

Conversion: A Commitment to Perfection

Happy Sabbath to everyone, and may Yah's blessings be with you during this Feast of Tabernacles for 2014.

I have to say that, so far I have truly been enjoying our meetings... for one, I am hearing some "voices" that are not usually heard during our Friday night studies, and for another, I am not the one doing all the talking :)

Tonight, I want to talk a bit about conversion and sanctification. As we all know, many Churches consider "justification," being declared free from sin at a particular moment in time, to be the end of the story, the fulfillment of the Gospel. They say, "Once you accept Jesus as your Savior, He forgives you for all the sins you have done, and all the sins you will ever do, and then you go to Heaven." They do not speak of the life that follows; or, if they do, it is about trying – and failing – to live up to the Bible's standard for a born-again life... but that is ok, they say, because Jesus keeps picking you up every time.

Of course, we know that even earthly fathers do a better job of caring for their children than this artificial Christ, who is worshipped by those who believe we are saved **IN** our sins, rather than **FROM** them.

The Scriptures do not say that Yahshua saves us from past and future sins. It says first this, that the Messiah was sent "for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Rom 3:25) But, as it is written, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." (Pro 3:23) We are saved from the guilt of our past sins, because we can do nothing about those; but we are not merely saved from the "guilt" of our future sins; rather, we are saved from the experience of them. In a sense, we are forgiven for all the sins we "would have" committed, had we not been born again – but in reality, we do not know the persons we should have become had we continued in that dark life, nor do we know the transgression we would have done. And why is this? It is because that sad and evil future is removed from us, forever, and we are given (for-given) a new life in its place.

In this feast, we want to talk about what conversion is. That is our sub-theme: "What is Conversion? What does it produce in the believer?" Well, I want to look at those things tonight but I will give you a simple answer to the question right away. What is conversion? It is the beginning – but only the beginning – of everlasting life.

Justification and conversion are the birth-event of the Christian. But we do not go through our entire earthly lives glorifying the moment at which we were born. As we know, CSDAs do not make a "big deal" about birthdays, and this is, perhaps, the spiritual reason why. We acknowledge, and appreciate, the beginnings, but we also enjoy every moment of our experience in this life with our Father, and as Paul says, we are "forgetting" those things that are past, and always looking forward to the next rung of the ladder.

Practically, in terms of sanctifying our lives, what this means is that just because we were once justified, and are doing things the best way we know how today, this does not mean we are doing them the best way they can be done. We are ever looking upward, forward, and around, with the joy of learning holiness in our hearts.

As I said in the beginning, I am enjoying our meetings during this Feast. One of the reasons is because, by listening to your studies, and testimonies, and comments, whether they are new light or reviews, I am changing. I am learning to be a better husband, friend, and teacher. I learn new principles to apply to every aspect of my life, and even with material I have seen before, I am learning to see unusual things in the usual topics. I am learning to see things in a new, and refined, light; and I pray that is the same for every participant from day to day.

These are blessings I need. And as we began by planning this feast, this question ought to be a constant one: “What is it that I need? What is it that the Church needs?”

These are questions that attend sanctification; they reveal to us what it is we need to learn from each moment of our lives. The question, by the way, of what the Church needs is not one for only the pastors and elders to consider. This is a question for every member, because we are being sanctified together. Those who teach are not above those who learn. Those who instruct are themselves students, and everyone is here not only to learn, but also to teach, to coordinate, to cooperate, to labor for the souls of men. So let this be a question that accompanies our daily walk in the faith: What are the brethren’s needs? And we include our own needs as well, in our consideration of the brethren... it is a sanctifying question.

Had even Cain considered in his heart, “What is it my brother needs?” he could not have committed the first murder. By being our brothers’ keepers, teachers and examples, we become sanctifying influences to them; and as we keep that commitment, maintaining that covenant, we ourselves are kept from a multitude of sins.

One of the things we identified as a need before the Feast – and no surprise, for every Church in history has always needed this – is a clearer picture of conversion. The original Adventist Church fell, and eventually fell away completely, because it had become composed of members who did not know what conversion was. For us, for the last generation, what we need is to have that perfect picture, that divine image, for by beholding it we become changed into its likeness.

On the first night, I spoke of my expectations: a vision of excellence, an expectation of glory, a revival that lasts. But that is only one theme. The other is, “What is conversion? What does it produce in the life of the believer?” This is what we currently “need” to consider.

Let’s begin by talking about what conversion is not:

- 1) Conversion is not a feeling. Although the “heart” of man is the part that receives the Law at the point of the new birth, the heart (used as a symbol for our emotional beings) is also

subject to a large number of factors, ranging from illness, to hormonal changes, to hunger and thirst. If these temporary conditions were allowed to determine the state of our salvation, we would have little assurance of everlasting victory. As it is written, however, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” (1 John 3:20-22)

Now, John is giving us an inspired teaching here. He shows all the aspects of this matter. Emotions are not bad. He says, “If our hearts do not condemn us, then we have confidence.” That’s good... but what this shows is that our emotions can only be trusted as long as they coincide with what we know of our Father and His Will for our lives; because, if our hearts DO condemn us, we are to trust in Yah, not our feelings. It is the principles, the foundations, of our faith, that keep us in unity with the commandments. And I’ll tell you truly, when John says, “We keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight,” I know of only THREE places I have ever heard that without a bunch of excuses and qualifications. Yahshua said it, John says it here, and members of the CSDA Church say it. Other Biblical writers echo its meaning, of course... but nobody else in this age, it seems, has this “testimony” of Yahshua... Fortunately, three witnesses are all that is required for establishing a spiritual fact.

- 2) Conversion is not an improvement over the previous life. I think both of the brethren from Colombia touched on this in their studies, so I actually don’t need to provide a long explanation here. The Scriptures, in fact, say all that is necessary on this point: “For the love of Christ constraineth us [i.e., “holds us firmly, takes us captive”]; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2Cor 5:14, 17)
- 3) Conversion is not a temporary, fervent period of time, followed by sinking back into what we were doing before. Conversion, brethren, is a “revival” (a bringing-to-life) that “lasts.” If any were wondering, perhaps, about the connection between our major and secondary themes then let it be clearly seen: they are one and the same. True conversion brings us back to life, redeems us from our trespasses and sins, but then it also maintains us in our justified state, keeping us ever from falling.

We have seen the verse from Jude, saying Yah is “able” to keep us from falling, and we reason, “So, if He is ‘able,’ why do any say that He does not? For love’s sake, Yahweh DOES keep us always from falling.

“After all, ‘If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?’ (Luke 11:11) Who, in asking Yah for a life free from transgression, would receive instead a life full of sin, guilt, and failure?” That is quite sound Biblical reasoning, certainly, but we need not rely on drawing even the most solid conclusions for this most critical matter. The verse I mentioned earlier from Proverbs tells us that our feet will not stumble; and obviously, this is not talking about physically stumbling, but spiritually. There are also most precious promises such as this:

“‘Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.’ Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art Yahweh our God.” (Jer 3:22)

All of Jeremiah 3 is a beautiful prophecy of the days to come, but this verse in particular stands out, as it deals with the current age. Furthermore, I looked this up in the concordance, and there is indeed a difference between the words “backsliding” and “backslidings” in the Hebrew. The words themselves have the same root, but the second is a little different – and both are plural. Yah does not say, “Return to me and I will heal you from your current apostasy.” Rather, He says, “I will heal your backslidings (all of them). I will heal your tendency to turn away, to depart from me.” We know that what Yahweh heals is healed indeed, and in verse 14 the Father says to His people, “I am married unto you.” This is commitment, this is permanence... this is everlasting life.

There are probably a bunch of other “nots” that we could look at, but as I indicated last night, after dealing with some of the more common and pervasive errors, it is best to go right into declaring truth rather than infinitely dissecting falsehoods. Let us see, then, what conversion IS. As I have said, it is a beginning, the birth-event of the Christian life. It may also be expressed in a few other ways, some of which we have looked at in previous studies, and some of which the Scriptures tell us directly. For example, the verse from 2 Corinthians tells us that those who experience conversion are entirely new creations. They are not what they were before, but the old things are passed away. Now, it is not enough for us to say those words, or to learn them. This is a truth that must be experienced. The reality of it is before us every day, and every moment.

As we saw in previous studies, conversion is an acceptance of the gift of prophecy. I do not mean that we agree that this-or-that person is a prophet. I mean that we come to know for ourselves what the future is. I can say, without a vision or voice from Heaven, “Tomorrow, I will not sin.” Paul was able to testify, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Tim 4:8) This assurance, this knowledge, based on the Word and promises of Yahweh, is the very gift of prophecy, as it is best able to be used.

Next, conversion is a decision to stand in Yah's judgment. We read, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'" (Eph 5:13, 14) The Scriptures tell us that Yah judges the heart, and reveals the secret things. King David wrote, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," (Psa 51:7) and also, "Search me, O Elohim, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psa 139:23, 24) It is from this Psalm that Adventist writings drew the idea of David hating sin with a "perfect hatred," therefore it is a significant one for our study of conversion.

As with the "nots," there are many ways that the truth about conversion can be described. I will end with one more, however... the title of this study: Conversion is a commitment to perfection.

THIS, ultimately, is what sanctification is. Some say, "What is it? What is sanctification?"

Sanctification is the process of being made perfect... that is what the word means. We become sanctified, holy, flawless in spiritual and moral character. But this definition is really still just an "outside" view. What does sanctification "mean?" What does it look like from the inside? What does it feel like to the one being sanctified?

Well, we began by speaking about emotions; so from that perspective of emotions, there may be joy, but also feelings of frustration, fear, anger, impatience. These sensations will certainly exist, just as we may feel pain when we burn our fingers, and learn to be careful around fire. And the Scriptures themselves do tell us that it is not a pleasant thing to receive rebuke and reproof. We must remember, conversion is not a feeling, but feelings can be instruments of our education. When they fail to convey the truth as it is in Yahshua, we rebuke them, and they pass.

So conversion may "feel" like all these things, which is to say, "variable." But what it is, what conversion is, is exactly just like agape-love. It is a decision.

Conversion is a decision we make, to respond to the invitation of the Father and Son, to rest in Their power, to have confidence in their promises. In being converted, we allow Their Spirit to dwell within us as It has been sent to do. This is why true religion can never be based on works... because the Father, and the Son, through their Spirit, earnestly desire to see us saved. Therefore, no work that can be done toward our salvation can possibly come about as a result of our own efforts, which would be separate from Their power within us. If all the infinite power in the universe is working on our behalf, to save us, then it becomes a natural tendency, a natural like gravity. All we must do is rest, and gravity does the work.

But Satan has convinced men that they must fly, and so they build towers, they glue on wings, they fight as hard as they can against gravity... and then, when the whole world is flying, they look around and see very few on the ground. They say, "Look at all of us up here. Who can possibly be saved?"

Men have learned to work diligently against their own salvation. We, brethren, must teach them to rest... we know that the world is full of restless spirits. We see them, well, quite often... But we must teach them Sabbath, to let themselves be drawn, through the loving Father's power, into Heaven. We have had studies teaching that it is "easier to be saved than lost," but the world does not believe it, because it is the world's nature to resist.

Conversion is a decision, a natural decision, a resolute decision, to turn from evil, and seek what is best. It can only be done through the power of our Father, and only because of the sacrifice of the Son, but for our part all that is necessary is that we let our eyes be opened, so that we see the truth. When that is done, the choice is presented clearly before us, and we accept the saving power of the Father through the Son. Then, at that point, life truly begins. Thereafter, in that life, whenever we are faced with a decision of moral and spiritual importance, we have the Spirit within us, driving us... and we all know what the leadings of conscience feel like, but for the converted it is not just childhood training, or natural propensity, it is a supernatural fire, keeping us ever from falling.

Do the brethren know the Spirit of Yah that keeps us ever from falling? If so, then let us rejoice before Yahweh. If any who hear this, or read this, desire to know that choice, to experience that life through the Spirit, and to have that experience, then that is good. You have heard the invitation of Heaven. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." The invitation is yours to accept, and that through prayer. Believe, when you pray to accept it, that you have received this precious gift, this everlasting decision to be righteous. And then, having believed, then you have done all the "work" you will ever need to do to obtain it. Let yourself then testify, "I have it!" Let yourself then know that, because conversion is not a feeling, or a temporary state, you have it always, and none may take it from your possession.

Only in expectation is there fulfillment. Only in faith is there salvation. Let us therefore, whether we are old or young in the faith, be always in expectation of perfection. Let us, with our testimonies, and our actions, be always committed to perfection. If we do this, then in all things, whatsoever we do, or say, or think, we glorify our Father in Heaven.

Creation 7th day Adventism
flyingcreature@hotmail.com