

The Abundant Life

Happy Sabbath to all.

Tonight I have a relatively simple study, but it covers a matter that is critical to our understanding of both who we are, and who our Father is.

It is called “The Abundant Life,” and the name comes from this passage: “Then said Yahshua unto them again, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:7-10)

At some point, I would like us to examine “all that ever came before” the Savior, because there are lessons there regarding identifying truth and error. Tonight, however, I would like to focus on that gift that Yahshua has provided us with, life – and that more abundantly.

The concept actually came to me while I was considering a conversation that the Church had during our last New Moon meeting. Pastor Chick pointed out a common error within Christendom, and one about which the Elect ought also to be wary. It is a tendency of individuals, having gone through some troubling or challenging experience, to take up the testimony, “I have overcome the challenge.”

In reality, however, they may not have “overcome” it – at least not in the way consistent with Yahshua’s character – but merely “survived” it. They have not triumphed over the situation, they have merely avoided being destroyed by it, and they are often no more sanctified, and no better protected against future occurrences of the exact same event.

Of course, as soon as I heard this the “truth” of it struck me. But as I often do, I went to the Scriptures to find verses to solidify the principle, to clarify it so that it may become a general tool for teaching others about Yahshua, and for bringing us closer, ever closer, to that perfect vision of the Father and Son. That is when I found that passage from John 10, and I was impressed by the words of Yahshua, regarding this life that He has given Himself for us to receive.

There is a difference in the Christian life, as in any other life, between “survival” and “living abundantly.” The Scriptures tell us that the Christian walk is a process of being “changed into the same image [as Yahshua] from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2Cor 3:18) The progress of the true Christian walk is ever-upward, not from crisis to crisis, but from glory to glory. It is a series of victories over sin and self that is something far greater than “not falling down” each time a challenge is faced.

It is the product of the natural man, of the evolutionary mind, to see growth and progress in terms of survival. The principle of the natural world is “survival of the fittest.” The evolutionary mindset says, then, that if we survive our competitors, and misfortunes, we will emerge victorious eventually, at the end of a long, dangerous, process. But this is not the life that Yah would have for His people, because those who adopt this mindset, whether they call themselves Christians or not, have no true experience of the Sabbath.

Christians that go from challenge to challenge, surviving each one and calling it victory, are not resting in the Sabbath, and there remains a Sabbath for them to enter.

Yahshua said that He has come to give us life. If He had ended the statement there, that would have already been a powerful statement. We know that in Adam all die, but in Yahshua all are made alive. (1Cor 15:22) The verse in 1 Cor 15 actually says that all “shall be made” alive; that is, in the future, because Paul is discussing the resurrection.

What we know, however, is that we need not wait for the resurrection (or translation) to live the life that Yahshua died to give to us. We are resurrected spiritually at the point of baptism – that is what it means to come up out of the watery grave – and, as Paul writes elsewhere, “the life which I NOW live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20)

As you who have known me for years are aware, I’ve had a number of encounters with Jehovah’s Witnesses since becoming a CSDA. I enjoy talking to them, and sharing the Gospel with those who come to talk to me. Several times I have asked them what they make of one of our favorite verses: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1 John 3:9)

Like most groups that claim the Bible as their foundation, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that we “should” not sin, but that inevitably even the most devout believer will occasionally transgress Jehovah’s Law. When I have asked them about this verse, the most Biblically knowledgeable Witnesses have said to me, “That verse is true, but we are not actually ‘born of God’ until the resurrection, so it doesn’t apply to us yet.”

I point out that John’s statement is not about the future. John begins by saying, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.” (1John 3:7) He then proceeds to expand on HOW we can know who the righteous, the faithful, the committed, are, and it has nothing to do with who “will be” righteous, but who IS (presently) righteous – it is the one that “doeth” righteousness, not the one that will, at some point after the resurrection, do righteousness.

Paul, in Galatians 2, underscores this idea. It is true that in Christ all “shall be made alive” in the physical sense, and raised with the glorified and incorruptible bodies, or translated into those divine forms. But it is equally true that the life that we NOW live is to be of the same quality,

the same nature, as the heavenly life. In fact, we are told that our Heavenly Father, through His only Begotten, “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” (Col 1:13) As Christ said, “It is finished.” If we are Christ’s, we are delivered, we are translated, we are free... and we have been given an abundant life. It is a life that does not merely go from calamity to calamity, surviving until the next crisis; rather, we go from triumph to triumph, glory to glory, each time not only surviving, but overcoming fully, so that we emerge closer to the Father and Son, and generally protected from repetitions of the same and similar challenges.

So, even if Yahshua had said, merely, “I have come that they might have life,” we have plenty of reason to give thanks. We have been redeemed from darkness, and the destiny of the natural man.

But Yahshua also said, “that they might have [life] more abundantly,” which is what we are really talking about with regard to the life free from sin, the resurrected life that we live even here and now “in the flesh,” because Christ “remaineth” in us even now.

In Greek, just as in English, the word “abundantly” means “over and above, more than is necessary, superior, extraordinary, uncommon, more excellent.”

These words perfectly describe the life of a Christian. If you cannot, with full honesty, say, “My life is all these things,” then you have not yet accepted that which Yahshua has come to give us. In His own words, the purpose for His earthly life, death, and resurrection, was so that our lives could not only be redeemed from death, but that they could have these qualities. This is not a description of a life that is always reporting crises and challenges. It is not a life that is always testifying of how the Father has saved them (often repeatedly) from some great disaster.

And please do not misunderstand... the Christians are to share one another’s burdens. They are to ask for prayer in matters that perplex them, and to praise the Father in public when He answers their prayers, and delivers them from their troubles. We spoke recently, you will recall, of the ABCDs of prayer, with the last being “Declare.” Yah has a covenant with His people, and He will protect those who are His. But how do we react to this delivery? Do we rejoice when we are delivered, but fall back into old patterns again? Do we say, “Thank the Father... now what is next?”

If we anticipate evils, if we fear disaster, then we have not yet learned what the Sabbath is to teach us. Consider the idea here. There is life, and then there is life more abundantly. There is the Sabbath, but then the Sabbath more fully. This is the same concept, the same principle.

The 144,000, who perfectly follow the Lamb, will not merely have life, but they have it abundantly. They do not merely “keep the Sabbath” as even the nominal and legalists do, but they keep it “more fully,” the day being a weekly reminder, a weekly reinforcement, of a blessing that resides within them every moment of their abundant lives.

Consider then, your testimonies. Yah has been showing His people this issue gradually over the past few weeks, but let us step fully into this light. For years we have known that one way to introduce the Gospel is to ask, “Are you satisfied with the life that God has given you?” and, “Is God satisfied with the life you are giving Him?” More recently, we have learned that we can evaluate our testimony by asking ourselves, “Am I truly happy?”

Now we can also ask ourselves further, “Do I have an abundant life? Do I have a quality of life that is over and above, more than is necessary (for mere survival), superior, extraordinary, uncommon, more excellent?”

These are all, really, the same question. And if you are not certain, if you are not confident that you can joyfully answer that question with a “Yes,” then let the Spirit show you what is next – there may be a life yet to accept from the Savior, and a Sabbath that you have yet to begin keeping.

Here are some verses with which I would like to close tonight’s study:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” (Rev 3:21) Here we see that the inheritance of the saints is the same as the inheritance of the Son, and the reason is because the Redeemed overcome as, in the same way as, the Son did. That is, completely.

We read, for those who are often darkened by their focus on trials and tribulations, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” (Rom 8:37) Nay – deny these thoughts of death and suffering – Nay, in all these things we are not merely conquerors, but we are more – we do not just survive, and live through these things, but we live through them abundantly, putting them behind us. We grow, and we move forward, not stuck in the same cycle of glory, then trouble, then glory... but glory to glory, from life to life everlasting.

We read, “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.” (Rev 4:6) That is the last verse for this study. Now you might ask, “What kind of a closing verse is that for a study about abundant life?”

Well, we need to understand this.

The word “beasts” is a poor translation into English of what this passage actually says. The NKJV and other, more modern, translations have it better. It says that there are four “living creatures” around the Throne. In the Greek, the word is *zo'on*, which comes from the word *zoe*, or “life.” Around the throne of Yah are four creatures that are alive, and they are defined by that life. Yah is their life, and by their closeness to the Throne, they are the creatures that are the most alive.

As we draw near and ever nearer the throne of Yahweh, we also become “living creatures.” We also become caught up in, and defined in terms of, that life that we receive from our Father. We stand in the light of Yah’s glory, even now, even here “in the flesh,” and as we come to see Him more and more clearly, we begin to understand the life that we experience abundantly, to act out that life abundantly, and to speak that life abundantly, with a testimony that begins to match the words of these four living creatures, who are often seen to be saying, “Holy, holy, holy.”

After all, the abundant life is a holy life, and a supremely joyful one.

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