

## All Evangelists

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This is our first Sabbath meeting after the just-passed Feast of Unleavened Bread, and it was certainly a time of refreshing for me. I do not mean in the sense that I wasn't writing or giving studies, but in the sense that I could be a "learner" in the congregation. It is true, of course, that I learn something every time Yah gives me a subject, and brings to mind Bible verses, and reminds me of principles that the Body may need to hear, but it is a different experience to be taught by the brethren, and I enjoy that.

I think that the principle of doing, rather than hearing, the Word, really has the best potential to be impactful for us at this time. We as the saints of Yah have a two-fold job, to perfect the character of Christ, and to teach the Gospel to the nations. And yet, those two jobs are a bit like the two principles of the Law, to love Yahweh above all, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. These principles are stated as two, two different ideas, yet they are one. Similarly, the two jobs that we are given to do are also one, for neither exists alone. We cannot perfect character unless we reach out to others with Agape, and we cannot effectively reach out to others unless we ourselves have a testimony of Christian perfection (rightly understood).

It should perhaps be no surprise that the principles of the Law, and the work of the Saints, are two, but really one. After all, they come forth from a Father and Son, two distinct Beings that are nevertheless One in glory, and in Spirit. We may know we have the right view of any teaching, if our understanding serves to deepen our understanding of the great principle of the Godhead, that Yahweh our God is "One." We read, "And Yahshua answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our Elohim is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:29, 30)"

Now, I haven't ever heard a teaching or study about this specific thing, but just reading it now, I find it interesting that the "first commandment" begins, not with an instruction to us at all... but rather a statement about the nature of the commandment-Giver. The authority of the Decalogue, and everything else in the Bible as well, is all based on the Unity of Yahweh, whether we are talking about the Father, the Son, or the Spirit as It dwells within Them and their Children alike.

So, we have "works" of the Christian which, while they may be expressed as two things (sanctification and evangelism) are really one great principle. To state that very simply, the principle is, "To Love." There are blessings in following this principle, whether it is directed to the Father, or to our fellow human being, Yahweh our Father IS Love, and as we express love, we show our unity with Him.

Now, if this seems like a very "basic" idea, I can assure you that we will be spending eternity uncovering new depths of what love is, and how it is expressed. A critical step, on conversion, is to remove from ourselves the "errors" that have crept into our definition of love. It is confused, far too often, with emotional or carnal desires, with sympathy, with affection, and while these things have their place, Agape-love, that is, love as Yah Himself defines it, is our innermost driving principle.

When we have agape, when we express agape, we DO all those things that we are encouraged to do in the Word, and that our brethren were encouraging us to do in their presentations this past Feast. What the Church of Yah needs is to be saturated in love. That is its primary and only genuine need.

It needs that perfect love that accomplishes all that the Word says it will. It needs to be spoken of among us, and realized in our words and actions. And we should remember what it is that perfect love does. It casts out all fear, (1John 4:18) which would solve the various problems that some of us identified during our conversations, of shyness, of fear of speaking due to concerns about being judged, being misunderstood, or receiving a rebuke for stating error. It allows us to examine and re-examine our priorities without worrying about the consequences.

Perfect love is expressed in tender mercies and affection (both stated and displayed) toward the brethren. Perfect love is expressed in a desire to save our fellow men from destruction. So here we see how these two principles are connected; perfect love casts out all fear, and in doing so, it removes the main obstacles that may exist for evangelism.

In our last meeting of the feast, on Sabbath morning, we had a fairly lengthy meeting... but in all that, I never did give my answer to the question of “What are you living for?”

I would answer it this way, and it is actually a rather unpleasant story... surprisingly, it is the story of my experience at the first CSDA Camp meeting.

Now, I would not say that I have a “perfect” memory, in terms of every single detail of every point in my life, although I do have memories from earlier years than many people think is possible. Furthermore, when it comes to experiences that have shaped me, my recollection of these things tend to remain quite sharp.

I remember that it was either October or November of 2000 when I first went to meet my CSDA brethren, to be baptized and received into my new faith. Up until that time, I had communicated with Pastor and a few others by email and by phone, but this was my first face-to-face meeting with him, and I have to say I was relieved. Some of the pictures I had seen of him online, with a bit of a wild beard, and a sort of grin... well, he looked a lot more approachable in person. Many of you will know what I’m talking about.

But this story isn’t about him... that wasn’t the unpleasant part. There were several other members there that I met for the first time... NONE of whom – except for Sis. Barb – are members now, which is sort of the point I am getting to.

Now, try to put yourself in my situation. I had just experienced the great relief, the great freedom, of having put down a life of very dark sin. I had made a decision to sacrifice the person I was, to become the person that Yah wanted me to be. Everything had changed... my relationships, the way I spent my time, the things I was interested in pursuing, my very heart and thoughts... they felt brand new, and I was overjoyed that there was such truth in the world. Yah had already begun opening up to me some of my more unique gifts. I had already written the Empyrean War, and both Church members and casual readers who found the site on the Internet were reporting that they were blessed by what I had seen of those events.

I was excited to be involved in this Church that would turn the world upside down, as the apostles had done after the events of the Gospels. I had found a family that, although my physical family is fairly close in many ways, had a spiritual unity that I had never experienced before.

It was inconceivable to me that, having found this great joy, anyone would turn their back on the light Yah was showing us... and yet, there in my very first camp meeting, we had a falling-away.

Now I have to confess, upon my first meeting with Bro. K and Sis. D, I was a bit surprised. I had difficulty reconciling their character with either what I saw of Christ in the Bible, or what I had come to accept in Pastor through our conversations. Bro. K was not an unpleasant person, but his attitude seemed a bit “brash,” a bit large and showy. His was not a humble character, to the degree that I wondered if perhaps I was missing something. Sis. D was quieter, but there were some expressions that suggested she perhaps held a kind of suspicious view of others, and was more apt to keep her own company than to open up to others.

Again, I wondered if I was missing something, or that perhaps Satan was altering my perceptions, and Yah was allowing it to test my commitment to the message as opposed to my own first impressions. As a result, I did not say anything; and as the newest member, I did not feel I had a place to “instruct” or even question those who had been a part of the Church for longer than myself.

At some point during the camp meeting, a dispute broke out. The issue concerned a letter sent from one who had been a member of the Church, but had since become its enemy... it contained (as it was reported, since I never read it myself) accusations about Pastor, and “warnings” about his teachings and character.

Well, Bro. K and Sis. D, who received the letter, had shown it to their adult son, whom they were, at the time, attempting to convince to give his life to Yahshua and to be baptized himself. Clearly, showing their son an accusatory letter about the Pastor of the Church they were supposedly supporting and promoting was neither an intelligent nor a spiritually sound decision. Yet, when they were asked about their reasoning, they became offended.

They withdrew their presence from the camp ground, and eventually removed themselves from membership. Now, the issue with the letter was not the “thing” that caused them to leave really; it was simply the event that precipitated the difference in character between these two individuals and the Spirit of Yahshua that is in His Church. In a similar way, maintaining the name “CSDA” is not the sign of salvation, but it is the event, the trial of our faith, that reveals whether or not we have the obedient and spiritually sensitive characters that exist in the redeemed.

Now again, in my mind it was impossible to consider that anyone would fall away... and yet, before my very eyes, I beheld this sorrow. It seemed, in a very striking way, a re-enactment among humans of the events I had just written down a few weeks ago, in my book. A shadow fell over me, and I grieved deeply, even though I did not know K and D very long.

Now, what does this have to do with my answer to the question, or to the name of tonight’s study, “All Evangelists?”

The point is, I did not know the individuals that well, but I still felt as if I was attending the funeral of a relative, or a close friend. It was a spiritual death that I had not been prepared to endure, and I recall being comforted both by Pastor, and by a brother named Darren. The point of perplexity I had was, “How could someone cut themselves off from the light, from the knowledge, that Yah was sharing with His people?” How could someone let anything, anything at all, certainly anything like a dispute about personalities and personal offenses, cause a separation from the Church?

I few days ago, I sent a “Testimony of Testimonies” to the Church. I received little feedback about it, except for a comment from Pastor thanking me for sending it.

The things I expressed in that email are the very feelings I had at that point in time. It still makes no sense to me why someone would surrender the chance, the opportunity, the process, to know Yah better, for any reason at all. The saints will say, “Heaven is cheap enough!” Paul said that anything other than the knowledge of Yah is “garbage.” Yahshua said that it is not worth the entire world, the price of a single soul.

Yet in those days, around me I saw people choosing the world, its policies, its interests, its way of thinking, instead of the Word of Yah, and the knowledge of Yah that it brings. I saw them choosing hurt feelings, and offended, bruised pride, over healing, and joy, and reconciliation, and unity, all things that come from the knowledge of Yah. To a more limited (but still unacceptable) extent, I see this “illness” has not been entirely cured among us either even to this day.

So, what am I living for? I am living to “know” the Father and Son. I am not speaking here of memorizing Bible verses, or constructing studies. I do love the study of the Word, but I am talking about a knowledge of the character of Yahweh and Yahshua, and in the knowing of them, to share that knowledge with others. The love of Yah must compel us, brethren, to see opportunities when they arise to praise our Father in Heaven. And more... people may come to us, but we must also go to them... because we are all called to express Agape, which means being sanctified, yes... but also being evangelists.

All are called to be evangelists, to express Yah’s love, to share His knowledge, and to see people sealed in that knowledge, for knowledge of the Father and Son IS everlasting life. (John 17:3) I have never forgotten that experience, seeing individuals choose emotions, impulse, and passion, over the joy of the knowledge of Yahweh. In removing themselves from the influence of the Church, they separated themselves from what the voice of inspiration describes as the only valid channel of truth between the Savior and mankind.

Of course, the Savior can reach out to individuals across the world by His Spirit directly, but these are invitations, enticements towards Himself, rewards for genuine faith, warnings against sins, promises of the relationship to come...

Within the covenant of the Church, after repentance, faith, and baptism, we are in the “channel” of truth. We have access to the power of Heaven to avoid all sin, and to be sanctified unto perfection – an opportunity entirely absent from the experience of the casual Christian, or even the sincere one within the grip of the various doctrinal errors out there.

This, of course, brings us to our responsibility, as those who are committed to the knowledge of Yah, to receiving it, and to sharing it with others. This is what makes us evangelists, and if we have the love of Yah, which comes WITH the knowledge of Yah, then we do the works of Heaven, and do always those things that please the Father.

There may be those out there who believe that, by not committing known sins, and doing good acts as they become aware of their duty, they are “ok” with Yah. But this is really the true test of conversion, of living the sanctified life: Do you love? Do you have the perfect love that casts out all fear, and that

draws the brethren together in clear, open communication and mutual affection? Do you love Yah enough to rest in Him when He instructs you to reorder things to better serve Him? Do you love your fellow man enough to do the work we were called to do?

We are all evangelists, or we are no Christians at all. Sabbath-keeping, obedience to the Law, avoiding actively sinning, these are all good, of course, all necessary signs of conversion... but these are not the full expression of Agape, even to the degree that we understand it in these cursed, limited bodies. We must not sin either by failing to do that which is "of faith," (Rom 14:23) that is, to follow the voice of the Spirit that will use us to find the willing unconverted, and to bring them into the Household of our dear Savior.

Let us be committed to this work, and see ourselves grow – both individually and corporately – as a result of this commitment.

David.

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