

## Great Disappointments

Happy Sabbath to all.

In the second half of the seventh Letter to Rachel, I continue the theme of prophecy. Last week, we looked at Moses' desire, which is really our Father's desire, that all His people should be prophets. We should pray to prophesy, not so much that we will be daily speaking of mysterious things to come, but that we can speak confidently the Word of Yah regarding both our lives, and the lives of others.

It is the gift of prophecy that tells us, without error, that "whosoever is born of Yahweh doth not commit sin." That is a statement about the future, because even though we are living in "today," we know what the state of our faith will be tomorrow, and every day after that. As we accept this, as we believe it, our testimony becomes unstoppable, and we can deliver it with a power that reaches the hearts of men.

But in the second half of this seventh letter, I talk about times when prophecy appears to fail. Specifically, I introduce Rachel to Adventist history as it began... with William Miller.

As we all know, William Miller's prediction about the "cleansing of the Sanctuary" in 1843 was misunderstood by those who were studying with him. They expected that the cleansing of the Sanctuary referred to the return of Yahshua, and the end of sin. In anticipation of this, they sold their homes and goods, and gathered together for the appearing of the Savior.

When nothing happened, they were confused and disappointed, and returned to their notes to discover that they were a year off. After Yahshua was conspicuously absent in 1844 as well, the believers were forced to seriously re-examine their conclusions. It was at that time that the significance of the Heavenly Sanctuary became apparent, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged.

Although this is called the "Great" disappointment in the history of Christianity, it is certainly not the only one.

The disciples were bitterly disappointed on the day of the crucifixion. Of course, Yahshua had been open with His followers about what would befall Him in Jerusalem, but it is one thing to hear a prediction of disaster, and another to see it unfold in literal, permanent steps. Those who had seen their Master command demons, illness, and stormy waves now bore witness to Him submitting Himself to the cruelty of corrupt religious leaders and unprincipled government officials.

Even before this, during the Exodus, the people of Yah departed from Egypt in triumph, with plagues falling on their enemies and signs and wonders guiding them. But they were not long in the wilderness before dissatisfaction set in. Discontent turned to complaint, which quickly became rebellion, and after the incidents with the golden calf, the quails, the rising-up against

Moses, and various other events, those who departed from Egypt were declared unworthy to enter into the Promised Land, and their generation passed away before completing their journey.

One might say that, at least in this latter case, it was the disobedience and lack of holy character that turned a triumph into a disappointment. But with the disciples, although they had defects of character to be discovered and eliminated, one could not say that they were in open rebellion – and in any case the crucifixion was on behalf of all mankind, and could not be altered by their behavior.

In the case of the Millerites, it seems that these were “the people” in truth, for they were faithful to the Word, dedicated to their conclusions, and prepared to give up all pertaining to this earthly life in expectation of their Heavenly home.

What this should indicate, then, is that dealing with disappointment is a fundamental part of the Christian experience. While we may spare ourselves much sorrow by faithful obedience and by remaining firm as steel to principle, even the most dedicated followers have had occasions of sadness and great perplexity.

Why is this the case? The world often asks, “If God is all-loving and all-powerful, why do bad things happen to good people?” We have addressed this question, in a variety of forms, over the years in our studies and discussions. We have examined the Book of Job as a primary example of how a present suffering can lead to tremendous blessings. We noted that while our Father does not bring tests and trials to His people, He will allow Satan some leeway to bring temptations so that the faith of the servant will be made more apparent.

And yet, even with this example – and others – before us, I believe that we as the last generation have a work to do in order to become “perfect” in dealing with disappointments and challenges. If we are tempted to see our challenges as overshadowing all our lives, if we fail to quickly banish thoughts and feelings of frustration and depression, if we give voice to unwise words during times of trial that reveal a lack of Sabbath rest, then we have not yet learned the precious lesson that our Father must teach His people to prepare them for the time of trouble and beyond.

In considering Job, we see the blessings to Job himself, and to future generations, only long after the testing had ended. During the time of the trial, however, Job did not detect very much evidence of Yah’s love. By that I mean, Job had obvious reasons to be thankful, and to praise the Almighty, before and after the period of Satan’s dominion over his life. But consider, very little is written IN the Book of Job about those times.

Job is introduced as a wealthy, yet faithful man, with a large family... and then immediately disaster sets in. We then have a number of lengthy chapters dedicated to the mental processes of Job and his friends. At the very end, Yah appears and gives His judgment, vindicating His servant. And then, in a brief afterword, we read that Job received great blessings because he endured to the end.

The focus of the Book of Job was on the trial itself, the suffering and patience, the challenge and how it was met, and not on discussing Job's pre-trial faith, or his post-trial blessings. If we consider that the Scriptures are designed to reveal the character and purpose of our Father, we need to understand not only each principle it contains, but also the reasons why things are written just as they are.

Job's Book focuses on the time of his trial, because it is during the trial that Job's faith was revealed. It was during the time of Job's disappointment that his faith was made manifest. The lesson of Job, and of our approach to disappointment as revealed therein is, perhaps, a simple message, but do not mistake simplicity for degree of importance.

If we do not understand exactly why Yah allows His people to encounter disappointment, even His most faithful and dedicated people, then we cannot truly enter into the Sabbath rest.

If we look at the experiences of Moses, Abraham, Job, the Disciples of Yahshua, and the Millerites, we know about these people, and we know that they are our brethren in the faith, because that faith was revealed through times of disappointment. As it is written, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1Cor 10:11)

To be clear, it is one thing to say, "I am sure that a blessing will come from this someday" when we are going through a challenging period, but that cannot be the extent of our faith. Even worldlings say such things as a way to comfort themselves when they are frustrated, angry or depressed. Those are certainly true words, especially for those who love Yah and are called according to His purpose, but our experience IN the trial must also be one of peace, and even of thanksgiving.

Consider an individual who, like Job, is wealthy and claims to be a Christian. Something similar happens as with Job, and this individual's wealth is taken away, and various disasters appear. Such an individual might easily say (because he may have read the Bible or heard of Job's experiences), "I know that God will bring something good about because of this..." but then might add a reflection of his true feelings, "but right now I am really angry/bitter/disappointed, etc."

Of course, we do not want to deny genuine feelings, but if it is true that "the just shall live by faith," a phrase that has come up a few times in recent meetings, then "faith" is the central theme, the lens through which everything else is viewed, and the context to which all the experiences of our lives relate.

Of course, Job – and anyone who has had similar experiences, like the loss of a child – felt great sorrow, and just as it is no sin to feel angry (Eph 4:26) it is no sin to feel sadness or disappointment. But what we must not do is allow these things to define us, or to cause us to make decisions contrary to principle.

The world judges based on senses of the flesh, and emotions, and because of this we see all manner of sin becoming commonplace, with crimes and divorce rampant, even among those claiming to be followers of the Messiah. But the Christian, the born-again, the redeemed from the powers of this world, we are no less human for that, even as Yahshua was fully human, and felt all that humans feel in response to sorrow and joy... but the Christian has a redeemed will, and the freedom to choose righteousness, even when that righteousness is completely contrary to the impulses and drives of the flesh.

This is the power of Yah unto salvation, that we are no longer bound, slaves to the principles of this world, but we are free to choose that which leads to life everlasting, and to great blessings even in this physical world. And what free, intelligent being would choose anything else? This is the lesson that Yah would have us learn from dealing with disappointment, not only that there are blessings to come in the future, but that we are – even during the hour of trial – learning to live in the spirit and not the flesh.

Now some would say, “Isn’t that just a way to comfort yourself in times of trouble? How is that different from the state of denial practiced by those in the world?”

It is certainly true that it may look the same to the outside world. But, as we have spoken about very recently, it is the same as the difference between presumption and faith... it is a narrow division between them, but that division is the difference between righteousness and sin. The division is this: the promises of Yahweh.

Again, a man who is visibly poor may say, “I am rich.” If he makes this statement on his own authority, with no other foundation than “self,” then he is deluding himself. If he has heard a promise from Yahweh and claims that promise, then he is exercising faith.

To the casual onlooker, there is no difference. There is no difference that the flesh can detect, but the promises of Yah are the foundation of our faith, they are the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for.

So it is with the way that we address great disappointments, whether these are corporate (for the Church) or individual. The blessing of the victorious faith, of the testimony of Yahshua, is that we are truly free. The Scriptures tell us, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do ALL to the glory of Yah.” (1Cor 10:31)

For the genuine Christian, in ALL things, Yah is glorified. He may be glorified in our rejoicing, and in our sorrow. He may be revealed to the world in our singing, and also in our tears.

Now of course, we do not pray to be disappointed, particularly when it comes to our work for the lost and dying... but then, our prayers are a result of our faith as well. When our plans go well, and we say that “Yah has answered our prayers,” then Yah is glorified. We expand the Gospel work on the earth, and new souls are introduced to the Savior.

However, when our plans go poorly, then we as the “endurers” may be held up as examples to the universe as a people of faith, as were our pioneers, and our testimonies are given power. As we choose (always) to stand firm despite disappointments, frustrations, etc, our Father is glorified in us.

Here is another way of putting it: When things seem to go well, Yah is glorified by our works. When things seem to go poorly, Yah is glorified by our faith. In either case, we remain in Sabbath. We are not destroyed, because we have knowledge, knowledge of our Father’s rest. We can know, even in hard times, that our Father is working through us, and we are thus trained to live in the spirit, not to lean on our own understanding, or to judge based on the sight of our flesh.

While it may feel, during those disappointing occasions, that we are going from darkness to darkness, we are actually continuing to go from glory to glory. Consider this: If William Miller had been correct in his initial predictions, a few souls would have been prepared for Heaven, and taken, leaving the world to destruction. In this generation, it may only be a few souls who are prepared for Heaven, and taken, leaving the world to destruction... but... because of the great disappointment, the Three Angels’ Message was sent to the world, travelling around the entire earth to offer salvation to any who will have it. That is the “blessing of the future,” but the blessing of the moment was that those who were feeling disappointment nevertheless chose faith. They banded together, and began the work of restoring the “old paths” to the world.

In our own great disappointments, let us not be discouraged. Let us not reside in sorrow. Let us praise our Father that, though we see not how at all times, His name will be glorified by our obedience and our faith, and more souls will hear the message of Salvation. Let us rejoice that we are free to choose always those things that are good, and that no challenges, not with houses and neighbors, not with children, or parents, or spouses, or anything at all, can take away the freedom that our Father has given us to serve Him in all that we do, and say, and are.

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