

Achieving the Kingdom of God

Roger Kendall—May 28, 2011

Good afternoon brethren. What a wonderful Elder's Conference that we've had and what a wonderful Sabbath Day that we're experiencing, and the unity, the love and the harmony that we feel here is so very wonderful. God is always well pleased looking down upon us.

We heard from Roger's {Tointon} message this morning that God has called us to be firstfruits, to be prepared for the first resurrection so we can serve and rule with Christ in the Millennium. With that calling, there comes responsibility; we have our part to play. We all know that. If it was easy, if it was something that was just a calling and you accept it, it would be easy, but it requires effort.

One thing I'm going to be speaking about today is the important of diligence, due diligence in your calling. Are you putting in the required diligence to your calling to assure that you will reach the Kingdom of God and be in the first resurrection? *God's Word teaches us that diligence is a quality, a characteristic that we need to have to make it through the troubling, difficult times*, because we are in the end-time.

- What is diligence?
- What are the characteristics of diligence?

We're going to be looking into that this afternoon and hopefully this will help us all to 'gear up,' to keep our eyes focused on the Kingdom and to really be able to go forward with full effort to achieve the Kingdom.

Years ago I was teaching college chemistry; I teach organic chemistry. One time a student came up to me and he was a premed student. He said, 'You know, Dr. Kendall, I really need to get an 'A' in this course. What do I need to do to get that 'A'?' He was looking for a shortcut. He was looking for some great way I could give him to achieve the 'A.' I told him. I said, 'You're reasonably intelligent. That helps, but beyond that it's going to take effort on your part, work and due diligence to get a good grade in this class.' I said to him, 'If you attend every class, take good notes, do the assignments I'm going to give you, do all your work assignments, be able to ask questions in class on those things you don't understand, pursue the knowledge and the understanding, the principles, and to really come to love this subject, I'll guarantee you you'll get a good grade.' He said, 'Oh, Dr. Kendall, that's a lot of work!' I said, 'That's the point.'

You know, God comes to us and He calls us into His begotten family. He's given us an

assignment. He's given us work to do. We have to work on ourselves. God does the work in the sense that He writes His laws and His way of life into us, but:

- we have to choose
- we have to choose to keep on keeping on
- we have to choose to everyday do those things that God requires of us
 - ✓ to do it with our might
 - ✓ to do it with all the effort, strength and knowledge that God gives to us

The Apostle Peter shows us very clearly that God wants us to apply diligence in our calling.

2-Peter 3:13: "But according to His promise we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. For this reason, beloved, **since you are anticipating these things, be diligent, so that you may be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless**" (vs 13-14).

What Peter is saying here is that *we have an obligation, a responsibility to be diligent in our calling!* Not to look at it lightly and that we just can kind of coast along and kind of go with the flow. We have to go against the stream; we have to go against the flow of traffic. As we learned this morning, we are pilgrims in a world that's going in the other direction. We have to fight against the current of this world. We really do.

Matt. 7:13-14—this a Scripture that we've looked at and understand. I want to put a new aspect that we might not have considered before. You're familiar with this Scripture.

Matthew 7:13: "Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it; **for narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it**" (vs 13-14).

God calls; you need to be called to find the 'narrow gate,' because wide *is* the way who don't know the Truth of God and they enter in through the 'wide gate,' which leads to destruction.

Those who are called enter in through the 'narrow gate.' It takes repentance and it takes a focus on the calling. I've come to understand that it also takes *diligence and hard work* to go through the 'narrow gate.' God brings us to that gate and we, with His help, we need to enter into the Kingdom of God and it's not an easy road to take.

We need to develop an attitude of focus, of doing our utmost with the power that God gives us to achieve the Kingdom of God. The fact is that God says that He will do His part, but **will we do our part in doing that which God requires?**

Diligence is an important principle concept, which we need to understand. The Bible has a lot to say about diligence. We're going to go over some Scriptures today and see how important it really is. In fact, we're going to read where Peter comes back and says about diligence, 'You can absolutely know whether you're going to make it into the Kingdom of God, **if** you are diligent in building the mind and character of God.' That's an example we're going to be coming to as we come along.

What do we mean by diligence? You look into *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, the English world comes from the Greek word spelled 'spoudazo,' which means *to make extreme effort, to dispatch with haste, that is: to do it quickly, efficiently, with earnestness, with true desire, to be diligent and to labor with intensity*. That means you really put your might into it.

We could phrase it this way if you would like to expand on that: *Diligence means to strive with the whole heart, with all your strength, with all your being, with an eagerness and zeal, because you see the goal!* You know where you're going and you need to go for the goal with enthusiasm and determination that you're not going to fail. You're going to make the final crossing point into the Kingdom.

God's going to get us there, but we have our part. If we lie down and take a lackadaisical attitude and saying you can just float along and do the minimum. I'm going to show you some Scriptures today that shows that you many not achieve the kingdom, because *God wants you to do your part* and for me to do my part, to want to love the kingdom so much that we're going to put in absolute effort to achieve it.

Proverbs teaches us some aspect about diligence Proverbs 10:4: "He who deals *with* a lazy hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."

The Scripture is very broad because we could talk about *physical* richness, or we can talk about *spiritual* riches. Of course, we understand that to become wealthy in a physical sense, you need to work, you need to strive and put in all your effort to become abundant in your life. Many families have done that.

Spiritually, God gives us 'the mine,' ***His Bible!*** That's the mine in which the gold is

deposited. Then He asks us to dig into the mine to find the true riches so that we can learn and grow and become like He is. So, you can see the effort in becoming spiritually rich is upon us. The diligent hand, the one who is putting in full effort, will become rich *spiritually* and to be able to understand the deep things of God.

Proverbs 12:24: "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the lazy shall be under tribute."

Again, we have all these contrasting Proverbs. We see now that the diligent hand will "...bear rule..." That means that **if** you're diligent in the way you conduct your life, **if** you show the fruits of that diligence you will be called upon to lead others because of your example and the way you live your life. But **if** you're lazy and slothful, whose going to follow that example. There are many who fall into that, but they're not going to follow that example. So, he who is diligent is one who will "...bear rule..."

Let's understand that we're going to rule in the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ. We need to be diligent if we're going to be able to grow and become like Christ so that we can rule with Him and be His bride. Again, we see the fact that it requires effort and work on our hands.

We can turn to God's creation and we can see some natural examples of what it means to be diligent. Let's turn to the example of the lowly ant. I say lowly ant because he's really down there in the ground, but he's not such a 'push over' when it comes to being diligent.

Proverbs 6:6: "Go to the ant, sluggard..." In other words, if you think you can just lay around and not achieve anything in your life, let's go look at the ant. Have you been out there and looked at an ant hill before? *Of course you have!* What do you see? *You see these ants lying around with sunglasses and sunbathing? No!* These ants are always working, they're scurrying about; they're working in 'due season.'

"...consider her ways and be wise, who having no guide, overseer, or ruler" (vs 6-7). You don't see somebody out there cracking a whip and leading everybody around. They're just doing what they do, getting the food in the hill and taking care of the brood and all of that.

Verse 8: "Provides her food in the summer *and* gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest" (vs 8-10).

Again, we see a contrast, here. We need to recognize that he who is lazy and with a limp hand is

not going to grow and to achieve, necessarily, the goal that's at hand. We can look at bees. We can look at the beaver, 'busy as a beaver.' There are many examples of what it means to be diligent in taking care of things when they need to be taken care of.

I grew up on a small farm in Vermont. It was 110 acres of rocky soil. It needed work. We had to be diligent in knowing when to plow, knowing when to plant and knowing when to harvest. If we didn't do things in due season, we would be hungry in the wintertime. We had to be diligently working with the soil to produce those things that the soil could produce. I always remembered that my father really taught me the example of diligence. He was one who wanted to teach his children about really working hard and recognizing the rewards of working hard will always be there.

I remember that we had a garden and we would go out and hoe and take out the weeds. He always told us to hoe to the end of the row. Don't stop half way through the row. You've got to get all the weeds out. We did because he was back there and he was keeping us in line. He said, 'Any job worth doing is worth doing well.'

We've been called to achieve the Kingdom of God! Our attitude needs to be zealous. We need to be in full strength and power to do that with diligence and with all our strength and might.

Ecc. 9 really expresses what diligence is all about; Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with all your might; for *there is* no work, nor plan, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave where you go."

We have a limited period of time called *the life cycle*. We have time now to be diligently working toward the Kingdom of God. We're going to see how this works, but we need to understand that ***if we don't do it, no one is going to do it for us!*** Salvation is an individual matter and we need to be doing the work toward the Kingdom of God in a manner and a way that is with determination, with zeal and to be able to grow, overcome and do those things that God would have us do.

- How much is enough?
- How far do you have to grow to fulfill your calling?

I know that I want to grow as much as I can. I want to become more like Jesus Christ and to overcome as much as I can in this life so that I can be of better service in the Kingdom. If I have the idea that I'm just going to go so far and I'm just going to rest the rest of the way, what's going to happen there?

Let's go over some points that the Bible points out of why we need to be diligent. Heb. 11 talks about *the spiritual elements in our lives*; we need to be diligent.

Hebrews 11:6: "Now, without faith *it is* impossible to please *God*. For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe that He exists, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Again, this Scripture shows very clearly that ***we need to be diligent in seeking God***, not just once or twice. This is a daily thing. We need to seek God diligently in the morning, in prayer, in study. We need to seek God in the afternoon as we battle different issues in life. If we seek Him for help and for guidance and making sure that we are seeking God on a daily basis. Then we're diligently working for the Kingdom of God and doing those things that are pleasing to Him. When we're close to God, we can overcome any barrier and any problem that we come up against, God will help us.

I'm going back and forth here, but this is the way the Bible is put together: 'here a little, there a little, line upon line.'

Psalm 119:1: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep His testimonies and **who seek Him with the whole heart**" (vs 1-2). That's diligence. Not just half an effort but the whole heart.

Verse 3: "They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to **keep Your precepts diligently**" (vs 3-4).

In other words, here's this aspect of doing things with all our might, to keep His commandments with all our might. Precepts are the principles and even thoughts of God. For the principles of God, we need to just grab hold of them, to keep them diligently and to do His will.

2-Timothy 2:15: "Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of the Truth." *We need to be focused on:*

- Jesus Christ
- the Kingdom
- His Truth
- His Way
- His life

As we study the Scriptures, we will grow in that understanding so that we can practice that way of life, particularly the way that Christ showed us to do it. As we heard this morning about dealing with forgiveness, it's just one small area that we need to practice and work on, but also for prayer.

1-Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray unceasingly." So, we need to be diligent in study and prayer. We've heard that all of our lives here in the Churches of God. It's so important, brethren, that you need to be diligent in your study habits and in your prayer *because that is the armor* that you put around you. That is the connection that we make with God the Father, learning and growing in that way, that we are practicing toward what we would call perfection.

You may not be able to reach perfection in this physical body of ours, but God wants us to work for perfection. That is our goal; the Kingdom of God and perfection through the Holy Spirit. We study because we want to be able to recognize false doctrine and the heresies that come in, so that somebody comes into your group and starts practicing lies and deceit, we are going to understand the Truth and we are going to be able to refute it. If we're not diligent in our study, if we are taken aside by the tangential thoughts and actions that are not of God, principles that are not of God, we're going to be swept away into the current of evil and the way of hypocrisy.

One who is diligently seeking God needs to guard their minds with diligence. This is what the Proverb tells us, here:

Proverbs 4:23: "**Above all guard the door of your mind with diligence...**" That means you're not sloppy. That means you need to "...guard the door of your mind..." 24/7. When you're sleeping, you're basically are somewhat not so well equipped to do that, but this means you cannot take your thoughts off from the Kingdom of God in that sense because Satan is deceptive. He can move and put thoughts in your mind. You need to "...guard the door of your mind with diligence..." That is full effort, maximum output and effort to accomplish the goal.

"...guard the door of your mind with diligence, for out of it *are* the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and devious lips put far from you" (vs 23-24). *That comes from guarding the door of your mind!*

We're going to find that when you ...guard the door of your mind..." your going to find that your actions and your words are going to line more up with the Word of God rather than the way of the world.

Verse 24: "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and devious lips put far from you. Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you" (vs 24-25).

That is, you're not going to look upon those

things which are the evil of the world. You're going to focus on God on the Kingdom of God, upon your calling. It says:

Verse 26: "Ponder the path of your feet, and all your ways *will be* established. Do not turn to the right hand nor to the left; remove your foot from evil" (vs 26-27).

Brethren, we need to recognize that if we're putting in due diligence to watching and guarding the door of our mind, we're going to be walking in the way of Truth and of righteousness and not falling prey to the ways of the world.

We'll cover some important aspects of diligence vs non-diligence. This is part of the Olivet prophesy where Christ is revealing to the apostles about the time of the end, and is focused on the Church, upon those people who have been called out of the world to be part of the Kingdom of God.

You are well aware of the three parables that are in Matt. 25. You know what they are: The five wise and five foolish virgins, the profitable servant and the unprofitable servant, and then we have the goats and the sheep. Each one of these parables, in one sense, is part of a separation that God is performing. He's separating those who have the makings of entering into the Kingdom of God and those who do not.

Another way of looking into Matt. 25 is to recognize the ones who are not achieving the Kingdom of God are not putting in diligence to achieve the Kingdom. They're not putting in the effort, the work, the full strength of their mind and their focus on growing in the character of God and becoming more like God through the Holy Spirit.

Let's understand what God means. Again, God calls us and gives us His Holy Spirit, but we have work to do. We have to apply the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Matthew 25:2: "And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. The ones who were foolish took their lamps, *but* they did not take oil with them" (vs 2-3).

We know the story. The five foolish virgins did not have an adequate supply of oil, which represents the Holy Spirit. They were not diligent in replenishing the Holy Spirit in their lives:

- through prayer
- through study
- through practicing
- through working and building good works
- through the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

They were not working to renew the Holy Spirit, which God gives to those who obey Him!

They were called and when they went to their vessels to get extra oil, there was none. They asked of the others, the wise virgins, 'Give us some of your oil.' They said, 'No, we can't do that. Go and buy for yourselves.' They went out to buy and when they came back, what did Christ say to them?

Verse 11: "And afterwards the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But He answered *and* said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you'" (vs 11-12).

That's quite a profound statement! So, the unwise and foolish virgins:

- did not have Christ in them
- did not have the Holy Spirit
- did not have the characteristics of one who is full of the Holy Spirit

God did not recognize them!

Verse 13: "Watch, Therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming."

Let's look at the Laodiceans because they have exactly the same problem. They're not being diligent in seeking the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 3:15: "I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot..." (vs 15-16)—*not too excited, not being worked up very much about the Kingdom of God. You're kind of lackadaisical!*

"...I will spew you out of My mouth. For you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (vs 16-17).

Why? *They were not putting in full effort!* They were not putting in the work that they needed to be doing to recognize that they needed a closer, personal, relationship with Jesus Christ to have the Holy Spirit in full measure!

Verse 18: "I counsel you... [Christ says here] ...to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed... [the white garments of righteousness] ...and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous... [be diligent, put in full measure, do the work] ...and repent" (vs 18-19).

I'm adding a few words to the Scripture, but Christ says we need to be zealous and put in full effort.

The profitable and the unprofitable servant: The unprofitable servant, what did he do? *He buried his talent in the ground!* That talent is what God provides through the Holy Spirit so that a person can grow and produce fruit, be able to develop character and develop the true riches of the Holy Spirit. Well, this person chose not to develop his talent and he buried it in the ground. ***God expects a return on His investment!*** He gives us His Holy Spirit and he expects us to use that to build, to grow and to develop more of the mind of Christ and the very character that He wants us to have. If we're not going to do that, then we are not being diligent, and we are falling short. We must be diligent, brethren in using God's Spirit and using the very thing that He gives us:

- to grow in character
- to produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit
- to show God the increase

That's what God wants us to have. We have to be diligent. God expects us to grow and to produce fruit.

Matthew 13:23 speaks about the sower of the seed: "But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold *and* another thirtyfold."

We can see here that God wants us to take the ground that we have, the field that we are working in and He wants us to develop fruit, produce. Depending upon your field, you may be able to develop a hundred, sixty or even thirty, but do the best that you can with the soil, with whatever the field is that you have to work in. ***Do your best, your utmost to be diligent*** and out there with the hoeing, the weeding and the watering, spiritually, so that you can produce a bountiful crop for Jesus Christ.

Finally, with the sheep and the goats, I'm going to make this a little bit abbreviated. Anyway, we understand the sheep and the goats. The goats did not understand the love of God. They didn't understand that in the love of neighbor and those who are in need. You go through this particular parable and Christ pointed out that those who have needs, the sheep provided the needs for those who had needs through love compassion and understanding. But the goats didn't see any needs. They didn't see were they could serve and provide the needs of others, because they weren't looking,

because they were blind through their own selfishness. Consequently, they were not being diligent in serving the needs of others. God wants us to be diligent in showing love and compassion to others by helping them wherever we can and serving them.

We can see that aspect expanded and we can understand what this parable is really showing regarding that the goats failed to have the love of God and to be able to serve the needs of the brethren and those who were around them.

1-John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren. The one who does not love *his* brother is dwelling in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling within him" (vs 14-15). John is being very clear, here, in terms of attitude of 'loving our brother as we love ourselves.'

Verse 16: "By this *very act* we have known the love of God because He laid down His life for us: and we ourselves are to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his feelings of compassion from him, how can the love of God be dwelling in him? My little children, we should not love in word, nor with *our* tongues; rather, *we should love* in deed and in Truth" (vs 16-18).

The aspect here of the goats: The sheep understood the love of God, the love of brethren and they served the needs of others, but the goats did not. They will not achieve the Kingdom of God. They won't because they weren't diligent in loving the brethren.

2-Pet. 1 is one you're familiar with this and it's one that we all need to read periodically, because it shows that if we're doing what we need to be doing in our lives with diligence, that we can have confidence in God and confidence that we can achieve the Kingdom.

2-Peter 1:3: "According as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue; through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature..." (vs 3-4). *That's in this life!* We can take on the Divine nature in this life by taking on the nature of Christ.

"...having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. And for this very reason also, having applied all diligence..." (vs 4-5). Maximum effort, full effort, striving for the Kingdom of God

with all your might, with all of your soul, with all of your being—**full diligence!**

"...besides, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge.... [here we see the building process that Peter describes] ...And to knowledge... [we build] ...self-control; and to self-control, endurance; and to endurance, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly love; and to brotherly love, the love of God.... [here it goes on to point out]: ...For if these things exist and abound in you, they *will* cause you to be neither lacking effort nor lacking fruit in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the one in whom these things are not present is *spiritually* blind... [not diligent, not applying full effort] ...so short-sighted *that* he has forgotten that he was purified from his old sins. For this reason, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure; because if you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time. For in this way, you will be richly granted an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (vs 5-11).

This shows above all else, the importance of applying diligence in your life and applying diligence in my life. We all want to make it to the Kingdom of God. God is merciful! He's working with us! We have our part to play. *But:*

- if we let down
- if we become lazy and slothful
- if we are not putting in the effort of prayer and study
- if we are not doing those things we ought to be doing

we may very well fall short, as Matt. 25 shows!

God wants us to put in maximum effort, zealously seeking His Kingdom, doing those things that are pleasing in His sight, so that we may be fully prepared for the role that God has for us in His Family!

We can have confidence that God will complete His process. *We need to put in the effort, the hard work, the due diligence,* so that in the end we can hear the words from Jesus Christ, '***Well done faithful servant. Enter in to the joy of the Kingdom.***'

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2-Peter 3:13-14
- 2) Matthew 7:13-14
- 3) Proverbs 10:4
- 4) Proverbs 12:24
- 5) Proverbs 6:4-10
- 6) Ecclesiastes 9:10

- 7) Hebrews 11:6
- 8) Psalms 119:1-4
- 9) 2-Timothy 2:15
- 10) 1-Thessalonians 5:17
- 11) Proverbs 4:23-27
- 12) Matthew 25:2-3, 11-13
- 13) Revelation 3:15-19
- 14) Matthew 13:23
- 15) 1-John 3:14-18
- 16) 2-Peter 1:3-11

Also referenced: Book:
Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

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