

# In Pursuit of Righteousness

Roger Kendall—May 23, 2015

Welcome to Sabbath services today!

Being able to set a major goal in one's life, and achieving it after putting in a lot of work, diligence, effort and discipline brings a person a great deal of satisfaction. You make a goal and go for it, and when it comes it's just a great joy.

For some it may be getting a college degree and going on and getting a good paying job. Others it may be getting married and starting a family. What about planning and training for a marathon? That's a goal to set for yourself to be able to run 26.84 miles in a race.

Every one of these goals basically requires an individual to set his mind and focus on the goal, and to do the things that are required and to stay steadfast even in the time of challenges and obstacles. *In other words, you go for the goal!*

For us in God's Church, this very element that I'm speaking about applies to us. What is our primary goal in life? Is it not to achieve the Kingdom of God? To be with God the Father and Jesus Christ forever in His family?

We are the spiritual Family of God, and He's called us out of this world to prepare us for eternal life. He's calling us now, training us, helping us to understand our calling, the purpose of why we've been called.

The Day of Pentecost is a milestone for us, because it is really the goal that we are seeking. In other words, we are now going through the Church Era and on the Day of Pentecost, when it's fulfilled, Christ and God the Father will raise us up to be in His family. What a glorious time that this will be!

This Feast day is a *spiritual* harvest when the firstfruits of God will be raised up. These saints of God, who have been called by God, chosen and have remained faithful to the end of their lives.

This is in the midst of Christ taking on the Beast Power, Revelation 17:14: "These will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb shall overcome them... [the Christ returning as the glorious King] ...for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who *are* with Him *are* **called, and chosen, and faithful.**"

- *called* to repentance
- *chosen* through baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit
- *faithful*, not only staying steadfast with the Truth, but in obedience and *in the pursuit of righteousness*

All three of these aspects are important in order to be there on the Day of Pentecost; that is to be raised. These are qualifications for one who is to be a firstfruit, one who is to be successful. What a fantastic and glorious day that it will be that we will be standing on the Sea of Glass and we shall see God the Father and Jesus Christ face-to-face. Can you imagine that? *It's going to be just incredible!* I can't totally picture that in my mind, but I know that it's going to be truly awesome and incredible!

We will have the opportunity to rule and reign with Jesus Christ for a thousand years, and then after that all down through eternity.

Revelation 20:6: "Blessed and Holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." What a wonderful Scripture!

Perhaps the one verse that helps us to focus on our goal to reach the Kingdom of God and to be with Christ and God the Father is Matt. 6:33. This is one we're all familiar with, but I want to give a deeper insight into this Scripture. Matt. 6 is talking about the things that people seek for in the world, that is physical things that they need: food, clothing. But what Christ says to us the very called of God:

Matthew 6:33: "But *as for* you, **seek first the Kingdom of God...**" Top priority, there is nothing that will be greater in our lives than to be in the family of God.

"...**and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you." In other words, if you've got your priorities straight—your *spiritual* priorities—God will take care of the physical and the other elements that He knows we have need of. That's what Christ is telling us.

- the first part, the goal "...seek first the Kingdom of God..."
- the second part is to seek God's righteousness

The first part is the destination; the second part of this verse tells us *how* we are to achieve the goal! How to achieve to be in the first resurrection is to seek God's righteousness.

I'm going to talk about what it means to seek righteousness, and how to achieve it. The Scriptures are focused on this topic. I'm going to be covering only a few key Scriptures. You can do a Bible study on this. We have our part to play and

God has His part. Seeking Godly righteousness is what we need to focus on and recognize it.

What does it mean to be *seeking God's righteousness*? I think we all know. The Greek word talks about being just and righteous, being able to be upright in character. That's what righteousness means. For us it really means something much greater than that. It means that we are to achieve our destination by first acquiring the very mind and character of Jesus Christ.

To seek righteousness means that *we are seeking the very character and mind of our Savior Jesus Christ*. Brethren, we are to become like He is. We are to strive to overcome this human flesh, the world, the elements of the spiritual warfare that we fight.

- to grow
- to change
- to become like our Savior
  - ✓ in attitude
  - ✓ in actions
  - ✓ what we say
  - ✓ what we do
  - ✓ how we conduct our lives

We need to recognize, in doing that, we need to be developing the very fruits of God's Holy Spirit. Why is that? *The fruits of God's Holy Spirit that we develop in our lives is a manifestation that we are*

- converted
- striving on the path to the Kingdom of God *in the process we are*
  - producing fruit

—which is the essence of God's character, starting with love. You can read about the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23<sub>[transcriber's correction]</sub>).

Pursuing righteousness is focusing on developing the very mind and character and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Paul focused on this, and this is something we all understand at some level, but what I'm trying to say in this message is that this is something we need to be thinking about 24/7. This has to be something that we need to recognize that if we're going to stay on the path to the kingdom, we need to be focused on Christ, on growing and becoming more like He is.

Philippians 2:1: "Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of *the Spirit*, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions, **fulfill my joy, that you be of the same mind, having the same love...**" (vs 1-2). Whose mind is he focusing on? Is it agreeing with Paul's mind?

Verse 5: "Let this mind be in you..." Paul is saying to let these thoughts, these ideas be focused on the very nature and mind of Jesus Christ.

Verse 2: "...be of the same mind... [as our Savior] ...having the same love, being joined together in soul, minding the one thing. *Let* nothing *be* done through contention or vainglory... [pride and vanity] ...but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself" (vs 2-3).

Did Christ do that when He was here. He was the Son of God, Divine, and yet, He put humanity ahead of His own life. He laid His life down; He humbled Himself and took on the cross.

Verse 4: "Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others." This is talking about the nature of Christ that needs to be indwelling in us.

Verse 5: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus"—while He walked as a human being on the face of the earth. We cannot have a spiritual mind until the resurrection. But we can follow and imitate the very life that Christ did when He walked on the face of the earth.

Matthew 5:6—in the Beatitudes where Christ said: "Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It's a pursuit. We have to *strive* for righteousness. It doesn't come naturally to the human psyche, the human mind. That's completely foreign.

But just as we crave food when we're hungry, or we crave water when we're thirsty, Christ is saying that we should "...hunger and thirst after [My] righteousness..." Hunger after who and what I am and you "...shall be filled."

In the Old Testament we find a lot of New Testament theology. David was 'a man after His own heart.' David brings out the pursuit of righteousness:

Psalm 15:1: "LORD, who shall dwell in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Your Holy hill?" What David is asking here is who is going to make it into the Kingdom of God? Who is going to be given entrance into God's glorious presence? David answers the question:

Verse 2: "**He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness...**" We see how important this is in David's mind, that seeking and pursuing righteousness in ones life is a very important endeavor and we need to be pursuing.

"...and speaks the truth in his heart" (v 2). In other words, you speak the truth without adding a lot of *ifs, buts and maybes*. You speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth from the heart, from the inner being.

Verse 3: "He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a

reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and **does not change it**" (vs 3-4). In other words, this person who is waling uprightly and in righteousness does not divert from the path of righteousness and Truth: keeping God's laws and commandments, walking in the way of the Truth.

Paul gives an example about how some individuals sometimes can get off the track of seeking Godly righteousness, because they're seeking physical things in this world; the worldly riches. Paul is talking about individuals who may or may not be in the Church, but he's basically talking about:

1-Timothy 6:9: "For those who desire to become rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which cause men to sink into destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evils; *by* which some, *while* striving after *riches*, were seduced from the faith, and have impaled themselves with many sorrows" (vs 9-10).

What Paul is saying here is that these are the wrong kinds of fruits or riches that people should be after. We should be seeking the *spiritual riches of God!* He goes on to explain what he means:

Verse 11: "But you, O man of God... [speaking to Timothy] ...flee these things, and **pursue righteousness**, Godliness... [God's way, the way of conduct according to God's Scriptures] ...faith, love, endurance *and* meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith! Take hold of eternal life to which you were also called, and did profess a good profession in the presence of many witnesses" (vs 11-12). Here Paul is encouraging Timothy to focus not on the things of this world, but on the spiritual things of God: righteousness and truth.

Verse 14: "That you keep this commandment without fault *and* without rebuke until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." To be actively seeking God's Holiness in our lives— '**become Holy for I am Holy**' (1-Pet. 1:15-16<sub>[transcriber's correction]</sub>) That's what Christ said, and we need to recognize what this says and by keeping God's laws and commandment, by living by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

In order to do this, we must not only overcome the sin in our lives—sin is the unrighteousness—but we also need to build in Godly righteousness, the very character of God.

You can see that this is the message of the Days of Unleavened Bread. We put out the sin, the unrighteousness, and we put in the righteousness of God so that we in turn can live righteously. If we don't put it in, it's not going to be coming out of you

in a righteous way of life.

Brethren, we are become like Christ in all that we do, all that we speak, all that we inner act with other people, the way we conduct our lives.

- How do we do this?
- How do we put the laws of God the whole attitude of living righteously into our live?

The book of Ephesians is a wonderful book, but Eph. 4 really tells us in detail how we put this into practice. How we put the right way of God into righteousness in our lives.

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." Here we see the different positions of authority and responsibility within the Church of God.

Verse 12: "For the perfecting of the saints... [Why?] ...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ... [of which we all are a part] ...until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto **a perfect man**, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ" (vs 12-13).

What Paul is saying is that the ministry is there to help and guide so that the Body of Christ can grow into the fullness of God and His righteousness. Then Paul says to come out of the world, come of the way of your carnal living before.

Verse 21: "If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, according to *the Truth* in Jesus: That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man... [the carnal flesh with attitudes, actions, unrighteous acts] ...which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind." (vs 21-23). Notice that we talking about transforming our very mind; changing from something that we were to something that is truly righteous and good before God.

Verse 24: "And that you put on the new man..." We put on Christ. That means we think, act and conduct our lives as He did.

"...which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth. Therefore, let each one put away..." (vs 24-25). Paul gives some examples of putting out the unrighteous and putting in the righteousness, the Truth of God:

"...lies *and* speak the truth with his neighbor because we are members of one another. *When* you become angry, do not sin...." (25-26). Anger can lead to bitterness, hostility, hatred and even violence. Anger needs to be controlled. Emotionally we might get angry at something, but be careful.

“...Do not let the sun go down on your anger... [put away the anger before the sun sets] ...neither give place to the devil” (vs 26-27). Once you start thinking these thoughts of anger, bitterness, violent attitudes toward someone else, you’re giving place to the devil to come in to affect your thoughts. That’s where Satan starts with us. We get a thought and if it’s not in line with God’s Holy righteousness, Satan can slip in there and begin to influence your emotions: I am right; this is good. *NO!* We have to recognize that anger needs to be controlled.

Verse 28: “Let the one who stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor with *his* hands, working *at what is good*, so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need.” You go from taking to earning and giving back. In other words, you’re concerned about the well being of others. You’re giving to others who have need.

Verse 29: “Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification...” For building up; you’re building up another person; you don’t tear them down by accusing them and being critical of them.

“...that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not vex [grieve] the Holy Spirit of God by which you have been sealed for *the* day of redemption” (vs 29-30). We grieve the Spirit when we sin! Even though the Holy Spirit is within us, it grieves because we are going away from the way of God toward the flesh.

Verse 31: “Let all bitterness, and indignation, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you...” Just like the leaven that we throw out during the Days of Unleavened Bread, we get rid of all of this junk.

“...together with all malice... [and you replace it with]: ...and be kind *and* tenderhearted toward one another, forgiving one another, even as God has also in Christ forgiven you” (vs 31-32).

We see here a very good picture of how to live righteously. Throw out the bad and bring in the righteousness of Christ.

Transforming the mind is something that Paul brings out in Romans 12:1: “I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a **living** sacrifice... [not a dead one] ...Holy *and* well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service.” In other words, we sacrifice our time, our resources. We give of our love, all that we have for others, and to be Holy. Here, again, is the idea of walking in Holiness, and this is pleasing to God.

Verse 2: “Do not conform yourselves to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Focusing on the mental process that is going on, because the mind generates the thoughts, which generates the actions, which generates the attitudes, and the conduct of our lives. It all starts within the mind.

“...in order that you may prove... [establish] ...what *is* well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God” (v 2). This is a tremendous statement, transform your mind, go from the way of the world and to walk in Holiness.

Peter solidifies this very idea of walking in Holiness, 1-Peter 1:13: “For this reason, be prepared in your minds...” We see this focus on the mental capacity, the mind.

“...be self-controlled...” (v 13). Keep your emotions under control and recognize that you have to be under Christ’s control in order to walk in righteousness. This is a fruit of the Spirit.

“...*and* be fully hoping in the grace that will be brought to you at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not conform yourselves to the former lusts, *as you did* in your ignorance. But according as He Who has called you *is* Holy, **you yourselves also be Holy in all your conduct**; for it is written, ‘You be Holy because I am Holy’” (vs 13-16). Profound! Strong walking orders! That’s what God is telling us; to become like He is!

Verse 22: “Having purified your lives by obedience to the Truth...” That is exactly what happens when you walk in God’s way. You obey His commandments in love, serve other people and basically are focusing on keeping the commandments, both in the letter and in the Spirit. You then end up purifying your lives. You push out, push away, the things of the flesh, and you purify your lives what walking in the Truth.

“...unto unfeigned brotherly love through *the* Spirit, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (v 22). Not with some pretensions or false ideas, but with “...a pure heart.” God is a *heart-knowing God!*

In order to be righteous and Holy before God we must continually purge out the uncleanness that’s in our lives; purge out the things of the world and of the flesh.

2-Cor. 6 is a key area that we can read and begin to understand what it is that we need to be doing. 2-Corinthians 6:16: “And what agreement is *there between* a temple of God and idols? For **you are a temple of the living God**, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and **I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**’ What an expression of who and what we are. We have been

changed and we have the living God *in* us through His Spirit.

Verse 17: “Therefore... [because of this] ...come out from the midst of them... [those in the world who are living contrary to the laws of God and God’s way] ...and be separate,’ says *the Lord...*” Don’t be part of their way. John says to ‘love not the world, love not the lusts of the world.’

“...be separate... [completely away from the elements of the world] ...‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you” (v 17). These two verses actually focus on the very definition of what is sanctification, something that is made Holy. But also sanctification has other elements. *You separate yourself from sin, from the ways of the world and are walking in the Truth!* All dealing with sanctification, growing in the very righteousness of God.

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

2-Corinthians 7:1: “Now then, beloved, since we have these promises... [what Paul has just expounded on] ...we should purge ourselves from every defilement of *the* flesh and *the* spirit, perfecting Holiness in *the* fear of God.” This puts in with the context of what I’m saying today: in order to be Holy we must put out and cleanse ourselves from sin and the defilement of the flesh.

Brethren, after going through these Scriptures, if we look at the spiritual condition of the Laodicean Church (Rev. 3) it reveals that many people in the Church of God today may have reached a certain point or attitude in their lives where they think that they’ve grown enough. They think they’ve achieved enough righteousness in their lives and have reach a level by where they ‘have it made’ to make it into the Kingdom of God.

They may do this knowingly, or they may do it unknowingly. They may just come to a point where they start to coast and don’t work quite as hard as they used to in Bible study and prayer. We could go down a list of what they may or may not be doing.

In other words, they’ve become lukewarm! They’ve become self-confident, arrogant and they’re not inspired to continue to pursue righteousness. That takes work! A lot of work! We will see that we have to be aware that this could happen to us if we let it.

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, I will spew

you out of My mouth” (vs 15-16). We’re familiar with this Scripture. These messages to the Churches describe the various churches down through time, but also it describes elements that can be in the present Church of God.

Verse 17—this is what the Laodicean says: “For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’...” not just the physical things, but ‘I have no need for God anymore because I’ve reached a good happy level and I’ve got it made. I’ve finished my course.’

“...and you do not understand that you are **wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked**” (v 17). That’s quite a ray of defects!

Christ says, v 18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire... [the very character and righteousness of Christ] ...so that you may be rich; and **white garments...**” What do “...white garments...” represent?

Revelation 19:8: “And it was granted to her that she should be **clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.**”

This is seeking righteousness, seeking the right way to live, Revelation 3:18: “...so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see.” So that you may see your own spiritual condition, so that you know that you need to repent and change.

Verse 19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.”

Pursuing righteousness is an all time pursuit that we need to do, a top priority in our lives. Not just seeking the Kingdom of God, but to seek Godly righteousness. We need to put in the maximum effort, not the minimum. You don’t want to put in a mediocre life where you’re just kind of plodding along and just doing the minimum.

If we get to this feeling that we’re comfortable with the way of our spiritual life and we don’t really have to work too hard. ‘I can now rest and wait for the Kingdom of God.’ If that is our attitude, you’re going to be just like a tree that stops bearing fruit. What happens to a tree that stops bearing fruit? *It begins to die!* That’s exactly what will happen to us if we begin to take our attention off from growing in righteousness.

You never, never fill the vessel in us! It’s a continually ongoing process. God has given us this goal. Just like a tree that stops bearing fruit, we become useless and unprofitable to God.

Let’s notice what Christ taught, a warning to

all of us to be zealous and to grow, keeping our mind on the Kingdom and Jesus Christ

Luke 17:7: “But which of you having a servant plowing or shepherding will immediately say *to him when he comes in from the field*, ‘Come and sit down *and eat*’? Rather, will he not say to him, ‘Prepare what I may eat, and gird yourself, *and serve me while I eat and drink*; and afterwards you may eat and drink’? Is he thankful to that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. Likewise you also, **when you have done all the things that are commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do’**” (vs 7-10).

What does this tell us? *If we’re just living up to the minimum*—just keeping the letter of the Law with a few little spiritual things thrown in—*we’re unprofitable to God!* We have to beyond the call of duty! *We are obligated to go beyond just doing the minimum* of keeping God’s laws in the letter. ***We need to fulfill them to the maximum with God’s Holy Spirit in us!***

In conclusion, there’s a lot more you can add to this, but to pursue righteousness means that we are filling our lives with the fruits of God’s Spirit, living our lives as Christ did when He walked on this earth.

1-John 2:4: “The one who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. On the other hand, *if anyone is keeping His Word...* [above the commandments because the laws and commandments are only part] ...truly **in this one the love of God is being perfected...**” (vs 4-5). Is the love of God, the premium fruit of the Holy Spirit, is being perfected.

“...By this *means* we know that we are in Him.... [but also that He is in us] ...Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (vs 5-6).

Brethren, ***let us dedicate and be diligent to pursue God’s righteousness in our lives!*** Not only by overcoming the sin, but by continuing to grow and overcome and putting into us the very mind of Christ, the very attitudes, the very things that Christ did:

- how He loved the people
- how He loved the brethren

If we do this and are committing ourselves to doing righteousness, ***God the Father and Jesus Christ will be well-pleased and it will be Their good pleasure to grant us entrance into Their glorious kingdom!***

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 17:14
- 2) Revelation 20:6
- 3) Matthew 6:33
- 4) Philippians 2:1-2,5,2-5
- 5) Matthew 5:6
- 6) Psalm 15:1-4
- 7) 1 Timothy 6:9-12, 14
- 8) Ephesians 4:11-13, 21-32
- 9) Romans 12:1-2
- 10) 1 Peter 1:13-16, 22
- 11) 2 Corinthians 6:16-18
- 12) 2 Corinthians 7:1
- 13) Revelation 3:15-18
- 14) Revelation 19:8
- 15) Revelation 3:18-19
- 16) Luke 7:7-10
- 17) 1 John 2:4-6

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 5:22-23
- 1 Peter 1:15-16
- Matthew 4:4

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Transcribed: 7/13/15

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