

Fairness and Justice

Happy Sabbath to everyone. This week, we are going to be looking at a topic that I have entitled “Fairness and Justice.” It is partly a look at the “words” that the Scriptures use, and that we use, in order to more closely refine our language, to the end that we should have an “invincible speech.” Now this term, I have not really heard before, but it seems to me to make a lot of sense in concept. If we are to speak with an invincible faith, then we must believe our own words are true, and that what we say will come to pass. Thus our testimony, our speech, our words, cannot be destroyed, if we are “in Christ” indeed.

As I have thought about this matter, a new layer of understanding has opened up to me with regard to Yahshua’s statement, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Mat 12:36) Of course, we have looked at this verse before. We have even, previously, explained that this is not a threat by Yahshua, but rather a statement explaining just how closely our manner of speaking reveals our faith. Of course, salvation is not a matter of what we do, and therefore not a matter of what we say – however, there are things that a redeemed person will and will not say, or this is evidence that redemption has not been experienced.

But there is another layer to this as well. Everything that Yahshua says is true. His word is truth, and He is the Word of Yah. And if we are “like Him,” then all our words are and will be true as well. The closer we become to Yahshua’s character, the more true this becomes of us, and therefore the more responsibility we have with the things that we say. This works on an “ordinary” level, because we are setting an example for others who observe us. However, it also works in a strictly spiritual level, because – as I heard someone say once – if we say, “I can,” then we are right... and if we say, “I cannot,” then we are also right. But the statement, you see, is true, and therefore we must always have an invincible speech, a way of speaking that always says what is true, and always says what WILL be true. Now, I want you to consider what that means, that the Christian must always say things that WILL be true.

It means that we must make sure every thought, which leads to our words, is captive to Christ. It does not mean that we are predicting the future (necessarily, although that is when this becomes possible) but it means that we cannot speak from doubt, or any negative emotion – and the only time our words as spoken do not come to pass, is when the circumstances change unexpectedly, for at that point even prophecy is conditional.

It was thus that Paul could say, “I have a crown of life waiting for me.” We must all speak with the gift of prophecy after that manner.

The Scriptures tell us we must be quick to hear, but slow to speak. We must wait on the Spirit to prompt us, if we do not know what to say, and this – even this simple thing – is training for receiving the Latter Rain in its full power.

An example of this is what leads to the concepts I would like us to examine tonight, and that is speaking of “fairness” and “justice.” I want us to keep in mind the importance of “invincible speech” as we look at this topic.

You have heard it said, by others of course, the expression, “Life is not fair.” Although this is not something the saints will be heard saying, because it indicates a kind of self-sorrow and depression, the statement itself, in a certain way, is actually true.

In fact, and this will take some explanation and careful thought, Yahweh does not treat everyone “fairly.” Now, what does that mean?

Well, last week Yah brought these words to mind, and so I looked them up to ensure that I understood exactly what they meant in modern English. I read this of “fairness,” and I am including the most relevant definitions that I could find: “The state, condition, or quality of being free from bias or injustice; evenhandedness.” So here we see that fairness has something to do with justice, but the two are not exactly the same thing.

I then looked for the word “justice,” and I found this, and I will put several definitions here:

- 1) The quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: to uphold the justice of a cause.
- 2) Rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason: to complain with justice.
- 3) The moral principle determining just conduct.
- 4) Conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment.
- 5) The administering of deserved punishment or reward.

Now, here we see that justice has something to do with fairness, because it uses the term “equitableness,” which also means to be free from bias and even-handed.

But notice that “fairness” by itself almost never implies anything about moral uprightness, conformity to principle, or law, or righteousness. It implies that we treat everyone the same way, but that way might not be very good. Justice, on the other hand, has a moral component to it, and it includes a component associated with being fair, but there are other factors that contribute to its qualities as well.

Without getting too deeply into the nuances of language, we can make an understanding of this idea very simple with a question: Does Yahweh treat everyone equally, or does He treat everyone justly?

I think you will agree, after considering it carefully, that there is a difference between justice and equality with regard to how Yah treats people.

Let me give you just a few examples:

“For the Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.” (Mat 25:14, 15)

At the end of his journey, we read that the one who had been given five doubled his resources, and was rewarded. The same was the case with the man who had been given two. The servant who had been given one, however, returned one, and was punished for being “wicked and slothful.” The moral, as

given by Yahshua, is, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” (Mat 25: 29)

Clearly, the servants were not treated the same way, and this is even from the beginning, when one was given more than the others. However, each was treated justly, according to that particular individual’s abilities (as the Scripture says directly) and choices.

Here is, perhaps, an even clearer example, because the quality of the work was the same in every case.

This is a well-known parable for CSDAs: “For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

“And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; ‘Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.’ And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, ‘Why stand ye here all the day idle?’ They say unto him, ‘Because no man hath hired us.’ He saith unto them, ‘Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.’

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, ‘Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.’ And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.” (Mat 20:1-10)

Clearly, the man who represents the Father did not treat everyone who worked for him the same way. Some did much more work, and yet received the same reward. The world would say, “That is not fair.” But the Kingdom of Heaven is based on different principles than these. What if we, who have been laboring in the message for years and decades, should convert someone to the truth right before the return of Yahshua? That individual, who has not labored for the salvation of others (like the thief on the cross) will receive the same inheritance as we. Now, I have heard it said by some Adventists (when I was a member of the mainstream Church), “Don’t worry, those who have been laboring in the Gospel will have more stars in their crown.”

Now, even back then, this statement really bothered me. It sounded almost as if they (and this just applies to those I heard speaking this way, I am not saying all Adventists have this mindset) were comforting themselves for the “unfair” way that Yah gives rewards to His children. They were thinking like the world. Now, it may be that those who have labored the longest will stand nearest the Throne in glory and honor. It may be that they will have the shiniest diamonds on their robes – if so, so be it. But the way I have heard it explained, it was sort of an attempt to undo the very principle and idea of this parable that we have just read.

Those who truly love their brethren will rejoice that they have attained unto what Yah has designed for all who are faithful. They will say, “It is wonderful that Yah’s grace is sufficient for all.” They will feel blessed to have been a part of those who labored with the Master from the beginning, and the concept of “fairness,” as the world uses it, will be far from their minds and hearts.

But Yahweh the Almighty one is Just. If you search the Scriptures, you will see that the translators of the KJV, and perhaps other versions as well, never once use the term “fair” to describe our Father or His Son, except where that word is used for beauty or attractiveness. The inspired record does not tell us that Yah treats everyone the same way – but the Word is full of verses that tell us that our Father is just, and true.

He will uphold moral principles, and be bound to the Law He has set for His creatures. He will punish evil according to the measure of guilt (which, again, makes the modern concept of “Hell” a terrible distortion of truth) and He will reward faith according to the quality of that faith.

The apostles did not, at least at first, understand this characteristic of Yah. As a result, they were fighting among themselves to see who would be the “greatest.” James and John even called in their mother, to see if she would put in a good word for them with the Master. And even when they had been with Yahshua for a time, and stopped openly disputing about their relative greatness, there were still some concern about whether or not one was being treated better than another.

We have read this passage: “Peter seeing [John] saith to Yahshua, ‘Lord, and what shall this man do?’

Yahshua saith unto him, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.’

“Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Yahshua said not unto him, ‘He shall not die,’ but, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?’” (John 21:21-23)

The fact that Peter would ask that question shows that he was not yet clear of a concern for “fairness.” He thought, perhaps, that John would receive more than one penny for his labor. And lest we single Peter out, the following verse tells us that a misunderstanding of Yahshua’s saying went “abroad among the brethren.” This did not result from any spiritual principle, but a misunderstanding of the distinction between fairness and justice, and a lingering residue of pride. In addition, there were other, related problems with the apostles which resulted in them being unable, for example, to cast demons out from those who were possessed after Yahshua took Peter, James and John with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration.

But if we understand that Yah is just in His dealings with each one, even if that does not mean all are treated the same way, then we can see beyond those stumbling blocks that Satan may try to cast in our path.

Brethren, we are in the last days, as John himself has said. We must be clear of those things with which our forefathers in the faith of Yahshua continued to struggle, at least up until the close of their record. This matter we are discussing tonight is but an example of these things. We must guard against the leaven of the world with regard to how we think our Father “ought” to act, and receive and rejoice in the understanding that all are treated justly – according to the talents they have received, and the circumstances of their lives.

It is the time now to put away the “little things” such as this, which may distort our understanding of our Father, and to esteem others better than ourselves. It is time now to develop a clearer and yet clearer picture of our Heavenly Father, to think of Him, not as the world has trained us, but as He has revealed Himself to be, through His Word, and through the testimony of His messengers. We are to be content,

and more than content, with the blessings we have received, the opportunity to be purified in the path of sanctification, and to be thankful for the light of judgment, which prepares us for life everlasting.

This is a matter that I believe that our Father would have us consider. Some, I think, will benefit greatly from coming to an understanding of this principle. Do we understand that our Father treats everyone according to their spiritual needs? Do we realize that this means that some are treated “differently” from our perspective? Do we rejoice that the Author of our salvation knows each soul so intimately as to perfectly prepare His blessings and providence for each, all at the same time? As we do this, those things which may once have seemed “mysterious” to us about our Father may begin to open up, and our Sabbath rest, our peace, will increase and become abundant.

Are there any comments or questions about this study?