

Fearing Error

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, our study's title is "Fearing Error." We have recently completed a four-part study on the nature of faith, and followed it up by discussing the spiritual application of our senses "sight" and "hearing." I considered, for a while, doing a full series on the natural senses and their symbolic uses, but as I was putting together the notes it seemed that this would come across as being a bit forced. For now, it appears that we have been given sufficient "theory" with regard to truth, conviction, the purpose of visions, and listening to the "call" to accomplish a divine task.

What remains now is to take the knowledge we have been given, and therewith to do those things that please our Father. Once we have concluded that we have the truth, which may involve a doctrine, or perhaps an activity that will advance the work of the Gospel, conviction will naturally drive us to "walk" according to that faith.

What we often see, despite this sound reasoning, this Biblical principle, is hesitation in following-up with those matters that have already been given acknowledgement. We may take an example, although it is unfortunately not limited to this, of those who hear the Gospel in its undiluted form.

We have all had conversations about our beliefs with others. We have always, so far as I know, been able to give answer to the questions about our faith, and to support those answers from the Scriptures. Whether we are speaking to Adventists about the Trademark Law, and perhaps the issue of the Godhead, or whether we are speaking to non-Adventists about the Sabbath and the Biblical diet, we have verses, often entire passages, which demonstrate the accuracy of our conclusions. We certainly have the clear teaching that "whosoever is born of Yah doth not commit sin."

Now, I hardly say this by way of "boasting," because the fact of the matter is that despite all this, it is very rare that those with whom we are speaking say, "You know, you're right! I will begin to do these things immediately." They may agree with us on some level, but "few" are those who translate this agreement into positive, lasting changes.

Now, this fact inspires two thoughts in me.

My first thought is, "Why not?"

Why is it that even those who agree with the truth are so rarely found changing the pattern of their thoughts and their actions to suit it? Why is it that an understanding of truth does not lead them to fall at the foot of the Cross, and surrender the life that they will admit has been lived in deception?

The bottom-line answer is "love of sin." With the knowledge of truth comes a reminder, a temptation, of how pleasant the deception might have been. But Satan does not come to people and say, "You know, if you accept this truth, you will need to give up sin." Those who believe they are seekers of truth would not be swayed by such a suggestion, because their claim is that they ARE attempting to eliminate sin.

Instead, other thoughts and feelings are suggested to prevent the individual from taking the step that acknowledgement of the truth should inspire. One of the major traps is, "What if this is also wrong?"

The Scriptures give us this insightful passage, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (1Tim 4:3, 4)

The spirit of this passage is not that the individuals who turn away from the truth are entirely deceived into doing so. Paul points out that their turning is “after their own lusts.” These people will deliberately listen to teachers whom they know will quiet the voice of conscience, stifle conviction, and confound the work of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts. The love of sin, ultimately, must disguise itself as something else, and allowing one’s self to be deceived, to be convinced that the truth they have heard is (perhaps) error, is a perfect hiding-place for this temptation.

But we must reveal the deceptions, for like our Savior we must say, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” (John 15:22) The idea here is not that those who are ignorant of the Law are innocent before Yah, but that they do not recognize their need for repentance if they are deceived (or sufficiently self-deceived). Thus, we as Yah’s people must testify that under the deception is fear, and under the fear is love of sin. When the layers are peeled back through the testimony of the saints, then those who have heard the truth have no remaining excuse. They must make a choice – to draw near the light, or to flee into darkness.

As I said, unfortunately, this tendency is not limited to the people of the world. Even within the Church of Yah, there are temptations to procrastination. There are temptations to fail at following-through with agreements or convictions. These things are allowed to remain in the corners, un-swept, because proper convictions are not being formed with regard to those things that are identified as “truth.”

The people of Yah must not fear error. They must not fear the results of speaking the truth in love, of answering the world’s accusations, of making a mistake with regard to doctrine or conviction. This is not to say that we do not have more to learn; this will always be the case, but we must take up the courage, and the authority, of Heaven when giving our testimony.

The tendency of the world to draw back from “strong” truth, and its potential consequences to the individual that accepts it, must be identified, and eliminated, in the lives of those who are being sanctified for Heavenly existence. The 144,000 will come to a point at which they can say to an individual, “It is too late for you to repent.” They will know, they will recognize, when probation has closed for individuals as the end draws near. This is a truly “fearsome” responsibility, but it is one we are prophesied to bear, knowing the truth of salvation and loss, with tears and with trembling.

There are solemn truths, but saving truths that are yet a part of the “Good News” about our Father, that we should be holding by now; yet, until we can wield the doctrine we have been given with authority, these things must be withheld. When the doctrines we hold are applied with authority, including to our own lives, then we cannot help but have power. If we read the promises of Yahweh to us, and say, with complete conviction, with no fear of error, “This promise is now, and forever, my Father’s unbreakable word to me,” then what shall we fail to overcome? What obstacle, what tendency, what defect of character, can keep us from the perfection of the fullness of the stature of Christ?

We must not fear error. The mind of Christ does not entertain the thought, “It is true that I see this promise in the Bible, but...” and then follow this with carnal reasoning. What the Scriptures say about the

saints are absolute and objective truths; and we must accept them with the authority of Heaven so that they become effective.

Now as I said, two thoughts were inspired by the fact that even those individuals who may agree with our reasoning do not often follow up on what they have acknowledged. My first thought was “Why not,” as I addressed above. My second thought is, and this may seem unusual, “Why should it?”

This applies, not so much to those in the Church, but to those with whom we speak from the world and nominal churches.

Let’s say we lock ourselves in a room with every version of the Bible, and a group of very persuasive speakers from whom to learn. We might refine our arguments, come up with a very convincing promotion of our doctrine-based activities (and I am using that term deliberately). In such a case, we might convince a number of people to do the works of the CSDA Church.

We might get a little crowd together who keep the Sabbath, honor New Moons, adopt a healthier diet and lifestyle in general, and any number of other things, all on the strength that it is “correct” and “Biblical” to do so. Most Churches would probably say, if this were applied to them, “That’s great!”

But from an eternal perspective, what would we have truly accomplished?

I am not saying that we don’t need to present convincing arguments, and to win souls to the proper use of the Scriptures, but the Faith of Yahshua is not about works. Consider when the Savior was walking the earth. He was among individuals who kept the seventh day restfully (if legalistically in many cases), had a kosher diet, read the Scriptures, and so on. But were they prepared, or preparing, for Heaven?

Yahshua said to such as these, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” (Mat 23:15) Of the SDA Church, Ellen White wrote that it was becoming filled with individuals who may adopt the practices, but do not know what conversion is.

As we have known from the beginning, Christianity is not about works. It is not about changing habits or actions. But like faith and victory, which cannot be learned from another human, we teach truth (as the Scriptures instruct) in order to prepare the soul to receive conviction. Let me be clear on this, because if our evangelists believe that they are out to change habits and actions, then they have failed before they have even begun to set about their work.

We speak about the Sabbath, and prove its applicability to the followers of Christ, not so that someone will be convinced and begin to do the works. Some Churches consider this to be sufficient, and will list all the convinced ones as “converted,” but the Bride of Yahshua does not seek this kind of obedience.

We seek understanding. We seek something deeper, because our definition of “conversion” is not like that of the world and the counterfeit brides. What we seek in our hearers is not just a religious “transformation,” but a religious “conversion.” I am using those words, which are often substituted for one another, in two different ways, and I believe accurately. A “trans-formation” is a change in form, in shape, in appearance. A conversion is a change in who a person IS.

Why should we be content if our persuasive discussions, and our proof-texts, and our reasoning, produce a religious transformation? Why should we be content if the mind is convinced, even to the point that works and actions are affected? There are many who do what the Bible says to do, but will be strangers to the Son of Man when He appears.

Many major world religions will claim to be “fast-growing.” It is true... the words and works of the famous and popular religious speakers have “transformed many lives,” as they will proudly state. This is the best that the world can hope for. This is what psychiatry, and medication, and therapy, hope to accomplish – a transformation of the life. But for us, we know that to merely transform the life is not sufficient. Yahshua did not say, “Nicodemus, you must transform your life.” No, He said, “You must be born again.” He said, “That which you know of ‘life’ now must end, and you must start over from the beginning, with a new Spirit in you, and the humility of a child to learn what I have to teach.”

We can instruct individuals of no mechanism by which this can possibly be accomplished. The evangelists of Yahweh cannot “convert” anyone. They can teach the truth, and pray that the soul becomes softened, so that when the grace of Christ appears through the Holy Spirit, the repentant sinner can say, “I was alive without the Law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” (Rom 7:9)

This was Paul’s experience, even after the death of Christ. It was the Law, and the commandments in the Law, (even after the Cross!) that brought conviction unto death, and unto rebirth. Can that which was “nailed to the cross of Christ,” and “done away with” lead to everlasting life? The student of the Bible must say, “Certainly not.”

Nominal Christianity’s message is, “Some actions are ‘bad,’ so you must accept Jesus and change them.” That is really no different than secular psychology, except that Christ is held up as the motivation. Biblical Christianity’s message is, “The Law of Yahweh is absolute, so you must accept Yahshua as a Substitute for the guilt of violating the Law, and you will receive a new life.”

No need is there to speak of habits or actions, because the “new life” is in harmony with the Law by its very nature. After that, pointing out habits or actions that are out of harmony with the character of Christ is simply the process of sanctification accomplished in the agape-context of the Church, of learning more about righteousness. It is not a command to change, but an education of what righteousness looks like.

Why should knowledge of the truth lead to a change in behavior? Ultimately, it shouldn’t. Realistically, it can’t – because the sinner that learns the truth is, at that very moment, still a sinner unable to perform righteousness. What it should lead to is a realization of the need for the Savior. It should lead to a conviction that the present life, lived in sin and deception, cannot please the Father. It is then that those who understand this, and what it means, and who allow the Spirit to bring conviction, will say to the messengers of Yah, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

After that there is water, and spirit, and fire. After that there is life surrendered to the grave, and life taken up anew. After that there is covenant, and commitment, and sanctification. And it is in that context, and ONLY in that context, that changes to behavior reflect the refinement of the soul. The evangelist, therefore, does not introduce individuals to doctrine and practice, but to Christ Himself.

But Satan knows this process well, and will obstruct it in any way he is allowed. He will use fear of error as a major temptation, both to those outside of the Church – to prevent their conversion, and to those

within the Church – attempting to limit their usefulness. Let us, therefore, be watchful of this trap. When we are called-upon to speak the words of Yahshua, or to do the work of spreading the Gospel, let us not fear error or consequence. Let us not allow one moment of wavering, but let our testimony be firm, and bold, as one would expect of a man, or woman, or youth, that speaks with the authority of the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth.

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