

## The Sabbath-Blessed Conscience

Happy Sabbath to all.

As most of you know, there has been discussion among us of having Sis. Jody re-record, and then complete, the Letters to Rachel series from the Binary Angel website, which is a fairly basic introduction to the Gospel message, leading into discussions about the Sabbath, victory over sin, and other foundational Christian doctrines.

I have decided, in an attempt to assist this project, to read through one of the letters every Sabbath for the next few, to see if anything needs to be re-worded, refined, and – when I get to the last one – altered in order to ensure that the series has a proper conclusion.

This past Sabbath, I went over the first one and, while I haven't found anything to really change, I was impressed to base the next few Bible studies on what I consider to be a core concept, an essential message, that may be obtained from each of those letters.

Now, this is not going to be a summary and commentary. In fact, I may not refer all that much to the actual letter at all, but what I would like to do is present some idea that struck me from re-reading these, and discuss it in the context of sanctification.

The first letter of the Letters to Rachel series focuses largely on the creation of Lucifer and his subsequent fall. We are not given a great deal of information about this incident in the Scriptures themselves. We know from the writings of the Old Testament prophets that his primary sin was pride, and from the writings of the New Testament and our Adventist authors this has been expanded a bit further to explain that he took a third of the angels with him in a rebellion against the Father and Son, that he was cast out of Heaven, and that he has sought to tempt mankind into a similar rebellion down through the ages.

These things, these records, are provided for our benefit, so that we can learn from the mistakes of those who have gone before us, and be wary of similar sins.

As I read through the first Letter, it was impressed upon me how gently, how gradually, this fall must have taken place. We really have no “time frame” for the war in Heaven, but it must have taken quite some time for creatures so perfectly loyal to become mistrustful of, and then rebellious against, their Creator.

In one place the letter reads, “It happened so gradually that Lucifer didn't even understand it himself, just how far from his joy and peace he had descended.”

Lucifer manifested discontent, a “troubled” feeling, but through most of it he managed to remain convinced that his position within the controversy was correct. Within him, the problem began with two related problems: this feeling of discontent, and a conscience that was no longer

sensitive to the full measure of righteousness. Again, these are related, since one leads to the other... when one is feeling discontent, there are two options. The feeling may be confessed, and restoration may be sought... or the feeling may be cherished, and then the soul has no option but to “harden” itself in order to deal with the continued presence of this unrest.

Human beings, and apparently angels, are very adaptable. Yahweh created us (like the plants and animals of earth) to function under a wide variety of circumstances. We are able to come to terms with quite a lot of things, but we are naturally changed by our exposure to them. This is one of the reasons why Adventism discusses diet, exercise, and general health. The things to which we expose ourselves have a definite impact on all aspects of our being.

We can become, if we permit ourselves, “used” to unrest, discontent, and sin. The Scriptures tell us about some who have a “conscience seared with a hot iron,” (1Tim 4:2) and these are they who have indulged in sinful thoughts to the degree that they have become commonplace. In such a situation, it is difficult to hear the voice of the Spirit... and unfortunately, this is the state of most of the world.

Lucifer, in failing to confess and expose his growing discontent for resolution, instead allowed himself to become used to his feelings, and in so doing he ruined his conscience.

We spoke last week about the Abundant Life that Yah desires for us, and that Yahshua gave Himself for us to have. This life cannot exist in us without a conscience that is at peace, in Sabbath rest.

If the natural tendency of the flesh does not steal that life away, Satan will seek after it, to see others ruined as he was. All of Heaven’s power is gathered to protect innocent souls from this corruption; however, those that stray unto unsafe spiritual ground, especially willingly, cannot benefit from this protection.

There is a great deal in the Christian life that depends upon training the conscience. Remember, our testimony is that of continuous victory, of overcoming obstacles, not merely surviving them, and a conscience that is not at rest cannot tell the difference between truly praising the Father, and merely thanking Him for allowing us to limp on to the next terrible trial.

Even in attempting to give a testimony of praise, we must guard against manifesting discontent. Remember that Lucifer’s fall was not immediate. He performed his duties for quite some time after rebellion had taken root in his heart, and he did it well enough that it seems most of the other angels did not even notice anything was wrong. We may give testimonies that, while they appear to be good on the surface, are actually speaking poorly of the Father. The Scriptures actually contain examples of this very thing. We may read, for example:

“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of Elohim they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. Shall mortal man be more just than God?

“Shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, He put no trust in His servants; and his angels He charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?” (Job 4:8, 9, 17-19)

This all seems perfectly correct, well-founded and proper doctrine. These verses tell us, quite correctly, that those who sow evil will harvest evil. The Proverbs tell us almost exactly the same thing. Further, the subsequent verses point out that Yahweh is most holy, and compared to Him, mankind and even the angels are as nothing. This is also certainly true. If we read the beginning of Job 4, we see that the speaker of this passage is Eliphaz, one of Job’s friends.

In chapter 22, the same speaker adds other reasonable-sounding advice, “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.” (Job 22:21-25)

Near the end of the book, Job is released from his suffering, and we read the following:

“And it was so, that after Yahweh had spoken these words unto Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.’” (Job 42:7)

But how is this? How can it be said that Eliphaz has not spoken rightly of Yahweh, when much if not all of what he has said can be found in other passages?

The answer is that Eliphaz was using these words in an attempt to convince the innocent sufferer Job that He had sinned against the Almighty, and that he should confess his wrongdoing so that the curse he was enduring should be lifted.

Eliphaz, like most of the world, and even many “religious” people, did not have a Sabbath-blessed conscience. He did not have the proper understanding of the Father, that just as He “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,” (Mat 4:45) so misfortunes may fall upon the just and unjust alike. Now, obedience to the Law of Yah will certainly save us much suffering; in fact, inspired writings tell us that we can spare ourselves nine tenths of our potential suffering by obedience to the will of the Father.

Yet there are times when we will experience challenges, perplexities and setbacks that are simply beyond our control, and in the case of Job, we see that it was because of his righteousness that Satan sought to attack him, not because of his sin. Now, who is the man who is deceived more

greatly? Is it the guilty man who is convinced he is innocent, or the innocent man who is convinced he is guilty?

Satan may claim a soul in either case, for if an innocent man believes he is guilty, he is still deceived, and does not know the character of the Father and Son well enough to believe that He is “one” with Them. This also shows a character that is not yet perfected, though it may be innocent of one particular wrongdoing for which he feels guilty.

The 144,000, though they experience a terrible trial in the end of days, endure through it and know that they are innocent. In the worst of times, under the greatest of spiritual pressures, they will “feel” terrible guilt... but they will search themselves – as Job did – and find no transgression. In order to be prepared for that, they will have learned to succeed where Lucifer first failed. They will have consciences, and perceptions, that are resting in the spirit of the Sabbath, and will be content even when their feelings, their flesh, their friends, are telling them something contrary to the truth.

It falls to us, then, as we advance toward Heaven, to pray always for wisdom, and to cultivate the Spirit of contentment in our hearts. And if we fall into a trial, we have a ditch on the left, a ditch on the right, and a narrow way between them.

We may, if we find ourselves in challenging circumstances, cast the blame on Yah, and speak wrongly about Him. This was actually a component of the first sin of humanity, regarding Adam’s words to the Father. We may, alternately, cast the blame on ourselves – but if we are innocent, and receive temptations to undeserved guilt, this is just as false a witness about our Father and ourselves.

We must certainly examine ourselves to see if we have contributed in any way to the matters that befall us, but we must do so in a spirit of rest, and not of condemnation. We must not allow either feelings or the input of others to convince us to leave a sense of peace, or – guilty or innocent of the sin potentially at the “root” of the problem – we will have ventured unto unsafe ground.

In all this, then, we must rely upon divine wisdom and protection. The brightest of all creatures fell prey to the results of a conscience that was not resting in the Law of Yah. He became “used” to a spirit of discontent, and in so doing lost the ability to discern between holiness and unrighteousness. In our humanity, we would have no hope to survive what overcame him... but if we cast ourselves wholly upon the Savior, who excels in strength, we partake of His Divinity. We become more than conquerors through Him, and maintain, for all eternity, that abundant life that He has given us.