke 2:10)

Notice, we have the right to be joyful. And there is a reason for this. First, Yah is a fair Judge. His judgment is the basis for our joy, for His judgment is the destruction of sin, of iniquity (which is actually in-equity, or “unfairness”). Also, we have a right to be joyful because the “tidings” the angel was bringing was that of a Savior. Because we have a Savior, mankind is made joyful. David spoke of the “joy” of salvation, and it was a right that no circumstance, or guilt, or temptation, could remove from him.

These are but some of the “rights” that the Scriptures well us we have, and if all men would abide by these, then we would not have some men seeking to control the rights of others, for in their policy they would strip others of their right to freedom of worship, and speech, and even – should it come to that – life.

But now, I would like to open up the floor to your thoughts. What are some other rights that the Scriptures give us? It might be good to take some time to consider this, especially in the light of our present circumstances, and then freely share your thoughts with us, preferably with Scripture support. And if not, you may ask, “Do we have such and such a right?” And perhaps another can suggest a Scripture to confirm it. This is another way to rehearse the blessings we have been promised in the Word.

[Discussion]

If anyone has other, general, questions and comments, feel free to offer them, but let me first conclude with a look at how we might apply the principles we have examined tonight.

Now, how shall we apply this understanding of our rights? I have already suggested a way. Let us do as Peter explains: “For so is the will of Yah, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of

foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”
(1Pet 2:15, 16)

Let us ensure that, as we exercise our rights, we do not suppress the rights of others. And, if we see that others are using their rights (or what they believe to be their rights – as granted by human governments and human minds) to suppress the promises and principles of Yah’s freedom, let us be able to explain the reason why this is hateful to our Christian souls.

And in another vein, let us see where Yah’s mercy is being shed, for as pastor told me in my conversation with him yesterday, “Yah’s mercy is never given without a cause. Yah’s mercy is never wasted.” As I mentioned earlier, a moment of mercy yet remains on the United States. We do not know how our Father will direct the work of the Gospel in the days and months following the events of this most significant month, but we know that, for now, His eye is directed on the United States, where Seventh-day Adventism arose, and where Seventh-day Adventism was betrayed. Let us take advantage of these moments of mercy, and work to ensure that, whatever souls Yah is waiting for in that country before its long probation closes, we find those souls and win them to the Kingdom of our Lord, and the Government of His principles that grant liberty and justice to all.