

## Declaring Victory 2: Speaking Up

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, I would like to do a relatively brief follow-up to last week's topic, which was called "Declaring Victory." In that study, there were several points brought up that I believe are vital to our sanctification. Now, over the time I have been giving these studies, I have said that about several topics (and certainly, to a degree they might be said of all of them) but I want to emphasize that when I say something is "vital" to our sanctification, I do not mean that we must merely understand the matter that is presented. I also mean that we must understand it to the degree that we can teach it to others, and furthermore, that we apply it to our own lives in whatsoever way we can. This is so that when we teach it to others, we are doing so as a testimony of victory.

Some of the points that were mentioned last week are these: 1) Every doctrine that the Church of Yahshua teaches is a teaching about victory over sin (and I briefly went over some connections). 2) Only fear, such as the fear of hypocrisy, would keep an individual who believes in the Bible to any degree from saying, "I have ceased to commit any known sin. I have victory over all sin." 3) The true pattern for a Christian's prayer consists of four components, which are easily remembered by their initials A, B, C, and D. These stand for Ask, Believe, Claim, and Declare. If our prayers are answered, but we do not declare the goodness and mercy of Yahweh in response, it is as if we are "burying" those gifts, and will not see them grow. During the conversation that followed, pastor also emphasized 4) Declaring victory is an example of the Sabbath rest principle in action, because those who expend efforts to try and "be" (that is, to make themselves) victorious have not yet died to self, "allowing" Yahshua to be victorious through them.

This week, I would like to give a practical application of declaring victory as it applies to another major topic of our recent studies, that of communication among the brethren. I need not revisit the various Biblical passages that point out just how important it is for the saints to speak often with one another. However, recent conversations with non-members (such as some recent posts on the CSDA forum) may serve as a useful object lesson with regard to the importance of having "one mind" about the things that our Father has shown us, and being united in faith, in judgment, and in Spirit.

One of the things that the Church provides for its members is a "safe" place for growth, which often necessarily involves correction. Because all of the members are united with Yahweh, and with one another, through the New Testament Covenant, we have a certain expectation of one another as it relates to reliability, to integrity, courtesy, punctuality, empathy (through which we bear one another's burdens), and various other attributes that we would all agree exist within the perfect character of Christ. We would not necessarily hold those of the world with whom we associate to these same standards, although we certainly take every opportunity to model these behaviors before them as a part of our testimony of Yahshua. But within the Body we have an expectation of excellence, of both ourselves and each other, and the process of growth therefore involves the potential for rebuke and reproof if we perceive that this expectation is not being consistently met.

Now, for those in the flesh, this would amount to a real challenge. They may know, on some intellectual, and perhaps even emotional and spiritual level, that this is the Bride of Christ, and they may say, to paraphrase Peter, "Where else would we go? The words of life are here." But, because they are in the

flesh, they must deal with the unpleasant reality of being subject to periodic reproofs. Now, being in the Spirit is not insurance against reproof. As we know, “perfection of Character” is not the same thing as “holy flesh,” or having “all knowledge” in an absolute sense. The Spirit-led Christian may have some “blind spots” to clear up before he or she is ready for translation into the Heavenly Kingdom without seeing death, and therefore they must also deal with the unpleasant reality of being subject to periodic reproofs.

But, that sounds exactly the same – so what is the advantage, in this case, of being in the Spirit rather than being in the flesh? The advantage is the difference between life and death. The one in the flesh recoils from correction, because if this correction were to be accepted, that flesh would die. The flesh seeks to preserve itself, just as it is, and therefore it is an open channel through which the “natural man” and the various spiritual enemies will attempt to lead a soul from everlasting life. For those not yet IN the Church, but become associated with us through our teachings, our articles online, and so on, this flesh-barrier can prove to be an impossible challenge to overcome, and so they either go away after some point, or set up a tent outside of Israel and watch the blessings fall on others from afar.

They know that if they were to actually enter the camp, and join the covenant, they also would be subject to an expectation of excellence, and their flesh could never countenance such an idea while it is yet alive. Such is the tale of the flesh.

But those in the Spirit, though they may receive the same correction as any other, they receive it willingly. It may not be pleasant, for the Scriptures tell us, “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb 12:11) They who would be innocent before the Father know, “Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die.” (Pro 15:10)

Specifically, “correction is grievous” unto both those who are in the Way and those who forsake it, but the idea in the verse from Proverbs is that the correction is grievous – and therefore avoided. Paul also speaks of them for whom correction is grievous, but they do not allow their flesh to repel them out of the Narrow Path, and therefore what is initially bitter for them eventually becomes sweetness. Those who escape the Covenant, they may believe that they are avoiding bitterness and the sting of correction, but how bitter will it be when they realize that the expectations of the earthly covenant are precisely the expectations of the Son of Man? Those in the Spirit trust that the Almighty will only allow them to receive what they can bear, and that for their everlasting benefit. Thus that perfect love, that perfect trust, will cast out any fear, any hesitation, any doubts that would hinder them from actively seeking to have others expect excellence of character from their words and their actions.

Now, what does this have to do with declaring victory? Well, there is the obvious application, in that those who overcome sin by receiving rebuke and examining themselves to put away imperfections can testify, “I have overcome through the blood of the Lamb.” But there is another application also, that impacts both our testimony to the world, and our communication within the Body.

Those in the Body, in displaying this excellence of character, must press together, even through the receiving of rebukes, and the growth that this will necessarily provide. But from where do these statements of correction come? The Scriptures tell us that the world will know that we are Christ’s by the love that we have toward one another... and in a world so very dangerous to spiritual life and growth, a lot

of that love will be demonstrated in the frequent opportunities that we will have to rescue one another from danger.

For the spirit-filled Christian, it is not enough to merely receive a rebuke, overcome whatsoever defects this may involve, and then move forward in victory. This is a parallel to the incomplete three-part pattern for prayer: Ask, Believe, Claim. We might say that this is, with regard to rebukes: Accept, Overcome, and Walk in victory. I suppose with a clever application of synonyms we could find something that makes the initials easier to remember, but hopefully the concepts here are clear.

And in line with what we saw earlier, if we merely stop at “Walk in victory,” we are only receiving a blessing for ourselves, whereas our Father wants us to “freely receive” and then “freely give.” To those three steps, I would add a fourth – Rescue others. Just as at the end of prayer we must Declare Victory in order to share our blessings with the Body, and through them the world, so when we grow in grace and spirit, we are now better equipped to help others to overcome the same things.

We have often taught that if we see a defect in another, this may mean that either the defect IS in us, (in which case we must remove the splinter from our eye, so we can help the one we have observed with a log) or WAS in us, and we have overcome it before. In such cases, we can, with a spirit of love, bring the flaw to the brother’s attention. There is a third possibility as well, and it most commonly applies to “overt” sins, but it may not. The Christian need not have committed a particular sin in order to identify it in another, and in the case of more subtle defects of character, perhaps he has seen another individual corrected, and has become watchful for it in his own life. In that case, we are learning from the experiences of others, of our brethren.

Now, the Christian who has learned about a particular imperfection, whether it is due to a personal experience of victory, or seeing a brother or sister gain victory over it, has also gained a responsibility to assist others. There is some danger here if the Spirit is not right, because the tempter will try to make the believer go to the other side of the ditch from permissiveness; that is, they may be tempted to become fault-finders, who officiously seek out the errors of others in order to “help” them. That is not what takes place in the community of saints.

Instead, one who notices a possible injury in another’s spirit, causing words and actions that are out of character for Christ’s followers, will take the matter to prayer. He will, if convinced that this is something that the other individual is not able to see for himself, follow the principles that we have learned as a people, in order to bring about healing. For the principles that apply here, we might speak of Gospel Order, we might speak of “I” messages (such as, “I have noticed you using words that I believe are inconsistent with our faith,” vs. “You are doing something wrong”) and other such methods of disarming divisive spirits. We know that the Enemy of souls is ever vigilant for opportunities to drive wedges between brethren, and so our Father has given us the proper equipment with which to operate.

Those who have gained victory over defects of character become their brethren’s keepers with regard to those things, and must all (as a community) be supremely interested in the health, happiness, and everlasting good of our brothers and sisters. In such a community, it is not the case that only one or two are always bringing problems into the light. We know well what Satan would do with such an arrangement – but here we have some room for improvement, and to apply the things that the Spirit is teaching us now.

We have, perhaps, borne witness to a brother pointing out an error, a mis-application of some principle, or some flaw of character, and then thought, “I noticed that as well, but I didn’t want to say anything.” It may be that the individual needed to hear it from one person, and not another... but it may also be the case that we did not exercise love properly toward that erring brother, and have something to learn. This is a delicate matter, as we can easily see, and requires prayer – but it should never be experienced passively.

In other words, if you see a flaw in a brother and say nothing, this must be the result of a deliberate decision to either wait for a more opportune time (such as a New Moon), to wait for further evidence that this is a repeated behavior that the individual did not catch for himself, or to seek advice from another before bringing it up. It should never be a case where you suspect something is wrong, and just leave it be indefinitely. That is not a proper exercise of love, and it robs both you and the individual of an opportunity to discuss the victory that Christ gives us over all things that pertain to this world.

We are still talking about declaring victory; and in this matter, as in all things, the guiding principle must be love, but we must ask for discernment to know how best to demonstrate it. We would never wish to see our brother or sister uncomfortable, but if we have overcome something that we see in them, or know of another who has, then we should count it joy to be able to bring “Good news” to a situation that would otherwise have a tragic end. In all these things, we have a duty to “declare victory” both in our own homes (spiritually and literally) and in the world. In all these things, we have a responsibility to ensure that the Body functions well, with health and power, and not to think, “Oh, that is something for Pastor ‘Chick’ to take care of,” or “That is something for Brother David or Brother Luke to deal with.”

Naturally, in some difficult situations it might be good to seek advice in general terms from a trusted source; but even then, it might still be better to go to the one whom you believe is in error, and begin an open, honest conversation with no thoughts of judgment or spirit of accusation. At the worst, a fault will be revealed somewhere that can be cleared up for the benefit of all involved... and at best... well, I think that as long as this is conducted with a spirit of love, there IS no “worst” or “best” case. In all cases where this takes place, the individuals will draw closer together, one or both will gain understanding, and the love of Christ will abide in all.

So here, brethren, we see another application of declaring victory. We seek opportunities to share our victories with one another, by example, by exhortation, and even through attempts at correction. We let our triumphs become those of our brethren, as we cleanse the camp of Israel from within, so that the smile of Yah will be upon us, and so that we reveal ourselves to be the ones chosen to finish the work of spreading the Gospel to all before that Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh. Let us hold fast, then, to the Savior, and to the Covenant we have with Him, and with one another.