

## Defining Our Faith

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

The study for this week, which I am calling “Defining Our Faith,” is based partly on a brief conversation that took place at the end of last week’s study. The topic last time was “Simplicity,” and it pointed out that Yahshua is the answer to all questions of faith, and that those who know Him, truly, are the only ones who are equipped to know what He requires of His people, and what He has given us the power to accomplish.

After the main study, we got into a discussion about the nature of faith, and the following are a pair of comments from Pastor Chick and from me:

Pastor “Chick”: I am reminded of a court case that I recently read about. Two firemen were “forced” to drive their fire trucks in a “Gay Pride” parade. The two persons claimed that to drive in the parade would violate their “sincerely-held beliefs.”

Now, my mention of this is to emphasize that IF you have a “sincerely-held belief,” you cannot be “forced” to violate it IF you are truly “convicted” to obey and observe your “sincerely-held belief.”

In this case, the two “offended” parties drove their trucks in the parade and THEN sued the state for requiring them to violate their scruples. After long and drawn out litigation, the Supreme Court of the state threw the lawsuit out altogether (for various reasons). But the ONE true reason the suit should have been thrown out is this: the two did NOT prove they had “sincerely-held religious beliefs.” They acted in violation of what they claimed to be a conviction, [but it was] really a preference, which is NOT protected under law (and need not be). We need to keep this in mind as things in America become more and more restrictive to “Christians.”

My reply was: This reminds me of something that you [Pastor] have actually said before, in a different way... that people always act according to their “true” beliefs. If that is the case, that they ALWAYS act out their true beliefs (even if they don't know what they are), then they would rather die than violate a sincerely held belief.

That is the end of the quotes, but this conversation has remained with me for the past week, and I have been meditating on the concept of true faith, and on individual accountability to our Father.

Personally, before I became a member of the CSDA Church, I don’t know for certain that there is anything I would have died for. Perhaps I would have made such a sacrifice for my loved ones, for people, but certainly no doctrine, no conviction relating to religion.

As I examined myself in the past few days, I found that – based on our definition of “sincerely held belief” – I haven’t had any beliefs that I “sincerely” held until I became born again.

Of course, this is not true for everyone; there are people of many different faiths, some of which do not even have the concept of the “new birth” who are so sincere that they are willing to die for their religion. Without the love of Yahweh, as expressed in the life of Yahshua, this can have terrible results, as anyone who has seen the news lately knows... but sincerity is not what is lacking in those cases.

We know that having (that is, accepting and acknowledging) the right doctrine is not sufficient to save anyone. As the Scriptures point out, even the devils “believe” the reality of the Almighty, but they have within them no power to accomplish righteousness. It is the same way with nominal and deceived Christians; they acknowledge that God exists, and most have some knowledge of what He wants them to do... but they will say, they will freely admit, that they have no power to accomplish perfect, consistent, righteousness.

This, for most of Christianity, is the “norm,” and anyone who challenges their partial view of conversion is labeled a fanatic or an extremist. But the Scriptures side with those who have a vision of perfection, and who walk by their faith in that vision. Those who deny the Gospel of Yahshua, which leads to victory over sin, are called, “cursed children” in 2 Peter 2:14, and are described as they “that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls.”

If we wish to convince the cursed children, and those who have believed their incorrect testimony of the Christian life, we must clearly define what we mean by “our faith.” We must reveal to them that thing that was revealed to me at the point of my conversion; that, because of our love for our Creator, and our Savior, we have true convictions. We have beliefs, doctrines, practices, and principles, that we are truly convicted are right. Because we have this conviction, we would rather die than violate our conscience that has been trained by this knowledge in the power of the Holy Spirit, and this comes from nowhere except the work of Yahweh in our hearts.

It is only when we have something we know that we would die for that our lives become defined. As we read, “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Mat 10:39)

Those who live only for themselves have nothing to anticipate in the world to come. The first part of that quotation is plain, straightforward. The second is equally clear, but it consists of two elements, which I’ve been describing here. Yahshua does not say, “He that loses his life for a cause shall find it.” No; that would mean that sincerity is enough, and we know that it is not.

Neither does He say, “He who does things for my sake, and agrees with what I say, shall find life.” Yahshua does not speak here of works, even the “act” of martyrdom. Faith, as He defines it here, consists of both sincerity of that faith, and also faith of the right order: the Faith of Yahshua.

The CSDA faith, by which I mean the Biblical Christian Faith, is defined by the two main elements identified by that verse. There is the “truth,” which is the set of principles, laws, and teachings that we accept as Yah-inspired, and then there is the “holding,” by which I mean we are convicted to testify of and obey these truths regardless of the cost.

In Pastor’s example that I quoted above, the firemen probably had more-or-less the right idea regarding certain doctrines, but they were not convicted unto death, unto the “losing of life” for Yahshua’s sake, and therefore they did not accomplish righteousness.

Members of extreme sects and factions within different religions are notorious for the “losing of life” for the things that they believe, and are often willing to take others with them... but it is not for the sake of Yahshua, not for the principles of Heaven, and therefore they do not accomplish righteousness either; in fact, they accomplish great evil in the world.

It is only when truth and conviction meet that we have a defined, Biblical faith. This is what we must teach to the cursed children, to those who cannot cease from sin.

As CSDAs, we talk a lot about corporate accountability. This is as Yah would have it, since it is so little understood in modern religion. As with the “Seventh-day” Adventists in a day when Sunday-sacredness was the primary mode of operation, today we speak often about an unpopular and controversial truth.

The Scriptures talk about corporate accountability. In fact, the entire plan of salvation was made necessary by, and succeeds because of, this principle. Were it not for corporate accountability, Adam’s sin would not have caused the entire human race to fall. Were it not for corporate accountability, Christ’s sacrifice could not be applied to every person that comes forward to live in His light.

In these “grand” ideas, it is accepted; it is taught from the pulpit, and never questioned. When we apply it to anything that is closer to home, however, like Church membership, like Church-State unions, like the Mark of The Beast, we are resisted. Many who hear our teachings on this may receive a concept of the truth, but because they are not convicted to apply it consistently, they cannot accept righteousness. You may begin to realize, without the two key elements of faith (truth and conviction) we will be ineffective of reaching the hearts of those in the world.

So, on a practical level, how do we go about addressing this? How do we become facilitators of the true faith to the world, teaching them of Yahshua unto the saving of their souls?

The most effective way we can do this is through our own epistles. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (2 Cor 3:2, 3)

Interestingly, the issue that Paul was addressing with these words is similar in a sense to the problem of communication that we have today. Speaking of the Hebrews, Paul said, “But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.” (2 Cor 3:14, 15)

The problem was not, of course, the reading of Moses, the “Old Testament.” The problem was the veil that was over their minds as they read it. They could not see Christ in the words of the earlier prophets, even though their teachings, their principles, were revealed in Yahshua’s life. His fulfillment of Moses’ words has “done away” the mystery surrounding the plan of salvation, as it is made plain that it is the veil – not the Testament – that Christ removes. Yet, because the “leading men” would not accept Him, (John 7:48) the common ones would not generally consider doing so either.

Today, as we approach Adventists, and even people of other faith, we go against – not the individuals themselves, but – the veil over their minds because of long-held traditions. To question the Trinity, Sunday Keeping, salvation in sin, or the Sunday Law immediately identifies us as “other” as “outsiders” to the mainstream faith, and therefore anything from irrelevant to dangerous because of the veil over their understanding.

At the very end of the chapter, Paul gives the solution, how to reach such people: “Nevertheless when [the blinded heart] shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:16 – 18)

When the ones blinded by deception and tradition truly turn to Yahshua, when they acknowledge the power of the Savior through both truth and conviction about that truth, then error is burned away. And “we all” assist in this process by being ourselves transformed from glory to glory, showing the Spirit of Yahweh to the world through our own open “writings,” that is, our testimony.

Plainly stated, individual accountability influences corporate accountability.

This is also seen in life of Christ. His one decision, to dwell among us and be lifted up on the cross, affected all of mankind. As we become more like Him, our actions become more and more influential in the lives of those around us, even if we cannot see it. We must have true faith, both elements, and be open about it, testify to it... show that we are willing to die for it, and this will accomplish the work of Elijah, to “turn the heart of the fathers to the [cursed] children, and the heart of the [cursed] children to their fathers.” (Mal 4:6)

Those whose hearts are turned away from Yahweh are just that: cursed. They do not see the Almighty, they cannot accept His strength, and this is why (even if they are sincere) they “cannot cease from sin.”

When I say we show we are willing to die for our faith, I do not mean that we go about speaking of death. We do not conclude every Bible study or lesson with, “...and I would die for this.” What we do, however, is speak a testimony that is greater than our lives. We bear, and must openly declare, a testimony that would survive our death, that cannot be destroyed. This is what the word “invincible” means, and it is truly the perfect word to describe our lives, and our speech, in the Son of Yah.

Going back to our examples...

The two firemen, having identified themselves as Christians, could have done great things for the truth, but because they chose to go along with what was being required of them, they received support from neither Heaven nor earth. The world, for all its sickness, loves the story of “overcoming.” They enjoy seeing unlikely heroes triumph against all odds, but they do not generally love plaintiffs in lawsuits. The world knows, on some level, that it is not righteous to seek justice for religious matters in the strength of mankind, and we as CSDAs are prepared to demonstrate what the truth is, and the Place from which everlasting justice truly comes.

The mainstream SDA Church and some of its defenders will justify the use of civil courts at times by pointing out that by their legislation, they have “saved” Sabbath keeping for some who were being oppressed for this doctrine. What they do not realize is that they are, from the perspective of Heaven, proudly posing in filthy rags. Even the world says, “It’s how you play the game;” “winning” and “losing” are temporary conditions, but the loss of one’s principles is everlasting death.

In conclusion, I would say this: Conviction without truth leads to heresy and fanaticism. Truth without conviction leads to hypocrisy and legalism. It is better to have neither than to have one without the other... but righteousness can only be found in the presence of both.

When we have these, then we walk in the light, and we may do so without fear, without the necessity of creeds, and in all righteousness.

Next week, I would like to examine this aspect a little further, as it applies to such things as sanctification, Church membership and the use of our gifts for the glory of our Father. For tonight, though, are there any comments or questions?

David.

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