

Fulfilling God's Will & Purpose in Our Christian Lives

Roger Kendall—July 29, 2017

This is a very comprehensive topic and I can tell you that I'm not going to cover all of the aspects of this subject. This will take many, many messages to really go into this. I want to focus on this because on our journey to the Kingdom of God, we need to continually recognize what God's will is for us personally, but also for the Church and basically what our future is in terms of the purpose that God has called us for.

It's a subject that is very intriguing and hopefully we'll have some time to have an open, interactive discussion, questions and answers regarding this. There's so much that one could put into this particular topic. God's will and God's purpose, where is it expressed? *It's expressed in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation!*

An interesting thing is that God basically reveals His will, but we have to search it out. It's 'here a little, there a little' and we have to go through the Scriptures and be able to comprehend exactly what it is; not exactly, but the comprehensive aspect of what God would have us be doing:

- serving Him
- serving one another
- traveling in our journey to the Kingdom

Why I focused on this is for two reasons.

1. while at the Elder's Conference this year, Fred basically focused on the general condition of the Church, the Church of God in general—and our need, as God's people:
 - to stay focused
 - to be able to stay strong in faith
 - to be able to endure the trials and difficulties that we face
2. to really stay close to God
 - in prayer and study
 - to be recognizing that in these uncertain times that we're living we really don't know what tomorrow will bring

It's always been true, but especially now in world events and the situation in this country, as we see and recognize the turmoil, the difficulties and the struggles and also the various activities of various countries that we are in turbulent times as far as the world is concerned.

We are living in the end-times. We know that being the period preceding the second coming of Christ. It's important:

- that we don't let down
- that we don't become complacent

- that we don't become weary of our journey

It's always a message to us to be zealous and to be seeking God's will and His purpose. That's why it's important to always come back to this particular aspect.

We need to always put God first in our lives. That's something that Fred focused on several times. That was a problem that the various Churches of God had in the book of Revelation, in particular the Church at Ephesus, 'leaving their first love.' Always focus on God, His will and His purpose and put Him first in all that we do and all that we work toward. That's a purpose and will. Every time in various Scriptures you'll find that there is a part and parcel of God's will and purpose on our journey to the Kingdom.

A key Scripture that points out what our focus continually needs to be: focus on the Kingdom of God and to be seeking God's righteousness.

Matthew 6:33: "But *as for* you, **seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...**" This word 'seek' has the connotation in the Greek to mean *to seek and to keep on seeking*. In other words, this is:

- an ongoing seeking
- striving to find
- to search out
- to keep on striving for the Kingdom of God

Not only to acquire salvation, but also now to grow in His righteousness, the Holy, righteous character of God.

This whole section here is dealing with being anxious about the physical things that we need in life. So, what Christ is telling us here is:

Verse 34: "Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day *is* the evil of that *day*." What we need to focus on is to **strive within our lives to seek God's will and His purpose!** That's really what we're called to do.

Rom. 12 is dealing with God's will and purpose. Going along with what we just read that we're to seek the Kingdom of God, but Paul tells us:

Romans 12:2: "Do not **conform** yourselves to this world..." This has the connotation that you kind of *fit in, you try to go along with and be part of*.

"...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (v 2). That's a very big topic that could fill several sermons.

- be transformed
- be focusing on changing
- be focusing on renewing your spirit daily so that you can:
 - ✓ be more like God
 - ✓ think more like He thinks
 - ✓ act more like He does
- get rid of this fleshy body that is:
 - ✓ focused on self
 - ✓ focused on doing what it wants

Rather than doing God's will and purpose!

Notice what Paul says, "...in order that you may **prove what is well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God**" (v 2). The emphasis here is:

- How do we do this?
- What is God's will?

Again, this is a very broad topic and I'm going to be covering some of these aspects. The key thing is that we do this by **setting our heart on God**:

- to love Him
- to be devoted to His purpose
- to be focused on what it is that God would have us be doing so that we can
 - ✓ build His character
 - ✓ be more like Him

There's a purpose behind that. Why is that? *We all know that **God is preparing us for eternal life!*** God is preparing us to rule under Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. That's the message of the Feast of Tabernacles, but also something that we need to keep in mind. There's a great, mighty and glorious purpose that God has revealed to us about the future. It's always tremendous to be able to comprehend and understand what that is. If we keep that in our mind on a daily basis:

- it gives us encouragement
- it gives us focus
- it gives us a light for the future

—*which basically is encouraging*, rather than to consider all of the negative, terrible wretched things that are going on in the world.

There are four elements that we need to keep in mind in order to know and to fulfill God's will:

1. Loving God with all your might

- Why is that important as far as God's will? *If we don't love God, if we don't really love Him with all our heart!*
- Why do we care about His will and His purpose?

It goes together. We need to love God so that we can do His will and His purpose. We realize that we want to please God. We want to work toward doing what He wants us to accomplish.

2. Obeying God from the heart

We come to love God, to know God and then we need to *obey* God:

- walking in His commandments
- keeping His laws, statutes and judgments

Being able to incorporate those into our lives as a way of life, as a way of living!

3. Understand God's Word

That's where God's will and purpose is found; we need to understand the Scriptures. We need to realize that through the Holy Spirit that God has given us, the Holy Spirit being upon us gives us not only the ability to know the Truth, but to be able to understand it and to be able to practice it. That's important to understand.

So, understanding God's Word and applying it in our lives work hand-in-hand.

4. Submission to God in humility

If you're not humble and pride comes into our lives... If you're full of pride, you're basically are looking to yourself. You're not looking to what God thinks. Therefore, it's a negative element that will prevent you from knowing God's will and purpose.

We can read a very important section dealing with pride and staying close to God, realizing that we need to seek God daily.

James 4:6: "But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, 'God sets Himself against the proud...'" That's all through the Psalms and Proverbs and various sections. We can find that God sets Himself against the proud, because the proud basically defy God; they're contrary to God. It says that the ways of man, in his own mind, is to serve himself.

"...but He gives grace to the humble" (v 6). Humbleness, of course, is *meekness*. It's being *gentle* and *kind*, but also not having an expanded idea of your self-importance. In other words, you recognize that you need God daily. Therefore, we look to God:

- to protect
- to provide
- to watch over us

Verse 7: "Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you..." (vs 7-8).

We tap the first act toward drawing to God, and He will draw near to us. God looks to us for that. Here we can see that every verse here is dealing with **God's will and God's purpose** for us.

"...Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded! Be grieved and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and *your* joy into mourning" (vs 8-9).

Sighing and crying over the sins of this world is something that we need to be aware of and looking for the return of Christ.

Verse 10: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you." We're looking at this element of humility and really how important it is in order to know God, to worship Him, and to know His will.

Matt. 6:10 is part of the model prayer and there it says to pray not that your own will, but God's 'will be done in heaven as it is on earth.'

God says to pray that God's will be done, but **God will show and reveal His purpose and His will for us** in the Scriptures. He gives us, literally, a lifetime to search out, to study the Scriptures, to know His will and His purpose. Today, I'm not going to be giving you all the elements of His will and purpose, but it's something that we need to continually search out and to recognize that **we need to be in synchronization with God and what He's doing!**

The question that I have for you in dealing with God's will is:

- Why did He call you?
- Why did He call me?

It's an interesting question, because I know that you've thought about this: Concerning all the billions in the planet today, **He's called the few for a very specific purpose! It's a personal calling!**

He didn't just throw out some dice. He didn't just say, 'I just threw that and something happened that it just dropped on your name and number.' No! **It was a personal calling!** He's called us for a glorious purpose. The glory of God is upon us and will be in the future:

- that we should be called the children of God
- that we should serve and be with God forever
- that we have a future in serving God and doing His will

Again, it all ties together. God's purpose and His will is tied into our calling and to our future.

Rom. 8 is very inspiring and very helpful to understand this bigger aspect of God's will and purpose for us.

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God." Here's a condition in being *a son* of God, in that we are being led by God's Spirit.

Verse 15: "Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father.'"

This is an endearing term. This is a loving, close, personal, aspect of our relationship with God the Father. 'Abba' means *papa, daddy*, Whose love for us is expressed in so many ways, as a father loves his children.

Verse 16: "The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit... [the spirit in man] ...*testifying* that we are *the* children of God." How did that testify? Because as we live our lives out, we manifest:

- God's will
- His purpose
- His character
- His love

That gives glory to God! It testifies of God!

Verse 17: "Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him."

A tremendous verse showing that the future out there is just so tremendous and so awesome that we cannot begin to really recognize what God has in store for us. '*The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, what God has in store for those who love Him.*' That's absolutely true! Indeed, we're co-heirs with Christ and we have the universe out there to think about. What does God have in store for us?

Verse 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God" (vs 18-19).

In every Scripture we see God's purpose and His vision. We see His purpose and His will. It's throughout the Scriptures. Indeed, it's a wonderful thing that God has in store for us.

There is a lengthy section here in Eph. dealing with the personal element of God calling us.

Also, calling us according to His will and to His purpose.

Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ." What a tremendous verse that God is surely blessing us with spiritual and physical blessings in this life.

Verse 4: "According as He has **personally chosen us** for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love." Reflecting back to what we just read Matt. 6:33, we are to be growing in the righteousness of God; we are to be Holy and righteous.

Verse 5: "Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will to *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace... [grace upon grace] ...wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*; in Whom we have redemption..." (vs 5-7).

We are bought back, we are restored and we're given opportunities to walk in Truth and righteousness through the Holy Spirit.

"...through His blood... [that covers our sins] ...*even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He has made to **abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence**" (vs 7-8)—*thorough the Spirit!* But it takes us:

- to do the studying
- to look into it
- to unravel
- to understand

We have our part in this accomplishing wisdom and Truth in our lives.

Verse 9: "Having made known to us the mystery of His own will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself; that in *the* *divine* plan for the fulfilling of *the* times..." (vs 9-10).

God has appointed seasons. He has appointed times and He's fulfilling it. The prophesies of the Scriptures are going to be fulfilled. As Fred says, 'Not in the minimum, but in the maximum.'

Those are things that are His purpose. For what reason? *He is establishing a family! He's establishing a Kingdom that's going to go on all through eternity!* My, oh my! What a future that lies ahead!

"...He might bring all things together in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things

upon the earth; *yes*, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated **according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will**" (vs 10-11).

That's the third time Paul talks about will and purpose. This is a section that deals with this. Are we truly striving to do that? *I think we are!* This is in our heart and mind. It's a very broad topic, but one that we need to appreciate; focusing on:

- What is God's will for you?

Not just in the 'big picture' but personally:

- What has He developed in you?
 - ✓ your gifts
 - ✓ your talents
 - ✓ your abilities

All that that entails in terms of what His plan for the future is!

As far as the condition in the world today, the Apostle Paul describes the general condition of the world, here in the end-time:

2-Timothy 3:1: "Know this also, that in *the* last days perilous times shall come." We can look out and see what's going on in the world. We know that we are on the edge of so many perilous situations, but yet, God says 'Do not be anxious for anything, trust in Me.'

Verse 2: "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, braggarts... [so much you could talk about] ...proud. blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection... [truly self-centered; no natural love] ...implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, despisers of those who are good, betrayers, reckless, egotistical, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (vs 2-4).

We see the world today has truly thrown God out of the picture. They are more concerned about self, their own pleasures, their own desires, not focused on God's will and purpose at all. That will change. The times we're living in are truly 'in the days of Noah.' A kind of an evil, wickedness, violence and focusing on self.

One of the things that Fred brought out in the conference, too, was that one of the key elements of why people may go astray from the Truth of God, is that they begin to focus on themselves, self-focus:

- What about me?
- What about my future?
- What this?
- What about that?

When we start focusing on ourselves and then, removing God from the picture, we're just

concerned about self, then we lose touch with what God is doing in our lives. God is there to provide for us and to lead us and to help us to go the right way.

We're to 'come out of this world and we're to be separate from it.' In 2-Cor. 6 Paul goes into that in greater detail, that we're not to be part of this world, because this world is not going God's way at all.

2-Corinthians 6:14: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common?..."

Being yoked to someone in the world, whether it be in business, perhaps in marriage, or perhaps in some other arrangements, it basically ties you down to the things of the world. You're not free to be totally in charge of things. Therefore, you're inhibited in that sense. So don't, if all possible, be yoked with unbelievers.

Many come into the Church and their mates are not converted, that's another thing. Once you are in the Church, it's not a good idea to marry somebody outside the Church. I think we understand why that's the case.

"...For what do righteousness and lawlessness have in common? And what fellowship *does* light have with darkness?" (v 14).

God's way is the way of light. Satan's way is the way of darkness, the way of evil, of wickedness. God's way is the way of Truth, righteousness, good things of success and true happiness.

We can't have one foot in the Church and foot in the world. We know that. That's not God's will. ***God's will is that we be thoroughly entrenched, focused and zealous*** for what God is doing within the Church and within us individually.

Verse 16: "And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols?..."

This a big one! The temple of God, that's us, brethren. ***We are the temple of the Most High God!*** Indeed, we cannot allow idols to come into our mind. Anything that you place in greater importance before God in your mind, that becomes an idol in your mind. If there's ***anything that you put in your life ahead of God, that's an idol!*** That's something that is a problem that Christ brings out in the messages to the churches, which I'll be going through in a little bit. We're the temple of the Holy God. Therefore, we are to 'be Holy and righteous.

"...For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: 'I will dwell in them and walk in *them*... [God's not going to 'dwell in us' unless we are striving to be Holy and righteous] ...and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.... [a

close personal group of people He's called out of this world] ...Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,' says *the* Lord..." (vs 16-17).

- to be sanctified
- to be separate
- to be Holy
- to be filled with the righteousness of God
- to not be part of what's in this world

Verse 18: "And I shall be a Father to you, and **you shall be My sons and daughters,**' says *the* Lord Almighty."

This is God's will for us that we be His sons and daughters. What a tremendous future. We are sons and daughters now, not yet born, but we have been begotten. We are the children of God developing *in the womb of the Church* as we look to the day of the resurrection. Because of these promises, Paul writes:

2-Corinthians 7:1: "Now then, beloved, since we have these promises, we should purge ourselves from every defilement of *the* flesh and *the* spirit, perfecting Holiness in *the* fear of God." That is a tremendous Scripture in terms of what it entails:

- purging out unrighteousness
- purging out the sin
- purging out all that is not of God

That is a challenge! This is a tremendous challenge for us. With God's Spirit and with consistency, this is the struggle that we fight against:

- the flesh
- the world
- Satan the devil
 - ✓ so that we might be pure and Holy
 - ✓ so that we might be righteous

There's a purpose behind this: Holiness and the fear of God purposes that we are going to rule under Christ in the Kingdom! ***We're developing the character, the very nature of God now so we can be more effective in ruling with Christ in the Kingdom!***

This is a tremendous section. We need to be growing in Holiness, overcoming sin, growing in the very character of God. Messages have been given on this. This is just reminding you that this is what we need to be doing.

Rev. 3 deals with the message to the Laodiceans. This is the end-time Church, or the attitude in some cases, of what is happening within the Churches of God at the end-time. Christ describes many problems, issues and sins that need to be dealt with. You're very familiar with this.

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot" (vs 14-15). They were *not* zealous! They were lukewarm, something that *we need to guard against in our own minds and attitudes!*

Verse 16: "So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." God is not pleased with this at all. This is something that He's very upset at His people in this era.

Verse 17: "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."

There's so much in here to be discussed, but the key thing is that *they weren't doing God's will; they were not fulfilling His purpose!* They were on a tangent. They were 'in the world' to a large degree. Maybe they were physically wealthy and rich, but they were spiritually poor and blind, not seeing their own faults and issues that needed to be dealt with. They surely lacked God's character. These are things that needs to be a call to repentance.

Verse 18: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich... [spiritually rich] ...and white garments so that you may be clothed... [righteous] ...and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see."

- that we might *see* the light
- that we might *understand* more deeply, God's Word
- that we might *repent* of our sins

Verse 19: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (vs 19-20).

They were so off on a tangent that Christ says He's on the outside knocking; showing that this is the time of His return, but also the fact that we need to have Christ in our hearts. He needs to be in us. We need to be showing and reflecting that presence by the way we live.

That's another purpose we have, because we are the 'light of the world, and the salt.' (Matt. 5_[transcriber's correction]). If we're the salt and the light, that means that we are elements that God's is now providing to this earth *to give Him glory*, in that we can *show God's righteousness:*

- to this world

- to those that God may be calling
- to those who truly might be seeking God

All of this is clearly seen here. There's much that we need to recognize.

We need to take this warning and apply it to ourselves. These elements could come upon us and we need to recognize that:

- we need to be hot
- we need to be zealous
- we need to be hot and passionate in all that we're doing

I know it's so difficult, because this world is just so depressing and so down in all that's going on. It's so important that we focus on His will and His purpose. When we do that we're going to be doing what God would have us be doing. Many in the world and maybe many in the Church think that they're doing God's will and purpose. Yet, they're not!

Matthew 7:16: "You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit" (vs 16-17).

He's pointing out that one of the responsibilities that we have as being a disciple of Jesus Christ is to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5):

- love
- joy
- peace
- kindness
- gentleness
- faithfulness
- patience
- meekness
- self control

All of those fruits! God desires that we produce abundant fruit. Notice what happens for those who are not producing fruit, or producing bad fruit, are corrupt. The question being is, they're going to be fuel for the fire if they do not produce good fruit.

Verse 19: "Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits" (vs 19-20)—an outward expression of God's character in us. That's what those fruits are. They're an outer manifestation of our faith, our trust in God and looking to God.

Verse 21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; **but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who is in heaven.**"

That is the key. We pray in our prayer daily, 'Thy will be done.' Indeed, doing God's will is part of our calling, part of our responsibility.

Verse 22: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?'" In other words, they did through a lot of actions, they did a lot of things, but:

- Did they truly have God's will in mind?
- Were they serving themselves?
- Did they really love God?
- Did they love others as they should?

Verse 23: "And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you....'" Even though they professed the name of Christ, even if they were doing what they thought were good works, Christ said, 'I never knew you.' He did not see Himself in them. Christ was not in them. Just as the Laodiceans were getting an attitude, getting away from Christ, getting away from God the Father.

"...Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.'.... [sin] ...Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them..." (vs 23-24). You hear the Word of God and you practice it. God's will and purpose again, all through. Everywhere you see to *practice God's will and purpose and His Word.*

"...I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock" (v 24). Who is the Rock that we build on? *Jesus Christ!* He is our Rock. He is our foundation (1-Cor. 3).

Verse 25: "And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (vs 25-27).

This is really kind of related some what to the 'five foolish and the five wise virgins.' Here we have wisdom vs foolishness. We do know that of the ten virgins in Matt. 25, five were wise and five were foolish. We may not have a chance to focus on that, but again, the same idea. It does deal with doing God's will and fulfilling His purpose.

What does God require of us? We're reading through these different verses, we can see what He does, but it's really shown in a couple of places. In the Old Testament we can find key Scriptures dealing with New Testament theology.

Deuteronomy 10:12: "And now, Israel... [we can put our name in there] ...what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in **all** His ways and to love Him...[to revere Him, to be devoted to God] ...and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (vs 12-13). *Absolutely!*

God's commandments and God's way of life produces blessings! It produces good things! Indeed, as we serve and love God we are fulfilling God's purpose and His will. Of course, we can read this in the New Testament:

Matthew 22:37: "And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" It's almost like a reiteration of what we just read in Deut.

Verse 38: "This is *the* first and greatest commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (vs 38-39).

This is focusing on the love of God. You need to love God, to love our neighbor and to love one another as a prerequisite of being in the Kingdom of God. Love is the essence of what God is. It's His very nature, His very character. God has to come first.

When we counsel individuals who are seeking baptism, this is a Scripture we turn to because we want them to understand that they need to 'count the cost.' They need to realize what God expects from them and that they cannot turn back into the world. ***This is their opportunity for salvation and they cannot go back in to the world!*** This is the commitment that they need to make, right here.

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." While this word 'hate' is not the element of hatred, The Greek means to *love less his father and mother.* In other words, they're second to your love of God. I'm not explaining that very well. ***God comes first,*** and your family, your job and anything else after this is ***second!*** Important, yes, ***but God is first in everything:***

- in what you do
- how you conduct your life
- ahead of your job
 - Does God want you to love your family?
 - Does God want you to love your wife?
 - Does God want you to love your children?

- *Of course!*

That's not what this means. **God is first in everything!** *That's what this means and even your own life!*

This refers to the fact that we may be called upon to lay down our lives for our belief, for our faith. As we come to looking ahead to the time of tribulation and trial upon the earth, **we need to be able to recognize that we need to be ready to give up our lives rather than turn back in to the world!**

We need to be sure about things that individually, maybe personally, we could be thinking about.

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As we all can see this is a broad subject and one of the elements is that maybe it's a little vague in terms of really focusing on the particulars and the specifics, but that's what God has given us His Bible for that we can search it out and be able to apply it to ourselves. The key thing is to recognize that there's a tremendous range of things that we need to be doing and aware of as we study God's Word. Yet, it's so important that we truly pray that God's will be done.

Sidebar: One of the things that Fred has mentioned is that it's possible for individuals in the Church of God to actually put the fellowship and the social activities at services ahead of the sermon or the fellowshiping with God through His message.

In other words, I go to services just because of the fellowship. That, he said, is not good because *that becomes an idol in your mind*. You're putting that before the primary purpose for Sabbath services. It's not the fellowship—don't get me wrong—it's fellowshiping with God and hearing His message preached. With that is the fellowship. What did Paul say in Heb.? *'Do not hinder yourselves from coming together,' fellowshiping and being together on the Sabbath!* It all works hand-in-hand, but the key thing he brought out is, **God comes first in all things!**

I look in my own life and I can see in subtle ways where I haven't surrendered everything to God. As you get older, I think you become wiser. One thing, you see yourself better and then you begin to say, 'Oh, no!' Then you realize just how much more we have to work on. That's the way it goes. God loves us. He's helping us.

One of the things I haven't really gone into is what we would call the collective, greater, mission of the Church. The purpose of the Church, the 'ecclesia,' *the called out ones* who are basically the spiritual body of Christ. That's the Church; a spiritual body being prepared for a tremendous

purpose. That Body of Christ, the body of believers who God is molding and shaping so that we might truly be sons and daughters of God.

During Christ's ministration He preached for three and one-half years the Gospel of Salvation. He called twelve apostles and many other faithful disciples to form the nucleus of the New Testament Church. Receiving the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in 30_{A.D.} they basically became the core, the center of the Church by which God wanted to see growth.

Before He returned to the Father, He gave the Church the responsibility of preaching the Gospel to the world, baptizing those who were seeking Him and wanting to have a relationship with God and also:

- to be a witness to the world
- to be a light
- to be the salt
- to give Him glory

We can read that in Matt. 5. You can put down these Scriptures:

- Acts 1:8—God says we've been called to be witnesses to the world
- Mark 16:15-16—the church is to preach the Gospel

Here we see what we call the commission to the Church; Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, '**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.**'.... [that's a pretty profound statement] ...therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age" (vs 18-20). Interesting set of Scriptures; it's pretty direct, but:

- Where are the details?
- Is this a little bit vague? *No, it's clear!*
- How to accomplish this?

A lot of times we read these Scriptures and they're not specific. They're not focused on giving us the details. That's up to us to go out and search it out and to be able to understand what's being said. There's so much in these verses.

This is the commission to the Church. Sometimes many in the Church would say, 'These are the responsibilities of the ministry, not of the general members of the Body of Christ. Yet, God reveals that we all have a part in all of these aspects:

- witnessing
- being a light

- salt of the earth
- to help other people to be called, as we have personal interactions with people

As far as baptizing them, that's something that the ministry does to make sure the person:

- is truly seeking God
- has truly repented
- has counted the cost

basically, it comes down:

- through our tithes and offerings
- through our prayers
- through our devotion to God

That we all have an integral part in the greater commission of the Church.

I know that in Worldwide Church of God, there was a time—I even hate to say it—that we were called 'to pay, to pray and to stay.' That's really kind of a naïve and narrow way of thinking. Much, much more that because our relationship with God is a personal relationship. It's not based on an organization, in that sense.

Christ is the Head of the Church, we're part of that Spiritual body and it's not a mast-head of an organization. We're faithful to God, to Jesus Christ and to others that we serve and work with.

Reviewing the key aspects of God's will and His purpose:

First: We have been called to be part of God's spiritual family. That is really the top of the relationship. That's God's purpose and His will is that we accomplish that through His help, through His Holy Spirit; that we can be sons and daughters of the Most High God for all eternity.

Second: He's called us so that we can be made perfect in Jesus Christ through the love of God, that we can be made perfect. We can read:

Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect." Also, we could turn to other Scriptures where it's talking about growing in the perfection of God's love.

Third: We've been called to do His will and fulfill His purpose. In other words, we've been called to do that which God requires of us to fulfill His purpose so that we can be ruling under Christ in the Kingdom. We're 'firstfruits': those who are prepared ahead of time for a very unique and special purpose, that is to serve under Christ.

Let's face it, God can do anything, but God appears to reveal to us that He needs our help to be able to bring salvation to the world. To me, I think that's what the Scriptures reveal. He could have

done it another way, but He's chosen us for that personal reason to serve:

- we are ambassadors for Christ
- we've been called to be a Holy people
- we've been called to be the royal priesthood

The more you look at this subject, the more you realize just how big and how incredible it is.

1-Peter 2:9: "But you *are* a chosen stock... [personally chosen] ...a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for a possession *of God*, that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues, Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people, but now *are the* people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy" (vs 9-10). What a tremendous Scripture this is. How in showing the very purpose of who and what we are as God's people.

We talked about growing in perfection in the love of God. I want to go to 1-John 4 because one of the critical elements in fulfilling God's purpose and His will is:

- to be filled with the love of God
- to be filled with love for one another
- to love our neighbors

God even says to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44^[transcriber's correction]). Love is an essence of what God is. This whole section in 1-John 4 is talking about the love of God, but just to pull this section out:

1-John 4:16: "And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and **the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him.**"

I want to stop there and spend some more time on this. Here we see a mutual indwelling based upon the love of God. It's through the love of God. It's through the love that He gives to us. The only reason we love God is because 'He first loved us,' changed our hearts and gave us His law and His commandments to be in our hearts.

Verse 17: "By this *spiritual indwelling*... [that's how it occurs] ...**the love of God is perfected within us**..." That's now, ongoing right now, ongoing perfection: the love of God in that we can serve God, love Him and love one another.

"...so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment..." (v 17). What does that mean? *That means that if we truly have the love of God in us and are reflecting that*, and are showing and producing the fruits of God's Spirit through that love, we will have no fear, no anxiety at the day of the resurrection, because we will be in the

resurrection! That's what this is talking about. Have confidence that we will be in the resurrection.

Verse 18: "There is no fear in the love of God; rather, perfect love casts out fear because fear has torment. And the one who fears has not been made perfect in the love of God."

Verse 11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another." The love of God is the key essence of all that we think, do and act upon. We just need to recognize that God's will is that we truly be like He is. {Note John 13:34-35}.

How are we to love each other? *We are to 'love each other as Christ loves us!'* That's quite a challenge but that's what we are to grow into—'to love each other as Christ loves us.' How does Christ love us? *He loves us with total devotion and love toward us!* We need to do the same. Brethren, there are many more things that I could bring up:

- Rom. 12:1 says that we are to be a 'living sacrifice' in service to one another.
- Gal. 6 says that we should 'not be weary of well doing,' serving brethren in love.
- Matt. 25:32-40 deals with that we are to truly be serving the brethren in love in all that we do—separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep who are serving God's brethren and not even knowing it.

That's what love does. When you're filled with the love of God, you're going to be out there doing it and it's like second nature; it's automatic. You're not sitting down thinking about your rewards, or this, or that, or the other. You're just doing it because it's part of who you are.

They said to Him, 'Father when did we do it to you?' And He said, 'You did it unto Me when you did it unto the least of my brethren.' Pretty awesome!

I want to close with Eph. 3, which is Paul's prayer to God for the brethren. It's powerful! I'm not going to read the whole thing.

Ephesians 3:14: "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man" (vs 14-16). O God, we pray for that. We need to be strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"—faith unto faith. We have the faith of Christ in us, so we in turn can have faith back to God.

Verse 18: "And that being rooted and **grounded in love**, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, and **to know** the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge; so that **you may be filled** with all the fullness of God" (vs 18-19).

There is the true desire of God! His will and His purpose for us that we may truly be 'filled with the fullness of God!'

It's a broad subject. Hopefully this has been helpful, inspiring and helping us to really, truly, appreciate our calling in a much greater, greater degree.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 6:33-34
- 2) Romans 12:2
- 3) James 4:6-10
- 4) Romans 8:14-19
- 5) Ephesians 1:3-11
- 6) 2-Timothy 3:1-4
- 7) 2-Corinthians 6:14, 16-18
- 8) 2-Corinthians 7:1
- 9) Revelation 3:14-20
- 10) Matthew 7:16-17, 19-27
- 11) Deuteronomy 10:12-13
- 12) Matthew 22:37-39
- 13) Luke 14:26
- 14) Matthew 28:18-20
- 15) Matthew 5:48
- 16) 1-Peter 2:9-10
- 17) 1-John 4:16-18, 11
- 18) Ephesians 3:14-19

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 6:10
- Galatians 5
- 1-Corinthians 3
- Matthew 25
- Acts 1:8
- Mark 16:15-16
- Matthew 5:44
- John 13:34-35
- Romans 12:1
- Galatians 6
- Matthew 25:32-40

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