

Developing Our Faith

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Last week, we looked at “Defining” our faith; that is, we examined the components of what it is that makes up a true faith. We saw that there must be two elements present and in full effect. First, there must be truth that goes beyond private interpretations and opinions. There must be truth that is spoken by Yahweh, revealed in Yahshua, and understood by the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Second, there must be a conviction, which leads to a commitment, to live according to the principles of that truth.

As we have noted several times, human beings will always act according to their true faith; and yet, many claim a faith that they do not truly hold, and many hold a faith that they do not realize. It is when faith is “tested” that we see where the truth of the matter actually lies.

As I concluded last week, conviction without truth leads to heresy and fanaticism, and truth without conviction leads to hypocrisy and legalism – as one may teach and expect things of others, but not be convicted to perform them one’s self. What we need to do is develop this idea further, to show how the presence of these two things together, conviction and truth, leads to a pure and proper relationship with the Creator.

To that end, I would like to examine conviction and truth tonight in light of three main ideas, these being sanctification, Church membership, and spiritual gifts.

First, with regard to sanctification, I have seen some Churches that have one, the other, or neither of the two elements of faith. The sincere members of nominal Churches have the conviction to do what they understand is right. We hear at times on the news of Christians being persecuted, even giving their lives, because of what they believe. These are our brethren in conviction, and set a good example before the world of the importance of a sincerely-held faith.

Unfortunately, without present truth, they cannot perfect Christian character during the time of their ministry. They cannot teach others the importance of Yah’s Law, of the proper understanding of Christ’s grace. Sin is not overcome, and so the work cannot be completed as it was intended.

On the other hand, there are Churches with much truth. Seventh-day Adventism, as it came forth from the hand of the Creator, is the Biblical religion, and yet without a conviction to follow right principles in every aspect of their lives and operation, the organization went into darkness. For all its doctrinal accuracy, what we see are the ruins of a fallen Church that does not even know it has fallen, and it continues to receive (and boast of) a multitude of souls every day. This is a warning for all to note.

As Yahshua said, “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” (Mat 13:12) Talents that are buried in the ground, unimproved, undeveloped, are removed. Truth that is given to a Church, if it is not accepted, lived, and refined, is similarly taken away. Because it was not true to its convictions, the mainstream SDA Church – as many before it – ultimately surrendered what it knew as right, joining itself to the world in the persecution of Yahweh’s saints.

To an even greater degree, Creation Seventh Day Adventists have the brightest light that our Father has ever shone upon the world. Where the Churches of the past have had to concede ignorance about some aspects of our Father's character, CSDAs are called to pull back the veil that Satan has cast over His loving nature, revealing the mercy and justice that have long been absent from discussions about hell, cause-and-effect, and human probation, for example. The degree to which we answer that call is the degree to which we experience that "conviction" of truth.

As a mainstream Seventh-day Adventist, I once asked a pastor to explain how the Investigative Judgment works. He told me that we will not know when it passes to the living, we will not know when our names come up for review, and we will not know whether we have been accepted or rejected until the moment that the Son of Man appears in glory.

This "made sense" inasmuch as I had read some of Ellen White's writings on the subject, but it did not really seem "fair" to me. It seemed to violate common sense, and even human standards of justice seemed superior to this supposedly divinely perfect system of Law.

I was troubled, and I think that I continued to be troubled all throughout my time as an SDA. It is, perhaps, these little areas of uncertainty that bothered me the most, and ultimately could not prevent my lapse into worldliness and worse. As I examine myself, and think back, it seems reasonable to me that I would be troubled by this, because perfect truth should make sense to honest seekers, and Yahshua told us plainly, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Mat 5:6)

Well, I hungered, and I thirsted, to know the truth of this matter, but I was not filled at that time, in that place. I could not develop my faith any further, and so it began to die. I could not form a proper "conviction" because I was not convinced I was hearing the full "truth," and therefore my testimony could not be invincible, and my faith could not withstand every temptation.

Sadly, this is the experience of many, but as we know, being "sealed" means to be settled into the truth so that we cannot be moved. There are the two elements we have been discussing. We must be "settled [...] so that we cannot be moved." There is the conviction. And it is the second element, the "truth," into which we must be settled, which speaks for itself.

When I encountered the CSDA Church, and the Investigative Judgment was explained to me in terms of victory over sin, the due process of law, true conversion, and the role of the Church in "perfecting" the saints with no compromise regarding what those words mean... I was finally satisfied. The promise of Christ to me, that I would be filled, was found to be true, and I could form a conviction on that promise.

As I said last week, I don't believe there is any doctrine for which I would have died, not even a commandment like the Sabbath, before I became a CSDA. Without a knowledge that we have the truth, an honest person cannot form a true conviction. If we are dissatisfied, if we are unsure, our faith will be weak even if we generally "trust the Church," as I did as a mainstream SDA. As Yahshua said, "If ye have faith, and doubt not..." (Mat 21:21) it is than that the mountains are moved.

In the CSDA Church, we – as the servants of Yahshua – say to all, "Come and see." We say, "Seek, and you shall find." Do we have the answer to every question that pertains to the Plan of Salvation? I would confidently say, "Yes, to the degree that it will satisfy every honest question."

We encourage questions from an earnest heart, and we note that in every event of a separation from former friends and spiritual family, the first thing to go was that sense of curiosity, that desire to learn more about our Savior and His faith... and to communicate those things.

Not every detail of how all things work have been revealed to us. We know that our Father has reserved some things for Himself. But what has been revealed is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to deny every counterfeit, every deception, and to settle us in peace to the point where no temptation can move us.

Truth is necessary for sanctification, so that honest commitments can be formed. That commitment is necessary for the believer, so that the truth can be transformed into character, and so that faith can be perfected unto the sealing of the 144,000. The truth, as it is in Yahshua, lies with this, His Church. What responsibility, then, do we hold?

This brings us to the second issue for which the proper development of faith is important: Church membership.

Why do people join a particular Church? It is because, as with any social group, or indeed any activity whatsoever, they recognize a need within themselves, and seek to meet it. Some are convinced, if not convicted, that they “should” join a Church, and so they adopt a number of approaches to solving the problem. They join one that is conveniently close to where they live. They join one with doctrines that are close to what they already believe. They join one that challenges them to grow spiritually. They join one because it is the Church that their family members attend. They join one because a friend or neighbor convinces them to attend.

These are just a few reasons, and they do, indeed, fulfill the drive that they may feel to address their spiritual needs, but without the truth, this intent will not lead to everlasting righteousness.

On the other hand, some are convinced that they have “the truth,” and will – believing all Churches to be lacking, corrupt, or otherwise objectionable, stay isolated. Perhaps with a few friends or family members, these will not look for anything that is actually capable of accomplishing what the New Testament describes as the mission of the Church, to take the sin-destroying, life-changing Good News of Yahweh’s love to all the world.

In both these cases, the truth would set these individuals free. Those who consider the Church to primarily be a social structure would recognize that they are not being perfected by their fellowship, and seek out the Bride. Those who believed they had the truth in isolation would see, in the full truth, their errors, the truly “social” aspects of Christianity, and acknowledge that the pastors, elders, apostles, and prophets that Yah has given to His people are necessary for the perfecting of their character for salvation.

Church membership requires both of our study’s factors to be effective, as it involves identifying the genuine Bride of Christ from among the many impostors, and then it involves the conviction to pass through the triple-gate of repentance, faith, and baptism into the Everlasting Kingdom.

False prophets, independent ministries and ministers, and non-denominational or ecumenical movements are all united in a misunderstanding of the Covenant of Yahweh, which is open to all, but at the same time holds up the Bible, and the Character of He who is revealed in the Bible, as the only standard of redeemed human behavior. It is in this balanced place, and only in this balanced place, that faith can flourish.

Third and finally, the elements of faith are critical when discussing the use of the gifts that Yahweh has given to us, His people. The talents and skills that we receive from the Father are designed for one of two purposes. They either help us to edify the Church, or they help us to bring lost souls into the Church. In 1st Corinthians, for example, the gifts of prophecy and tongues are discussed.

Prophecy is given for the edification of the Church, while tongues were given to teach individuals who spoke other languages than those of the apostles. Some have misunderstood this latter gift, thinking that an “unknown” tongue is a spiritual language that only the speaker and Yah know, since it reads, “he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries,” (1 Cor 14:2) and “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth [only] himself.” (1 Cor 14:4)

The context, however, clears it up. Paul indicates that tongues are indeed a sign to others; specifically, to unbelievers (1 Cor 14:22) who are being evangelized, (1 Cor 14:21) but “when ye come together,” (1 Cor 14:21, 6) that is, when you are in the presence of the Greek and Aramaic speaking brethren, if you are not speaking these languages, but some language unknown to them, you are not edifying them.

Both of these gifts have their place: prophecy for the Church, and tongues (and other methods of communication) for the world. Both of these gifts are necessary, for we need to both be equipped for, and then go forth and do, the work of teaching the Gospel to every creature.

There are many who consider themselves teachers to the world, who consider themselves servants of Yah, and messengers of His Kingdom... yet they have not the truth, and they do not practice the truth. All their conviction to act, then, accomplishes little if anything toward the saving of souls, because they have conviction without truth.

By contrast, what shall we say of those who have the truth, but are not convicted to do the work of spreading the Gospel? Are they to be considered any better?

As Creation Seventh Day Adventists, this is a danger we face. Both elements of faith must be present, remember, truth and conviction. Yah has given us the truth; of this we have the confirmation of the Spirit, and the testimony of our lives, free of sin. It is not lack of truth that would prevent us from effectively completing the work of Heaven, and so Satan (knowing this) does not often attempt to refute us on this with any great effort. But let everyone be convicted – choose to be convicted – to use what we have been given in the service of others.

We must pray for wisdom, to see and recognize opportunities to share the truth we have received with others, but, and just as importantly, we must also act those prayers out. We are called to finish a great work, and we have all the authority, all the resources of Heaven, to accomplish it. But just like salvation itself, these things must be accepted, received, and used. It takes truth, and conviction, working together, to accomplish the work our Father has called us to accomplish. If we have these, then we have power. If we have these, then we will understand the responsibility we hold toward those whom the commandments instruct us to love, Yahweh with all our heart, our soul, and our might, (Deu 6:5) and also our neighbor as ourselves. (Lev 19:18, Mat 22:37-39)

This is the Gospel of Yahshua, and the fulfillment of the Law.

Next time: Defending our Faith

Continuing with our common theme: conviction and truth.

Means, to argue a doctrine until won. Suggest an alternate, a better, meaning for this phrase. To defend the truth is to reveal it. We defined lies by hiding them, we defend truth by letting it be known.

May be misinterpreted, may be used against us, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why those who have the truth, as we were discussing last week, are less bold.

But must see ourselves in the mirror of Yah, and overcome fear, anything that besets us, or we cannot do the work we are called to do.

Confidence Without Arrogance a part of it, or new study?

Talking victory... not something we can teach you to do. Not something like fixing a car, step by step... it is something we receive when we are born again. But, like Law, necessary to reveal it.

When we say, "You must have victory," do not look for how to accomplish it. If I say, you must have a car, I am not asking you to build it. Buy it, receive it. Gold tried in fire, already tried when bought! Consider this.

Who defends our faith: Yahshua defends our faith. TM wars result of not understanding how to defend faith. Be still and know that I am Yah.

So, why talk about it? It is to teach that it is possible, it is necessary, and to form a conviction that will take us through repentance, faith, and baptism.

END

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Creation 7th day Adventism