

## Brought Into Unity

Happy Sabbath to everyone,

This week, I would like for us to speak a bit more about the topic of unity. We had a study on this the last time, followed by a good discussion, which precipitated an important clarification to this topic. Namely:

There is no need for truly converted persons to “come” into unity, because if they are one with Christ Yahshua, they are one with all the others who are in Christ Yahshua as well.

To explore this a bit further tonight, there are a number of verses that support this idea, and I’d like to begin with this section from Romans:

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Yah dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Yahshua from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom 8:9-11)

This, to me, is a most critical passage for the subject of unity. Even though the words “unity” or “one-ness,” or even “brethren,” are not mentioned, what we have here is a full description of what that really looks like.

Paul establishes, first of all, that one cannot be part-way a Christian. One cannot be “mostly” converted, or “generally okay” when it comes to salvation. One must have the Spirit of Christ, and that fully, or he is “none” of His. Next, if one has this Spirit of Christ, the “body is dead.” It is not Yah that kills the body, but sin is allowed to run its course, and the “wages of sin is death” applies to the “old man” that we were before.

Finally, Paul points out that resurrection unto everlasting life is accomplished by means of the Spirit. The Father does it through the Spirit, and because of the Son. This is how the “three great Worthies,” as Adventist writings describe Them, cooperate in the plan of salvation. But this only takes place if the Spirit of “Him,” meaning Yahweh the Father, is already in us. It is this Spirit that “quicken” our mortal bodies, and gives them life.

Now, while this – in its full interpretation – describes the physical resurrection, or translation, of the bodies of the saints upon Yahshua’s return, it is also speaking about the spiritual resurrection that is the New Creature. Paul does not say, “the body will die because of sin,” or will be dead in the future. No, the body is dead NOW, and the only way we can have life NOW, if we are Christ’s, is if the Spirit of Yah is the life within us.

So, what does this have to do with unity?

It is this...

The true Christian is not the nominal Christian, or the social Christian, or the uncommitted Christian. The true Christian is the one who has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within, and it is not several spirits... it does not say that the believers are filled with the Spirits of Yahweh. If we have one Spirit in us, then we have one Life within us, because it says in the verse from Romans, “the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” The work of that Spirit is to guide, and teach, and reveal, and motivate. It is the role of that one Spirit to work out that perfect Christian character within us through sanctification – an active process that requires our deliberate and diligent cooperation.

And if one has – and is filled by, and is only alive by – one Spirit, and another is similarly of that one Spirit, then those two individuals share in one life.

Perhaps we have seen the “words” of this before, reading as we have about one Body and many members that must cooperate to accomplish the work of that Body. We have certainly seen those verses about the Church’s various members working together to perfect the saints, and to prepare them for every good work.

But what I want us to focus on, and meditate on, and know to be true, is this idea of having one Life among us all. All are “dead” according to the passage we have read, and it is that One Christ in all that yet lives. This, for me, introduces a new, and very “personal,” perspective. I have the same Spirit, and therefore the same life, as Bro. Luke, and Sis. Daphna, and Pastor “Chick,” and Sis. Barb. A husband might be “one flesh” with his wife, and one might suppose that this is a more intimate connection, but the fact is that my wife and I are no more “one Spirit” than she and Sis. Guerline, or she and her parents. The Spirit of Prophecy writings speak about “disinterested love” shared among the members of Christ. This does not mean “uninterested” love; it means “impartial,” equal among all, and it is because the true love is the divine Agape love, which comes from the unity of having One Spirit.

In regard to our relationship with the rest of humanity... we all share the “life” of a human being with any other person on the earth. Because of this we have sympathy with them, and are driven to labor on their behalf to bring them into everlasting life. Because we want to go from merely having humanity in common with them to having Life in common with them (the Life of Yahshua through His Spirit) we are motivated to share with them the Good News of the Savior. If we indeed have the Spirit of Christ, then His Life, which involved teaching the Gospel, is lived out in us as a people and as individuals in our present generation.

Now, this is NOT something we can become, or learn, or practice. This is what we are already, if the Spirit of Christ is in us. If we are converted, then the self is “dead,” and the life that I now live is not only the life of Yahshua, it is also the life of all my other brethren as well. As a Family we share the Spirit and the Life, even as a biological family shares common blood, and this determines our spiritual characteristics just as much as genetics determine physical traits.

We can, of course, develop skills that help us to express our life more clearly. We can become more experienced at expressing our Spirit to the world. We can (and must) learn to communicate more clearly, more actively, and so foster a deepening understanding of our unity. However, in none of these cases are we adding anything new to Yahshua in us.

If we were to say, “I can become more united with my brethren,” this is just like saying, “I can become a better Christian.” The meaning is really, “The Spirit in me can be improved.” But is this true? Can this possibly be true? If we have the Spirit of Yah and Yahshua in us, then that is the Perfect Spirit, and It cannot be educated, or increased, or improved. It is as unchanging in its perfection as the Father and Son.

Yahshua in us is “all” for salvation and the perfection of character. As Peter says, Yah “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” (2Pet 1:3) Thus, while we can come unto a deeper “knowledge of Him,” and thus make the Spirit in us more visible, and the unity among us more apparent, it is not truly an improvement in quality – only in manifestation or appearance.

Now, the Scriptures do talk about being brought into unity. So... what do those verses mean? Let us examine those verses which are, interestingly enough, found primarily in John 17. We read, for example:

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:11)

Yahshua, here, is praying that His disciples might become one – that is, that they be brought into unity. However, it must be remembered – especially when looking to the apostles as examples – that any activity or way of speaking in which they engaged before Pentecost reflected a time before “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:4)

We have used verses such as this to demonstrate that the apostles were not fully converted during Yahshua’s earthly ministry: “But I have prayed for thee [, Peter], that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22:32)

Some have said in response that the word “converted” there is not being used in an absolute sense, but rather, when he had repented of his particular error on that occasion. It is clear from the Book of Acts, however, that until the day of Pentecost the Apostles and other disciples were not yet “born of the Spirit,” even though Yahshua had spoken to them and dealt with them with

some expectation of converted behavior (and that is another subject worthy of some consideration).

The Apostles, up until that occasion, were not truly “dead to self,” and indeed, all of Paul’s teachings on this subject came well after that occasion, when the process of conversion was properly understood, and had been experienced firsthand by, the Body.

Scripturally, then, we can show that that being “brought into unity” is simply another way of saying “becoming converted.” This is what Yahshua was praying for in regard to His disciples, and because the same Spirit does both (converts and brings brethren into unity) the two ideas cannot be separated to any degree. Those who are converted necessarily share in the same Spirit as Yahshua and all the brethren, and at that point unity has been received.

By the way, and speaking of Paul and his teachings... although I have not mentioned it so far, this week’s study IS connected to the current Letter to Rachel; that is, the sixth in the series. In the section of the 6th letter that I reviewed this week, I spoke about Pentecost, I discussed the calling of the deacons and the martyrdom of Stephen, and then I began to talk about Paul.

Paul is an interesting case, a unique one in the New Testament, in that he began (as Saul) as an ardent supporter of the Sanhedrin, and thus a deadly enemy of the Church.

Next week, I would like to spend some time examining Paul's conversion experience... because it reveals in a fairly dramatic way the manner in which Yahshua is one with His people, and how the early Church's unity contributed to its initial successes.

For tonight, however, I would like to end with this...

Those who are born again are in unity by virtue of the Spirit that they share.

Those who are NOT in unity of the Spirit must be brought into that unity... because it is not just a matter of Church membership, or fellowship... but of whether or not they are “dead to self” and thus filled with the Spirit of the Savior.

When we speak of others being “brought into unity,” we are really talking about their salvation, and this must remind us of our responsibility to our fellow human beings. Yahshua has called each of us to live His life, and He has given us His Spirit to do so. That life, the life of Yahshua, calls out to the lost and dying, to bring them into unity, to bring them unto life, to bring them to the point of conversion... and we, in our own unity, seek to share this tremendous blessing with those who are yet willing to know the truth in the world.

Are there any questions or comments about tonight’s study?

Sharp disagreement, how possible?

At a certain point, however, Yahshua struck him from his horse with a beam of light, and that experience began his transformation into the most visible evangelist of the Christian Church.

Many have said, mistakenly, that Paul was “converted” on the Road to Damascus, where Yahshua appeared to him in that brilliant light. However, like the apostles during Yahshua’s earthy ministry, things had only begun for him there.

After Paul expressed a sincere desire to understand the meaning of what he had experienced, as evidenced by him spending three days fasting and praying, (Acts 9:9) Yahshua did not appear to him and say, “Here is what I need you to know, and what I want you to do.”

Instead, Yahshua sent him to two disciples (Ananias and Peter) to learn about the Way that he had, up until that time, been ferociously persecuting.

While I wish to speak more about Paul’s conversion experience next week, it is relevant to our discussion of unity that even the well-educated, well-spoken and charismatic individual who would become one of the greatest leaders in the early Church required education, and this involved him taking instruction from the Body.

I find it very interesting, also, that contrary to what much of His earthly ministry involved, Yahshua struck Paul blind, and it was His followers that healed his eyes.

In a sense, this demonstrated the change in the kind of ministry that Yahshua performs for our sakes. This incident, and several others, shows us that He had gone to stand before the Father and deal with final matters of judgment... while His disciples on the earth were given the ministry of healing. As we read, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:13)

Of course, it is Yahshua who ultimately and truly does the healing; however, since His ascension, He has always operated through agencies on the earth. By that I mean, healing is always an earthly ministry. I cannot recall a time when healing came down directly from Heaven by a light or through a vision. There was always, someone praying, or an angel sent to earth; there was always a visible representative of Yahweh when healing took place.

Healing, which is a physical manifestation of the power of the Gospel, demonstrates clearly the unity that Yahshua has with His people. The Spirit in Him that healed men during His walk on the earth is that same Spirit that operates now through the earthly Church. Furthermore, Paul’s conversion shows the cooperation between the human agencies and the divine will. This is the pattern for all of Yah’s works on the earth – but unity is the key by which these works are accomplished.

Obviously, the individuals must be born-again, must be converted and thus filled with the same Spirit of Yah. But for any cooperative work, for any coordinated work, there must be unity among the believers as well, and this comes only – only – when all who are covenanted together acknowledge the Spirit with which they are filled, and recognize the unity that we already have by virtue of being one with the Savior.

Like all things associated with salvation, we must make the “step of faith” and simply claim that we have received what is true. Now, for most things, this would merely be presumption. A poor man claiming to be rich is still a poor man, and a foolish man claiming to be wise only makes his foolishness more apparent. In these cases, however, what these individuals are doing is denying the truth of what they are.

For the Christian, by faith we are “made” the thing that we were intended to be. There is a popular saying in Christianity, which is very contrary to the true Gospel that goes something like: “I am not what I am supposed to be (yet), but I thank God I am not what I was.” I’ve heard a couple variations on this from popular ministers, and it only reveals to me how unqualified they are to speak on behalf of the Father. It doesn’t matter how many individuals listen to them week by week, or how popular their ministries may be... those who accept these lines of secular, perverse reasoning are made further from Heaven than before, not closer.

The just shall live by faith. Those who are justified are justified because they believe the promises that have been made to them by infinite power, and with infinite love. A poor man may claim to be rich although he is poor... but if One infinite in strength had first said to him, “I have made you rich,” then that man is rich, even if he does not yet recognize the truth of what he has received.

That is how it is with us. We have been given precious promises, but now it is our part. Now it is our place to acknowledge, to accept these things, and unity – like salvation, like the Holy Spirit – is something that we must claim as our own, and then we will see the manifestation of this great glory in our lives.

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