

## Faith and Positive Thinking



e must talk about the concept of “simplicity,” and then to apply it to a particular distinction that is important for God's children to make.

One of the things that most impresses me about the Gospel, and the message of our faith and Church, is its simplicity. This does not mean, of course, that there are not basic and more advanced concepts to understand. The truth behind all things, and the way the universe functions, was designed by an infinite Intellect, and established with divine power. There are many things that we will not be able to understand until we fully share the open glory of the Father and Son.

And even regarding those things that have been revealed, there are ideas that we may really grasp only after some study, and some meditation.

However, when we grasp these things, when Yah reveals them to us during the course of our sanctification, they “fall into place,” as the saying goes, fitting perfectly into the pattern that is the result of the very first principles of the faith, and we may well say, “Of course, that makes perfect sense.”

The reason why most people in the world do not understand the Creation 7th Day Adventist message, ultimately, is a matter of inclination rather than complexity. In other words, as we read, “the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of Yah, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1Cor 2:14)

Those of us who are of the faith, we have been given the Spirit of Yah, by which the Bible’s message is revealed to us in a way that we can understand on both a “mind” level and a “heart” level. It is not that those who receive the Spirit of Yah are smarter, or more intelligent, in a secular sense – but Yah places things “in” us, that we may know and do His will.

Consider a concept as easy to understand as *Righteousness by Faith*. For us, this is the most basic, and yet most powerful, of the Gospel’s many effects. All other teachings come forth from this idea, that because “self,” through which sin enters the life, is reckoned dead, sin has no power over us. Because Christ dwells within us, we cannot be of darkness, because the first recorded act of Yahweh is the separation of light from darkness, and Yahshua in our lives is “the light thereof.” (Rev 21:23)

Even a child can understand this. They know that “A good person does good things,” and “A bad person does bad things.” John the Apostle explains this concept to Christians, as if to children, saying, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this



purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because

his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.” (1John 3:7-12)

In this matter, “a little child shall lead them,” because it is the worldly, the sophisticated, the “mature” (as the world reckons maturity) that complicate even such matters as good and evil.

And of all those who have complicated such matters as righteousness and wickedness, faith and works, the nominal Christian is one of the most “mature,” in the sense of being the most confused. Because the Spirit of Yah has not revealed the Gospel to them, they believe that they may be “righteous” while still committing evil or, at least, accepted by God while yet doing those things that He has commanded them not to do.

The essential idea behind much of this, that of being “saved in sin,” comes in a variety of different mutations. For example, there is the “eternal security” variant, that tells us that the cross of Christ covers all of a believer’s sins, both past and future. The Scriptures tell us specifically that the death of Yahshua upon cross is designed to grant us “*the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*” (Rom 3:25) **And what about “future sins?”** These are not going to keep us from salvation for the simple fact that they do not exist. When one receives Christ according to His Gospel in all its power and simplicity, His life and His power become in us the very righteousness of the Father, and the life that we live thereafter is free of sin.

In the judgment, we stand before the Throne of Yahweh innocent of sin: cleansed from those committed in the past, and free from transgression because of the power of the Almighty to keep us clean, to “keep [us] from falling.” (Jude 1:24)

We could look at any number of different doctrines, all designed to narrow the gap between righteousness and sinfulness, all designed to comfort the Christian who has not yet given “all” to Christ, that he may truly be free, and truly be saved from sin. To most, the thing that the Savior has “saved” them from is the penalty for sin. For us, who really believe His promises, the Savior has saved us from sin – the thing itself – and the rest is just nature taking its course.

We could look at any number of doctrines that do not lead to everlasting life, but for us the necessary thing is to focus on what the truth actually is, the simplicity of the truth, so that when we do encounter these errors, we can do a number of effective things.

First, we can recognize the error so that we do not fall into the trap that it contains.

Second, we can tell why it is an error, or at least get a sense of how it differs from the truth.

Third, we can explain to others why it is an error, and how to replace it with truth, in such a simple way that, if they are willing, they can say, “Of course, that makes perfect sense.”

Again, the truth is always simple. This does not mean it is always simply understood, because of a love of sin, and because Satan always has close counterfeits for those things that are true.

We may speak of “the ditch on both sides of the road” when we discuss any significant teaching. We speak of extremism of one variety or another. We talk about those who believe “almost” as we do, but the doctrine, or the version of the doctrine, that they accept has not killed sin in their hearts. But it is not enough to merely discuss those things among ourselves. We must be prepared to go among those who have been ensnared by these errors, and bring light to them to see if any are still awake, if any are still alive, if any are still hoping for something better, something more obviously “divine,” than they have thus far been taught.

Now, one of the issues we can use as an example, to be able to recognize, and identify, and explain the error, is one that has been mentioned a few times in passing. That is, the issue of “positive thinking,” and how it is different from the faith of the Bible.

It may be surprising to learn how often these two ideas are confused, even by well-known preachers, who give their message to the world in a way that blends genuine Christianity with humanistic concepts. In some cases the blending is so smoothly done that even those who would be the “very elect” are in danger of nodding along, and saying, “That makes sense to me.”

On the surface, the two are very similar. On the surface, both accomplish the same results, and rely on the fundamental concept of “hope” to create changes in reality as a result of invisible means.

We have heard sermons, in which the preacher has said, “If you want (money, a better house, a new car, a happier life, a romantic partner), all you need to do is *believe*. And if you believe, and pray, and hope hard enough and long enough, you will receive the thing you desire.”

There is almost nothing wrong with all that. In fact, it seems to have some Scriptural support. We may read, for example:

*THE SOURCE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN, AND THUS THE CHURCH, IS YAHWEH*

“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” (1Cor 5:14, 15)

And another:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:12, 13; see also John 15:16 and John 16:23)

The secular version of positive thinking generally leaves out prayer and Yahweh altogether, but one cannot merely “add” Yahweh to a worldly concept and see it transformed into a Biblical doctrine either. Those who have accepted the Christianized version of positive thinking (which is the result of merely adding in some spiritual concepts) may find great comfort in those verses that I have just quoted, and yet, if they merely believe these things as they are commonly taught, they will not see the death of sin in their hearts. They will not be sanctified by their faith, nor will they attain unto the perfection of Christ’s character, which is the condition, ultimately, of “being saved.”



As I began by saying, the truth of the Gospel is always very simple. But Satan, aided by the inclinations of the unconverted human being’s carnal inclinations, may prevent the simplicity of the Gospel from becoming apparent.

In this case, carnality and secularism have hidden three things from those who cannot discern between positive thinking (even the Christian version) and genuine, Biblical faith.

I would label them as “**Conditions**,” “**Authority**” and “**Divine Will**.”

The first of these, conditions, is not mentioned in the specific verses I have quoted, yet they are clear from the passages, and what is written in other places. There are some who use the Bible as a “collection of sayings,” rather than a single, perfectly harmonious message. They will use some verses to “counter” others, and some to replace others, without giving any thought to the value of the parts that are being ignored or disputed. In order to understand the mind of Christ, we must know all that He says to us and, even if we do not apply every statement in quite the same way as they were originally used (a common criticism from the world regarding Old Testament practices) we understand *the principles behind them* as saying something important about the character of our Father.

The Scriptures, while speaking about obtaining the things we desire from Yah, say much in addition to those verses above. For example:

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim, which I command you this day, and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of Yahweh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.” (Deu 11:26-28)

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Yahweh thy Elohim, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am Yahweh that healeth thee.” (Exo 15:26)

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” (1John 3:22)

Clearly, this is not an “Old Testament” doctrine. In fact, the clearest Scriptural statement on this matter is in one of the last books: 1 John. Those who preach this message of positive thinking and prosperity never – to my recollection – utilize these verses. If they mention them at all, it is as a footnote, a curiosity, rather than the actual instruction with regard to having our prayers answered. They desire the blessings, but without the covenant of obedience between Yah and man.

Now, obedience is not what makes us just. It never really was, but the New Testament does emphasize the “grace” *that grants us* obedience (Romans 1:1-5) over merely performing acts that we know to be proper. Nevertheless, because we have been made just through our belief, made righteous by our faith, we obey. Our faith has made us righteous (this is what “Righteousness by faith means”) and this is more than just a theoretical “spiritual” righteousness, but one that manifests itself in obedience to the will of the Father.

This is the first difference between faith and mere positive thinking. It is subject to the condition of our righteousness, of Christ’s righteousness within us, and working through us; and this is shown by faithful obedience.

**The second of these distinctions is authority.**

Often the statement is made, “You only need to believe.” But the question is left open, “Believe in what?” It may be said, in a religious setting, “This was said in the context of the Church and Christianity, so it is understood that ‘God’ is the One from whom these good things come.”

But more than who made the promise of good things, it is also important for us to know those things that He has promised, and those things that He has not.

There are things that Yah will not permit, even if we were to ask for them.

Our “amount of faith” is not a deciding factor if we ask for something that Yah has not promised us. In other words, it is not up to us to decide what we are to receive from Yah. Of course we will ask for those things we desire to have, but this does not automatically obligate our Father to give us those things. Again, we cannot merely take those three verses I quoted about offering our “petitions” to Yah and rely on those without any consideration of the overall picture.

For example, the Bible also has verses such as:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor 12:7-9)

We can imagine Paul coming to a modern Bible preacher and describing this experience, and receiving the reply, “Well, this just means you didn’t believe enough.” We have seen similar errors to this in the past, treating Yah as if He was merely some cosmic force, and not a true Person, with His own intentions, purposes and authority. The truth is, nothing was wrong with Paul’s faith – but Yah is the one who decided, in His infinite knowledge, to leave Paul as He was. Of course, because of love He did not merely leave Paul to ask, and wonder why nothing was happening. Paul knew the true God of the universe, and was willingly submitted to His authority; therefore he DID receive an answer, even though it was not exactly what He requested.

But Yah’s promises to us must be the foundation of our requests. We must believe that “He is faithful that promised.” (Heb 10:23) It is not enough to attribute the success of our prayers to the belief itself, because this indicates that something about us – ourselves – can “make” these things happen. But the experience of Paul, and others, shows that Yah very intelligently hears us, and responds based upon those things that He has promised we would receive already if He desires us to have them.

**This brings us to the third distinction: His will.**

Even if we submit ourselves to the authority of the God of the Bible, and speak to Him, and pray to Him, focusing on His promises, and His power, rather than the “strength” of our faith, there is another issue at play as well.

The Name of Yah is more than just the sound of the word, it is also about His character.

It is written, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” (Luke 11:11, 12)



The problem with modern man, however, is that they will ask for a stone, a serpent or a scorpion just as readily as they would ask for bread, a fish, or an egg. In other words, they will often ask for things that are harmful to them – and in fact, those who rely on positive thinking often attempt to obtain some material benefit to themselves through this method.

This is not always the case, but even when good things are requested, the focus is on the desires of the self, and the power of the self's belief to obtain them.

The carnal mind has hidden the consistent message of even those verses used to support the Christianized positive thinking message. Again we can read the two I supplied above:

“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” (1Cor 5:14, 15)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:12, 13; see also John 15:16 and John 16:23)

In both of these, we see “according to His will,” and “in My name.” They are essentially the same idea. We must not only ask for Yah's promised results, but also according to what we know He wants for us. Now, the secular mind will ask, “How do WE know what Yah wants for us?”

But the Spiritual mind knows. Those who are in a true relationship with Him will know, and this is one of the truest ways of distinguishing the genuine convert from those who are Christians of convenience. I do not mean that the believer will know every step, every specific – as we may read of the Apostles, they had periods of perplexity – *but they will know the principles of the life that Yah has given them.*

As we come to know Yah, we come to know what He wants for us. As we live “according to His will,” and “in His name,” then we come to know what to ask. This is based on wisdom, on the knowledge of our Father's character, and not about what we believe we need, or what we desire, at any given time.

This does not say, of course, that we should not ask for those things we want – but as we are sanctified, as our characters become closer to Christ's, we more and more perfectly know the mind and will of Yah for our lives, and then what to ask for (and what we receive as a result) becomes more and more certain.

Thus, receiving a desired answer to our prayers based on true faith is about knowing the character of Yah. Contrary to mere positive thinking, it is about being “at one” with the Father and Son, and having the wisdom to ask according to Their perfect will.

To summarize, then, the saints would distinguish positive thinking from true faith in the following ways:

- 1) The blessings of true faith are conditional on the state of the believer’s spiritual life, and this is outwardly indicated by obedience to Their commandments. This is also, by the way, the principle behind the concept of conditional prophecy.
- 2) The results of true faith are based upon the authority of Yah, and not on the “strength” of the believer’s faith; it is therefore indicated by a genuine spirit of worship.
- 3) True faith operates according to the Will of the Father, and done in His name. It is therefore based upon wisdom, and our knowledge of His character.

These differences are easy to understand, and simple to explain to others. We are commissioned by Christ to teach a pure faith, free of secular thought, and the influence of this world’s philosophies on such matters. We are advancing in the light, and discarding those things that are of the darkness. We are doing this so that, among other things, “our joy may be full,” and this is not always the same thing as “getting what we want.” There are things that we must learn, and things that we must unlearn, before the end comes, and as we learn, let us consider it our great responsibility, and our great privilege, to share these things with others.



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## **Graphic References**

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