

## Responsibility and Blame

Good evening to everyone. Last Tuesday was the New Moon, and upon that day, Yah brought forth an opportunity for vital cleansing for His Body on earth. This was our monthly cleansing, according to the parable we follow when understanding the Spiritual applications of our Father's holy days. And of course, with that cleansing will often come some discomfort. Sometimes a bit of blood will be shed. But despite that, the fullness of the walk of the Christian is one of peace, and even joy.

With our Father, all things are in balance, judgment and mercy, sorrow in this life and happiness. Today, the Sabbath day, we have a symbol of the "rest" that our Father wishes us to have, and so, whatsoever trials you may have endured and overcome this last week, whatever temptations and difficulties, today our Father invites you to spend time with Him, and indeed, to have a happy Sabbath.

The Gospel is good news; all of it is good, designed for our best health (on all levels), and fulfillment. Even those parts that stretch us out at times, are only doing so in order for us to contain more of the Spirit of Love that comes pouring down upon us like rain. For our part, we must be able to see the blessing in all that occurs, including those times when our Father wishes to "cleanse" us of various things.

Today, our study is called "Responsibility and Blame." It is so titled, because those two words we are going to look at tonight are very similar in their modern usage, but there is a difference between them, with one tending heavenward and the other earthward. Let us look at a few verses to begin.

We read, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Yahshua the Messiah is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates." (2Cor 13:5, 6)

That is a well-known passage to us. And here is another, perhaps even better known in Adventism:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, 'Fear Yah, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.'" (Rev 14:6, 7)

From the beginning of the Gospel, we are told to examine ourselves. Yes, it is true that Yah has given judgment to Yahshua. Through the Son, the will of the Father is revealed – with regard to both universal decisions, and the weighing of every soul in the balance of the Divine Law. But even though this ultimate decision is the work of divinity, we have a part to play in that as well. Just as we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pet 1:4) with regard to the experience of being born again, so we become partakers of Christ's judgment, having been given the discernment, and the knowledge of the Law, to know whether or not we are walking according to the faith.

Now, some religions will take this a step too far, and they will say, "Ultimately, man judges himself, according to his own standards, and God will merely abide by that judgment." This is only true to an extent. As Paul writes in Romans 2, there are some who, because of certain circumstances, are only responsible for a limited amount of light. But those who have not heard the Gospel to any degree are few and very far between, compared to the early centuries of the Apostolic Church that was very limited in its scope of influence.

Today we have a very different story, and yet those who are, indeed, “reprobate,” as Paul terms it, are unable to judge themselves correctly despite their exposure to the message of the cross. Even when brought into contact with the guidance of the Spirit, and the testimonies of the prophets and saints, those who are darkened in their understanding are not able to properly separate light from darkness, and they will not attain unto everlasting life, even if they are very much sincere in their beliefs.

In this generation, when, as the first angel says, “the hour of [Yah’s] judgment is come,” we dare not attempt to rely upon any sincere innocence. We have a duty before us to seek out, actively, the will of our Father, accept it, and testify of it to others with our words and our actions. But how shall we do this, if we ourselves do not know all things?

Well, since we are covering the well-known passages today, let us look at one more common one among us: “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph 4:10-15)

This passage describes clearly the process of Christian growth. The manner of Christian growth, that of being “perfect” at every stage up to its expected level, we discuss in other places, but this is the process – it is ultimately through Christ, who “watereth” the seed, regardless of who has done the planting (1Cor 3:7, 8) This watering, this raining-down of the Spirit upon us so that we grow, is accomplished through various means.

Although all growth originates through Christ, as the passage from Ephesians tells us, He may give us growth through direct communication (through prophecy) or, perhaps more often, through the testimony of our brethren, especially those who have been appointed as teachers within the Body. How we respond to these methods of growth, the instructions, warnings, reproofs and encouragements, determines how quickly, and to what degree, we do indeed grow, and how firmly we plant our roots in the soil.

The plants that receive water, and sunshine, and nutrients from the soil, they do so passively and freely, as a demonstration of how the process works. But when the “plants” represent people, then we have individuals created with freedom, and choice, even the choice to reject that which would do them good. No plant ever hated water, but many human beings reject or avoid the agencies appointed to help them to survive and grow.

Rebuke and reproof are those methods that Satan will, if allowed any influence in the process of growth, attempt to cause separation and bitterness among brethren. Therefore, we need to ensure that as we ourselves grow, and as we ourselves are examined in the light of Yah’s truth, that we are able to do so as those who love the light entirely, and desire the fullness of sanctification above all else.

The Scriptures use the concepts of both “blame” and “responsibility.” However, it does not use them interchangeably, and neither should we. In the world, there is little distinction between the two in many

contexts, but here among the family of Christ, all that we say, and all that we receive from the words spoken to us, should be designed to draw us ever closer to the perfection of Yahshua's character.

Of course, we cannot control what we hear as closely as what we say, but how we respond to the words that we hear determines the power that they have over us. Sometimes very subtle differences in meanings can have an influence upon us, and even several years later, I still believe that one of the most practical and useful lessons I have learned during my time with the CSDA Church is the difference between the terms "I am" and "I feel." Just being careful to say, and to believe, "I am – "all the things that Christ has told me I am, and then to say, "I feel," when my emotions or physical senses are reacting to some external factor, gives us a tremendous benefit. By doing just this, we receive much in the ability to separate the truth – everlasting and ever-present – from temporary conditions, including even the temptations of Satan.

So, how does the Word use the term "blame?" Let us look at a few examples, and then the point should become clear.

The first time the word "blame" appears is in Genesis in a passage in which the sons of Jacob have found their brother Joseph in Egypt when attempting to avoid starvation due to a famine. Joseph, however, had not revealed to them that he was their brother. Instead, in an attempt to have them "prove" their story, he demanded to see their youngest sibling (Benjamin), and so Judah, having returned to Canaan, is attempting to convince his father to let them take Benjamin with them back to Egypt. Since the apparent death of Joseph, Benjamin has become Jacob's favored son, and so the idea of losing the only remaining child of his wife Rachel was not an easy one to consider.

But here, Judah speaks to him, "And Judah said unto Israel his father, 'Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him, if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.'" (Gen 43:8, 9)

This is a significant passage. Judah, here, is essentially pledging his life as a guarantee of Benjamin's safety. If he should fail to keep his brother safe, Judah will bear the "blame" of it – the consequences, the condemnation of Benjamin's death, forever.

In the New Testament, the Apostle tells us how we ought to act, "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed," (2Cor 6:3) with that term, in that context, meaning to be found faulty, to be mocked.

In both these cases, Old and New Testaments, the translators use the term "blame" to refer to something with permanent, perhaps irreversible, consequences. Ultimately, blame has to do with condemnation. This is why, when the Scriptures tell us there is no "condemnation" in Christ, this is paralleled with many verses that tell us we must be "without blame."

The Christian, the Scriptures say, must be "blameless." This is an easy idea to confirm:

"[Yahshua] shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Yahshua the Christ." (1Cor 1:8)

“Do all things without murmurings and disputing, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (Phil 2:14, 15)

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2Pet 3:14)

Now, as I said, this study is really about our growth, and particularly our growth through the appropriate reception of rebukes, reproof and correction. How we respond to “hard sayings” tells much about our ability to endure unto the end.

The Sons of Yah, the Scriptures tell us, are to be “blameless;” therefore, when faced with correction, we ought not to allow it to provide Satan an opportunity to distract us from the path of righteousness. This does not mean, of course, that we do not accept “responsibility” for the thing about which we are being corrected. Although the Scriptures don’t actually use that word, “responsibility,” the concept is very much there.

We read, for example, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48)

And, “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of Yahweh your Almighty One, which I command you this day, and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of Yahweh your Almighty One, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.” (Deu 11:26-28)

Here is one other: “For Yah hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2Tim 1:7) You might wonder what this last one has to do with responsibility, until you understand that the term “sound mind” there actually means “self control.” Yah, our Father, has given us the ability to be in control of ourselves, to decide whether to obey or disobey, to give a testimony of trustworthiness to others, and to have Yah expect “much” of us.

Now it is important, when we receive rebuke and correction, to continue to “examine ourselves” in the proper way. Accepting the rebuke means to change the way we think, the way we consider one or more things about ourselves and our opinions. It means to adjust our approach, and to exchange a deception for truth. It is an opportunity to draw nearer to Yahshua, to be thankful for His mercy, in showing us something that was keeping us from further unity with Him – as an expression of His love for us, and His desire to be closer still.

Satan, of course, will be present to insinuate thoughts of “blame,” which again have to do with condemnation. But we must cast him off, remembering the Scriptures, which tell us that we ARE “without blame.” This is what is true. We are without condemnation, even in the midst of trial and temptation. We are not to accept “blame,” which has to do with destruction. Instead, we acknowledge that we are responsible for making an error, when it is determined that we have, and we go on to reject that error and embrace righteousness.

Consider, if a situation, or a statement from a discerning brother, reveals some error in us. The revelation of the error does not make us any “more” guilty than we already have been. Now, if we reject that light,

then we are to be “blamed,” because it is now no longer an error, but a willful disregard for the truth. Now the action has to do with condemnation, and with destructive consequences to the soul, because at that point there is a turning-away from Christ’s mercy. Then there is no longer blamelessness, and the promises that Christ has spoken of the individual no longer apply.

But merely discovering the error, this is the way we avoid condemnation. This is how our Father saves us from destruction, because we have the opportunity to be cleansed of that thing.

Ultimately, receiving rebuke, correcting faults, and yet remaining “blameless” is another way that the “Sabbath rest” is expressed in the life of the Christian. As I began by saying, even if trials come, and cleansing proves challenging to our senses and feelings, Yahshua our Savior offers us a time of rest, a Sabbath rest, which the day itself merely symbolizes. We therefore let these things be for us a part of the “good news” of being one with the Father and Son.

Are there any questions or comments before we close?