

## Commentary –The Power of The Word (Part 1)

Happy Sabbath to all. As you know, we now have a new CSDA forum once again, and I am planning, either tonight or tomorrow, to begin posting a short series about the “Pillars of the CSDA Faith.” It will consist of four threads, and introduction and then a thread each for Victory, Purity of Doctrine, and Unity of Faith, as modeled after the essence of the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14, which the Bible calls the “Everlasting Gospel.”

What I hope to do is show, in a very basic way, what it is about the CSDA faith that makes it absolutely unique, and separate from the man-made or man-modified religions, and invite questions and comments from online passers-by. In thinking ahead, I recall the many arguments made against our beliefs, and how very easy it is to show that none of them can stand up to “it is written.” For each belief we hold as foundational, there are at least two clear witnesses from the Scriptures attesting not only to the doctrine, but to our understanding and application of that doctrine.

After the introductory thread is posted, the first post that contains “meat” will be the one that deals with victory over sin, and there are perhaps two main obstacles in the minds of nominal Christians – certainly nominal Adventists – that come up time and again. The first, of course, is the belief that it is even possible. We teach that whosoever is born of Yahweh does not commit sin. One might think that, this being a direct quote from the New Testament, that would be a more celebrated teaching, but we find that this is very rarely the case. We hold it to be true with no dilution or limitation; and further, we teach that the life of the born-again belief is a life of repentance. We need to define what that means most of the time, because we find a lack of education among those whom we encounter (for the most part) about even the most common words associated with the Gospel. Repentance, many people are taught in Churches, is the state of “feeling sorry” for doing wrong.

Biblically, repentance is “resolutely turning from evil.” The Christian lives a life of repentance – a life of turning away from evil, both in the world and – when we discover it through the process of sanctification – in ourselves. The sanctified life is the life that puts away all that is displeasing to our Father, and the idea that we CAN live this way, and never willfully doing a known wrong, is something that requires true faith to accept.

The other common objection, and the one I wish to address tonight through commentary on a study that was written in 1896 by A.T. Jones, is the statement that, “Yes, we can have victory, because the Bible says we can do ALL things through Christ, so it must be POSSIBLE... but it happens eventually, after many years of devotion/practice/prayer, so you can’t say that we must have it NOW.”

On the surface, this answer seems better than the one that denies victory altogether, however we find it to be a much more difficult wall to tear down, because the error is more subtle. It seems to agree with the principle, but it denies the practice, and the Christ gave a parable at one point in His ministry that goes thus:

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.’

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir: and went not.’

Whether of them twain did the will of his father?

They say unto him, 'The first.' Yahshua saith unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.'" (Mat 21:28-31)

Lip service does no good; and in fact those who are honest and say, "I don't believe," these can perhaps be convinced later on. But if someone already thinks they know the truth, but does not practice it, it is much more difficult for the Spirit to convict that person of a need to die to that error, and live unto Christ.

I do not want to go overlong on this introductory section, because I do want to point out that delay can be a greater error than denial. There are some who say, "I can't see the victory message in the Bible," and then, when we show them the verses, admit that yes, the Scriptures do tell us to "go and sin no more," and that the promise is in the Word Itself. But there are some who say, "Of course it's in there, but you are being too extreme in saying that from the very moment you are born again, this is your experience."

Let us see what Adventism has always taught about a faithful response to the Good News, the Gospel of salvation from sin.

We begin with Jones' study here, with a quote from the Word:

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"As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The earth can bring forth vegetation only because of the moisture that comes upon it by the rain or the snow from heaven. Without this, everything would fade and perish. So also is it with the life of man and the word of God. Without the word of God the life of man is as barren of power and of good as is the earth without rain. But only let the word of God fall upon the heart as the showers upon the earth; then the life will be fresh and beautiful in the joy and peace of the Lord, and fruitful with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.

Notice, too, it is not you who are to do that which he pleases; but, "It shall accomplish that which I please," You are not to read or hear the word of God, and say, I must do that, I will do that. You are to open the heart to that word, that it may accomplish the will of God in you. It is not you who are to do it, but it. "It", the word of God itself, is to do it, and you are to let it. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you."

[endquote]

These three paragraphs bear with them a powerful truth. One of the things we need to be aware of is that people sometimes seem trained to "mishear." We say to them, "Through Christ, we achieve complete victory over sin." Sometimes, and I think many of us have experienced this, they reply with, "Well, if you claim to be completely victorious over sin, what need do you have for Christ?"

They seem to think that they "have us" with that question, and yet the entire operation of passing from the first to the second birth is in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ at every step. His sacrifice has made

it possible. His resurrection has provided the way, and His abiding within us by His Spirit is what allows us to maintain the life free of sin. It is all Christ, and Christ in all, that allows this, and Jones here states it plainly – that it is not we, but Christ – specifically, His Word, who accomplishes His perfect life within us. We are, in this flesh, imperfect and without worth, except that Christ puts His life into us, and places His value upon us, and because of this He is not ashamed to call us – even us – His brethren. Because of this, and only because of this, we are like Him in mind, and spirit, and in character. These are statements of faith that must ever be in our minds, and spoken with confidence in the promises that make these things so.

Our testimony must be plainly uttered, and clearly understood. Like the Spirit that gives us the words of testimony, we do not testify of ourselves, but of Christ who abides within us, and would abide within all, if they would but open the door when He knocks.

We continue:

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This is stated in another place thus: “When ye receive the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” Thus it is the word of God that must work in you. You are not to work to do the word of God: the word of God is to work in you to cause you to do. “Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

[endquote]

A brief comment here on the statement, “You are not to work to do the word of God.” This, to me, is a perfect statement of what it means to be a Sabbath keeper. We are not people who “do not work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.” We are a people who rest in Christ, and allow Him to do His work through us – allow Him to fulfill His Word through us. Those who focus on outward factors will only see how this manifests in a way different in practice from their own religious experience, but they should be focused on how it makes us different from those who have a religion based upon “works” altogether.

Continuing:

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The word of God being living and full of power, when it is allowed to work in the life, there will be powerful work wrought in that individual. As this word is the word of God, the power, of which is full, is only the power of God; and when that word is allowed to work in the life, there will be the work of God manifested in the life-it is his power working mightily. And thus it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. “It shall accomplish that which I please.” Let it.

From these scriptures it is plain that we are expected to look upon the word of God only as self-fulfilling. The word of God is self-fulfilling. This is the great truth presented everywhere in the Bible This is the difference between the word of God and the word of men. And this is just the difference emphasized in

the passage that says, “When ye received the word of God,...ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

[endquote]

Now, this is wonderful. When we become true Sabbath keepers, as I take that concept to describe, when we enter into the “rest” that Yahweh has for His children, then we become doers of the Word. Then we become obedient to His commands, and realize that no matter how hard we tried before, we could never accomplish the divine commission – we were simply unequipped for it. But as we let the word, “living and full of power” work in our lives, we cannot FAIL to do Yah’s work, nor fail to please Him. And how long must we “wait” after we are converted to please Him? That is the question... And the answer is, “No time at all.”

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, the Word says. But to look at that the other way, which is equally as true: With faith, true and living faith, it is impossible not to please Him. As we have said in one study a while back, which I think pastor gave, “it is easier to be saved than to be lost.” Only, we must have made that step, and been born again. All must be brought to that point of death, where they must choose to be convicted, and executed, for their sins, as Paul writes about in Romans 7, and then Christ will live through them for ever after. But that life begins the instant the choice is made... it is not something we must learn to do, it is something we are born (again) to do. Yes, there are things to learn IN that new life, but learning TO live, to be dead to sin and alive in Christ, is not one of them. This must be understood as a part of the Good News. We need not wait a moment for life to begin.

We continue:

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There is no power in the word of a man to do what it says. Whatever may be the man’s ability to accomplish what he says, there is no power in the man’s word itself to accomplish what he says. A man’s word may express the easiest possible thing for him to accomplish, and you may thoroughly believe it, yet it is altogether dependent upon the man himself to accomplish it apart from his word. It is not his word that does it. It is he himself that must do it; and this just as really as though he had spoken no word at all.

Such is the word of men. It is not so with the word of God. When the word is spoken by the Lord, there is at that moment in that word the living power to accomplish what the word expresses. It is not needed that the Lord employ any shadow of any other means than that word itself to accomplish what the word says. The Bible is full of illustrations of this, and they are written to teach us this very thing, -that we shall look upon the word as the word of God, and not as the word of men; and that we may receive it thus as it is in truth, the word of God, that it may work effectually in us the will and good pleasure of God.

“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.” “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” At first there were no worlds at all. More than this, there was none of the materials of which the worlds are made. There was nothing. Then God spoke, and all the worlds were in their places. From whence came the worlds, then? Before he spoke, there were none; after he spoke, there they were. Whence, then, did they come? What produced them? What produced the material of which they are composed? What caused them to exist? It was the

word which was spoken that did it all. And this word did it all, because it was the word of God. There was in that word the divinity of life and spirit, the creative power, to do all that the word expressed. Such is the word of God.

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What Jones expresses here is, I think, one of the most powerful ideas to be found in the Bible. The Scriptures say that nothing is too difficult for Yahweh to do. And why? Because He is Sovereign. Because He is King, and His Word is literally "Law." What He speaks IS and becomes so. "Let there be light." "Lazarus come forth." "Go and sin no more."

These are all the same Word. If we believe that Yahweh created all things in an instant with His word (He spoke on separate occasions, but each statement was followed immediately by results), and if we believe that He can bring forth light from darkness, why do so many disbelieve Him when He speaks to them?

He says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." But many who claim to have come to Him are not at rest, and rage, and bite, and devour themselves and others. He says, "Go and sin no more." But many who claim to have accepted Him say, "I still sin occasionally," or "I am still working on that," or "Someday I will succeed at failing to sin," if that makes any sense at all. Why not believe His words?

Let us believe the promises of Yahweh, and let us teach others to believe those promises today, this very day. Here is the last section of the study:

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"And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The word of God in the Bible is the same,-the same in life, in spirit, in creative power,-precisely the same, as that word that made the heavens and all the host of them. It was Jesus Christ who spoke the word at creation; it is he who speaks the word in the Bible. At creation the word which he spoke made the worlds; in the Bible the word which he speaks saves and sanctifies the soul. In the beginning the word which he spoke created the heavens and the earth; in the Bible the word which he speaks creates in Christ Jesus the man who receives that word.

In both places, and everywhere in the work of God, it is the word that does it. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Receive it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you. Then, "as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "To you is the word of this salvation sent." "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able [literally, 'full of power'] to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." RH, Oct. 20, 1896

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There is power in the Word. There is a song that says there is "Power in The Blood." This is true, and that power opened the way to salvation. But now there is power also in the Word, and without accepting

the power in the Word, the power in the Blood will avail humanity nothing. We must believe the testimony of those who have accepted Christ, for the inspired writers like Paul, and Peter, and the other apostles, give us firsthand accounts of their experiences with the Messiah.

And now, today, WE become witnesses of our firsthand experiences with the Messiah. We are facing great opposition, of course, for our testimony is at variance with those who have not become Sabbath-keepers (I am speaking spiritually here) through their acceptance of the Gospel, but the Word says there is a rest “today,” a keeping of the Sabbath “today” for all who will. Our testimony reveals that there is a deeper experience with Christ than many have been willing to acknowledge, and of course denial is the natural man’s response to this spiritual confrontation. But we are faithful, and testify to that which we have seen and heard, that which we have tasted and digested. There are some who love to hear the truth as it is in Christ Yahshua, and we seek these. There are some who may say, “I find it difficult to believe, but how wonderful it would be to truly be free from sin.” You see, these are like the first brother in the parable. They say, “That’s not my experience,” but as they consider what we are saying, that they can be – and will be – and ARE if they accept it – free from sin from this moment on, and forever more, they may repent, and come out with us into the field. In so doing, they do the will of the Father, and respond to His call. They let the Word accomplish the will of the Father in them.

The Word of Yah is effective, and powerful, and instant... but now, it must be chosen. We are not perfectly like the darkness, to be made into light. We are not exactly like the earth, which may bring forth fruit and living animals. Yahweh has made us in His creative and morally accountable image; He has given to us free will. Yahweh has given to us an image of His power, so that when we say, “Father, I come to you,” then it has value... then it has virtue. But the time is now, for any who have not yet chosen, to choose life. Now is the day to be born again, if any have not yet been born again. Now is the day to put aside all the doctrinal arguments against the truth, and all the justifications for one’s current state, and all the intellectual barriers to the simple testimony of the Word.

It is the understanding of the heart that draws the soul near to Christ; and while this is never in conflict with a sanctified intellect, the two are not in harmony in the natural man. As we give our testimony we must pray for a miracle of faith, that even those who are in darkness may come to love the light when they hear of it from our lips, and reach up to the waiting hand of the Father. As we speak, and pray, and reach out to others tomorrow (and all other days) let us remember to express to them the power of the Word, and that it awaits nothing, save their consent, to bring forth everlasting life.