

The State of Your Peace

Happy Sabbath to all. Today's study is called "The State of Your Peace." This week we will look at what it means to be "in Sabbath," and also what it means to be "almost" in Sabbath, where I believe many who claim to be Sabbath-keepers today currently reside.

Peace is a matter that many discuss, but few truly understand. They have no real conception of what it means to be free from distress, free from bondage, and free from a fear of illness and death. These things have become so much a part of the human condition that only through the eyes of faith can we really see what "mankind" was supposed to be like. But today, on the seventh day of the week, we have a holy day, a day that Yah has set apart for worship. This is a day to celebrate humanity as it should have been, and as it will be some day very soon.

But what is the state of your peace? The word appears over four hundred times in the Bible, and it is therefore clearly a very important theme of Yah's message to His people. In Israel, where we might say "Hello," or "How are you," they say, "What is the state of your peace?" That is the standard greeting there, and it is certainly a question worth some honest consideration.

Earlier today, as we were discussing just now, I wrote a post on the CSDA forum, a portion of which is relevant to this idea. Sis. Barb had posted a question from the individuals that she and Bro. Abraham met, basically asking what the difference is between the "righteousness" offered to the SDA Church in 1888, and the "righteousness" that Churches down through the ages taught before that. The question asks, if I understood it correctly, "What is it that is different and unique about the 1888 message?"

This message, which we also call Righteousness by Faith, and the Victory Doctrine, is central to our understanding of the Gospel, and therefore each of us need to be able to explain it clearly to others, according to the Scripture: "But sanctify the Lord Yahweh in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (1Pet 3:15, 16)

The reason for the hope that is within you... and what is that? The Bible tells us that for the born-again believer, "Christ in you" is "the hope of glory," (Col 1:27) and the Gospel is the "good news" about Christ. Surely, then, the lines connecting those dots are not very long at all. We must always be able to tell others about Christ in us, about our understanding of the Gospel, about the quality of that faith that we bear to the world as a testimony FOR it and AGAINST it.

This is another paradox, but not a difficult one to understand. Our faith, the words of our faith, the actions of our faith, and the name of our faith, these are testimonies against the evils in the world. At the same time, they are a "beacon of light" for those in the darkness of the world, given for their benefit so that they can find the narrow gate that leads to life. But the light can only shine as brightly as the candle that produces it, so our faith, and our peace, must be the very faith and peace that Yahshua Himself experienced, or else we are trying to signal to others with a light of our own devising.

Here is what I said in that post on the forum, with regard to the righteousness by faith that was taught by Christ to His people, unfortunately at that point His stiff-necked people, in 1888:

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In 1888, Yah was attempting to bring forth a reformation, a continuation of the Advent message that would have bound up the work in the hearts of those who received it with joy. But as those two references [“Grace on Trial” and “1888 Re-Examined”] indicated, there was a hardness of heart, and a blindness of the spirit, that led to this message being rejected. This message has NEVER been received by the mainstream [Adventist] Church (despite the declarations of a few) for the open repentance required for the message to be received has simply never occurred. In fact, we have seen a steady decline in true faithfulness within Adventism, until they sealed their doom by rejecting their first Husband (Christ) and uniting with the world (its union with the U.S. Government via. the Trademark litigation).

Yah has, in His infinite mercy, brought around a modern reformation through the CSDA Movement. It involves a people who repent (turn away) from the sins that led to the mainstream Church rejecting His revelation, and receive it as a necessary understanding of the Gospel. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” This is a promise from our Father Himself, and is therefore true, and true always. Those who accept the Gospel are those who are “born of God,” and therefore the Christian, by the very nature of his new birth, ceases to commit sin. All that is known to be “sin” is deliberately, consciously rejected by the true believer, and this is only possible because of the Faith of Jesus, the Faith of Yahshua, that He has received as a free and perfect gift.

It is the faith that brings forth this life free of sin, and therefore it is obvious that salvation could never be by works, because we cannot “earn” birth. We did nothing, in our fleshly bodies, to deserve being born. Similarly, the second birth is the result of Christ's work IN us, and the work is His. We merely receive it, and agree to it with our freedom. Some men may do good things. They may decide that it is moral, and right, and just, to act in a certain way. This is certainly better than doing evil, of course... but it is a righteousness that is based on works. It is the result of proper upbringing, dedication, discipline, and various other virtues. These things are pleasant, and yet by themselves they do not have the power to perfect the soul. This righteousness by works, however, is what most Churches understand to be the Bible's concept of Christianity: we believe in Christ, and then we go about doing, as best we can, good.

But the truth is much greater than this. We believe in Christ, and we “die” as He died, surrendering our earthly lives in order to let Him live through us by means of His Spirit. This is a great mystery of faith, as A.T. Jones once said, how the Son of God could manifest Himself in our sinful flesh; and yet this is precisely the power of the Gospel. So then, in 1888 it was presented in force that the righteousness that pleases God (as stated in Hebrews, Galatians, and other books) is that righteousness that comes, not from choosing to do the right act at individual points in time (righteousness by works) but from choosing to abide in Christ, and have Him abide in us. That operation of faith produces - naturally - all the good works associated with Biblical Christianity. But the mindset, the understanding, the spiritual reality, is very different than taught by the churches of the ages. It is an understanding that the choice has already been made - we have chosen to become “bondservants” to righteousness through Christ's life in us (the hope of glory!) so that our lives will be consistent, ever more glorious, ever more blessed, and approaching the fullness of the stature of Christ.

This is what our Father attempted to bring forth in 1888, and what He brings forth today through the CSDA movement.

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Ok, so the post that I quoted, which describes righteousness by faith, also describes the state of the Christian's peace. As the quote earlier from Peter said, our testimony is given "with meekness and fear, having a good conscience." If we accept that Christ in us is the hope of glory, and not the quality of our own works, then self is "excluded," and all is Christ Himself. What could remain, then, to cause distress in one's conscience?

Those who are at peace give the testimony of Christ abiding in them, and they are clear of conscience. They are in a state of Sabbath rest, of Christian peace.

Now, there is another class of people who feel no remorse, even though their acts are evil. Perhaps, "deep down" they may feel some regret, some remnant of conscience, but they have become experts at justifying unrighteousness, and they are not actively struggling against the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Yahshua said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Rev 3:15, 16)

Those who are "cold," being without the fire of the Holy Spirit, are untroubled by conscience; their spiritual judgment is either sleeping or dead. They do not feel drawn to Christ, and attempt to enjoy this world as much as they can.

Those who are "hot," being in harmony with the sanctifying flames of the Holy Spirit, are untroubled by conscience. Their judgment is awake, and they are alive to Yah. They do nothing that would make them feel troubled, for as it is written, "He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved." (Psa 62:6)

Who can say this but the faithful child of Yah? Who can say this but the follower of Yahshua? Those who do evil cannot say this. Those who have some defense other than "only" the Rock of Yah's salvation, they cannot say this either. If they have made the world their confidence, trusting in the judgments of men, or the justifications of their own minds, they cannot say this honestly. They are either troubled, thus being lukewarm, or they are "cold."

We have certainly seen many who are "cold" when they hear the call of the Three Angels' Message, especially among those who think they already know what this message is. They have responded with easily recognized "coldness" when they are exposed to the troubles of others, and that for consciences' sake.

And about us? What is the state of your peace?

Some time ago, Bro. Luke and Pastor gave a study with regard to "The Valley of Decision," based upon these verses: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down for the press is full, the fats overflow for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of the Yahweh is near in the valley of decision." (Joel 3:13, 14)

Judgment approaches, the harvest is ripe, and yet there are many who are neither hot nor cold. And of us, among us, we are (collectively) either guided by the Holy Spirit, or desire to be. But not all are equally

committed. Not all have a clear picture of Yahshua, or of the principle of Righteousness by Faith. If there was a clear picture, those who were within would be clear of those troubles that annoy even those in the world, and those who were not yet within the covenant of peace would be saying, like one who fell in love with the Gospel, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)

But truly, Yahshua did not say that He would rather people be hot or cold, and not lukewarm, merely to simplify His own judgment. No, it is for our sakes also. Those who are neither hot nor cold are the most miserable of all people. They can neither enjoy this life, as those who are cold, nor will they enjoy the life to come. They are constantly “trying” to fill a role, to reach a standard, and yet they never feel satisfied with their performance. They measure themselves according to those around them, trying to find a place, but without Christ IN them, their motivations must come from outside... and through the unreliable means of their natural senses.

This is not a good state of peace. The valley of decision, the life of being neither hot nor cold, is no place to spend any time. The valley is the lowest point. As the Scriptures tell us, the day of Yah is at hand. Let your consciences be clear, and your peace complete. Let your Sabbath rest be joyful, and your fervor for the truth be hot – not lukewarm or cold. If you do not know how to do this, the best thing you can do is to confess it, and to ask. If you are not in a state of Sabbath peace, you cannot properly shine the light of the Gospel on others. You can help neither yourself nor others from the valley, for Yahshua said, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” (Mat 5:14)

We are called, all of us, to a high place, to that hill. We are called to be separate from the world, with Yahshua as our defense, and our faith as a testimony. We believe, and reveal, that true righteousness is by faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast. We teach peace to the world, for “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” (James 3:18)