

## Declaring Victory

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Tonight, I have a relatively short – but I believe extremely vital – topic I would like to share with you.

It was initially inspired, actually, by the brief discussion that our Church members recently had on the CSDA Forum that we've been talking about. Jody, please include a link to the forum in the transcript. This is, the thread regarding a video that Pastor "Chick" has shared with the brethren. After several of us gave our analyses of the video, pastor summarized his response by stating that while the topics discussed in the course of that video were relevant, there were a few issues here and there with some of its applications... but the real problem, the actual thing that made it far less useful than it otherwise could have been, is something that a few of us also noted in what we shared – that the presenter did not have a strong testimony of the sanctified life. He did not give a "clear sound" of victory. Thus while he may speak of behaviors and practices, (and we believe he spoke quite well of some of them) as it is written, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor 14:8)

We find this in many studies, sermons, and presentations given by SDA groups, or those that have come out from them. They know the right "words" in many cases. They know to say that Christ gives us victory over sin. They know that "righteousness by faith" is "good." They know that through Christ all things are possible to them that believe. They know that faith overcomes the flesh. They know, they know, they know... but as long as it remains mere "knowledge," it does not become, in them "reality," and thus their testimony falls short.

And, this is not to say that such presentations may not have good things to teach us; however, we as the redeemed of Yahweh must beware, lest we be "leavened" by the subtle doubts that those who have not yet died to self necessarily include in even their best and most inspiring teachings. They know that they must not be hypocrites, and therefore it does not matter how powerfully they teach against sin, they MUST say, "But every now and then, of course we slip," or something to that effect. If a preacher were to give the impression to His congregation that they must not sin, while at the same time he knows that he occasionally transgresses our Father's requirements, he will find himself condemned by his own words. Thus, in order to avoid the condemnation of his own doctrine, the preacher who is not yet truly converted must always, always include some kind of disclaimer, that, "This may be possible, but nobody I know has ever done it (yet)."

And of course, if one were to appear and say, "But teacher, I have!" What would their reaction be? Well, again, it must be, "You cannot be telling the truth, otherwise I must also be able to have this victory." They are seized by fear, because if it is truly possible to overcome sin through Christ, but they have not overcome sin, then clearly they have not yet accepted Christ to the degree that He may be accepted. Are they qualified to be a preacher? Are they truly Christians at all? To silence the voice of these doubts, the flesh arises, and says, "Attack!"

We who have been bearing this message know well what this looks like. All of us who have tried to share the Good News with those who believe they have some kind of spiritual authority have been removed from Churches, have been assaulted verbally (and physically once or twice), have been ignored and segregated – which is its own kind of violence. Flattery, which arises in a few rare cases, to the effect of,

“Wow, that’s really great, I hope to get to your level of faith some day,” is also kind of violence. It allows the flatterer to tempt the Christian to pride... and at the same time to escape the conviction of the Spirit, because it makes the one proclaiming victory to be somehow “special,” placing the merit on the individual, rather than on Christ who offers it to ALL.

So what does a Christian do? Well, we need to press this battle to gates. Seventh-day Adventists are often accused, by those who would be convicted of its teachings about the 10 Commandments, of focusing too much on the Law. Creation Seventh Day Adventists receive such accusations as well, but also that we focus too much on perfection of character. For us, though, the matter is simple – we believe that any message claiming to present the Gospel of Christ Yahshua should actually contain the Gospel.

We believe that every message that claims to be edifying to the believer should clearly display the Victory over sin doctrine as a bright and shining banner, and we feel rightly disappointed when a Christian speaker (of any denomination) stands up to speak for Christ but does not give a testimony of total, consistent overcoming.

We must always be teaching victory. If we are teaching about the Sabbath, we are teaching victory, because victory is Rest in Yahweh. If we are teaching the Godhead and the Trinity, we are teaching victory, because to know the Father and Son is everlasting life, which is life separate from the “wages of sin.” If we are teaching about health reform, we are teaching victory, because Yahshua in us gives us life (physically, mentally and spiritually) abundantly, and also power over all that comes from a depraved appetite. If we are teaching the feast days, and the New Moon, we are teaching the tools that our Father has given us for victory. If we are teaching Church membership and the Covenant of faith, we are teaching about the community of believers in which victory over sin flourishes and grows into the full measure of the stature of Christ. If we are teaching about the Mark of the Beast, and why we separated from the Conference SDA Church, we are explaining the principles that relate to abiding in – or separating from – Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our victorious faith.

In everything we do, whether directly “Church related” or not, the converted heart is teaching the Victory that is ours through the Savior’s life, death and resurrection. The more actively we are aware of this, the more effectively we can express it.

The Victory over sin is not just “one doctrine,” or even the “central doctrine” of the CSDA Church. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory, and the very reason that there ever existed a “Church” in the first place, from the mountains of Seth, where the first believers were called the Sons of Elohim, to the few, faithful remnant in this last generation.

How can we not speak of it always, and in all things? And one might ask, “Who can speak about the victory all the time?” But we can, just as we can “rejoice always,” and just as we can “pray always,” and just as we can “give thanks always.” These are also Biblical directions. We can “speak victory always,” and that is what we are called to do. It saturates our lives, for consider this well:

An individual saved from a deadly disease will talk about it for the rest of their lives. The world, hearing this, will say it is an “inspiration.” But herein lies the difference for the converted Christian (or, we should say, the “healed human”). Since the World does not recognize “sin” as a disease, because it is

spiritual rather than biological, and because it cannot be treated using expensive medication, it is disbelieved, and those who claim to have overcome it are seen as irrelevant at best.

But we who have been with Yahshua know well that from which we have been set free. We shall not fail nor be discouraged by the disbelief of those around us. This message that we bear, of the Gospel of Christ, of Victory over sin, is not for the world. It is for the spiritual children of Israel. It is for those who are IN the world, but desire not to be OF the world. It is for the few who yet have the potential to awaken, and to hear the glad tidings from Heaven. At times, this knowledge can make the message seem a bit “hard;” but then again, contemplating the same situation, so did Christ.

To a woman not from Israel, who asked a favor of the Messiah, He said, “Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.” (Mark 7:27) Now, the woman – refusing to let go of the blessing – replied well, and received that which she had asked of the Savior. Yahshua’s answer did not mean that He did not love the woman, or the world, but He does not pray for the World, nor labor on Its behalf, (John 17:9) because He knows its destiny realistically. Those whom He seeks are those who are called, and those who – like the woman in Mark’s record – refused to let Him go, for they believe that He has the words that give them life.

This way IS open to “all;” unfortunately, many who came to the Savior, knowing He had life, went away sad... because they were not willing to give their all. They were unwilling to sell all they had, and this is seen today in those who love the “idea” of victory, but will not surrender all that they consider “precious” to obtain it. Their idols, their sins, are too precious to them, and they cannot surrender. It is easier to be saved than lost, as another wonderful study has taught us, but sadly it is more common to be lost than saved. Few are they that find the way to everlasting life, but blessed are those who help the few to find it.

Our role in this world is to always be holding up that banner, like a lighthouse, like a beacon in the darkness. Our role is to proclaim victory always, so that if ever one of these souls should wander across our path, they will see the light, and know that home is “over here.” We speak, we act, from an invincible faith, not only for our benefit (although it is to our very critical benefit) but for those who see and hear our testimony as well. Never should we lose the opportunity to testify to the “cure” that we have found to the deadliest of ills.

In considering this topic for the week, I was reminded of a study that I gave a few years ago, and referenced a bit more recently, and that is the concept of the “ABCs of Prayer.” I believe that what I have previously taught, though good, may be found equally well-presented in a nominal Church as well. We, as Christ’s Bride, must make our teaching about this matter even stronger.

Let me explain what I mean.

When asked to describe “prayer,” many Christians may say that it is when we ask God for something we need, or desire, or think that we should have. This, unfortunately, is the entirety of what some people are taught is “prayer.” However, this is only the first step, (A) – Ask.

Those with a little more education in spiritual matters might state, correctly, that asking is not enough. They may say, “You cannot just ask, you must also believe that you will obtain the thing you have asked for.” They will, again correctly, support this with verses such as, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Mat 21:22) So, we must add to asking ( B ) – Believe.

Those who have been well educated in the things of Yahweh, such as I believe all our brethren should be, will say that even this is not the full picture. We have said that there is an A, a B, and then also a C. We must “Claim” the thing that we have requested, demonstrating full confidence that our belief will see fruit, that our faith and our request are both acceptable to our Father. We thank our Father for His faithfulness in the keeping of His promises, for we approach with our petitions free from doubt and wavering. As it is written, “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.” (Mark 11:23)

Thus far we have stopped here, but for the Creation Seventh Day Adventist, there is another step into which we may grow. We have an A, a B and a C... but there is now also a D.

If we ask our Father for something and, believing, we claim it and receive it, we have been blessed that our Father has answered our prayer. That is good, but it can be made better still, if we then let those who may benefit from a strong testimony know that Yah is faithful to those with whom He has made His Covenant.

We Ask for things of our father. We Believe we shall receive these things, and we Claim them. Thereafter, let us Declare that we have received these blessings, and this is nowhere more important than in the receiving of that most precious thing – a new heart and a right spirit.

Surely, one may search the Scriptures and find places where Christ said to one whom He had healed, “See thou say nothing to any man.” (Mark 1:44) However, this is because His time had not yet come to be lifted up before all men. But that day has come, and is even now, when Yahshua must be lifted up above all the darkness and confusion of this world. In this day, when so many doubt His gift to them, or even that He existed at all in the way that His works have been recorded, it is more important than ever that we declare His victory, the victory that He has given to us, before this final age.

In general, it ought to be our pattern that we declare the goodness of Yahweh in thanksgiving when we receive those things for which we have prayed. That is the natural response to receiving gifts from our Father. But all of us here ought also to have prayed for, and believed, and received, the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. And as we have done so... in this gift, then, we have one faith, one Spirit, and one testimony... therefore let us share it, with joy, to all who will hear, as often as we are able.