

April 21, 2010

Dear Members, Co-Workers and Friends:

We recently observed the annual Passover and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, picturing, in Old Testament times, the death of the firstborn in Egypt, the physical salvation of the Israelites who had placed the blood of the lamb on the lintels and the door posts of their houses, and the exodus and deliverance of the Israelites from bondage. All of this was symbolic of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our spiritual salvation, and our deliverance today from the captivity of sin. As we abstain each year from physical leaven during the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are reminded of the need to remove spiritual leaven—sin—from our lives. This should be an ongoing process.

In a recent Editorial for our weekly Updates, titled, “Re-Commitment,” I wrote the following:

“Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are a time to examine ourselves and to make an effort to put sin out of our lives. In the Bible, leaven is many times compared with sinful, hypocritical and proud conduct. During the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, we are reminded of the physical and spiritual applications of sin and righteousness. The physical removal and avoidance of leavening, which we must not neglect, points to the spiritual and symbolical meaning, which is even more important not to neglect.

“Passover is a time to re-commit ourselves to our calling from God, and to stay engaged in the efforts that fulfill the purpose of our calling—to preach and publish as a witness the gospel of the Kingdom of God to this sick and dying world, prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

“Our efforts to put sin out of our lives are important, since this process helps us to draw closer to God. Sin acts as a barrier in our relationship with God, and especially at this time of year, we are reminded that we must be distancing ourselves from sin. Isaiah 59:2 says: ‘But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.’

“Since separation from God is the effect of sin, then the benefit of removing and abstaining from sin is that we can draw closer to God, and that He hears us as a result. Sin is our enemy, and we must recognize this and deal with it. We cannot ignore sin or attempt to sweep it under the rug, as it were; otherwise, sin will overpower us and the results will be devastating.

“To remove sin from our lives is of course not just a ‘once-a-year’ exercise, but it must be done on a continual basis, in order to maintain the positive effect of God hearing and answering us. We understand that it is through the Sacrifice of Christ that we obtain forgiveness of our sins...”

The physical exercises during the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread should lead to the spiritual exercise of continuously examining ourselves and removing sin from our lives, while replacing it with God’s righteousness. This requires us to distance ourselves from Satan and to draw closer to God, as we are admonished to do in James 4:8: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Within a few weeks, we will be celebrating the Feast of Pentecost. According to tradition, it was on that day when God pronounced from Mount Sinai the Ten Commandments to the Israelites. In the New Testament, it was on that day when God poured out His Holy Spirit on the apostles and followers of Christ. It was on that day when the New Testament Church began (compare Acts 2). The gift of the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to overcome sin and replace it with righteousness. And so it is today for us! Without God’s Spirit within us, we cannot really conquer sin, and we cannot receive, embrace and use the gift of God’s righteousness.

In the afore-mentioned Editorial, I said: “We also need God’s help to overcome and conquer sin. We cannot do it on our own. And so, God gives us His Spirit to overcome sin—but we must use His Spirit to do so.”

In addition, the Holy Spirit opens the minds of the followers of Christ, so Scriptures can be clearly understood. With God’s Spirit in us, we can comprehend the plan of God and our responsibility regarding it. In these times of trouble—especially as we draw closer to the terrible events of the “Great Tribulation” and the “Day of the Lord”—it is important for us to remain focused on the

purpose of our calling. It is more crucial than ever to allow God's Spirit in us to motivate us to help finish God's Work, which God has given to His Church.

The Church's commission is clearly explained in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come." Christ told us that it is the duty and responsibility, especially of the end-time Church, to preach the gospel and to feed the flock. That is THE reason why God called us now. We are NOT just called for individual salvation, but also for participation in God's Work, to help others to respond to the message, be spared from the terrible times to come, and to obtain salvation with us.

As I stated in my Editorial:

"It is important for us to carry forward into the balance of the year the vital lessons that these Spring Feast Days picture. They remind us of our responsibilities toward God to stay committed to His Work and purpose for us, and to maintain a state of continual removal of sin. When we remain close to God, He will respond to our prayers and requests throughout the whole year, and He will help us to fulfill the purpose of our calling. As we read in 1 Corinthians 15:57-58: 'But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.'"

It should be our main focus in life to support this effort, in whatever capacity we can. God wants to use us in His purpose to call more people to salvation now, so that they can partake of the First Resurrection and inherit eternal life. The fruit of our labor today might not be that evident at first sight, but God said that our labor will not be in vain, and that His Word which is preached by His Church will not return empty. Apparent lack of "growth" must never be an excuse to become less zealous in our efforts, but we are called to "abound" in our job, while leaving it to God when He will call new people, and whom He will call. Remember that God tells us that through our efforts or the lack thereof, we might either hasten or delay the Second Coming of Christ!

We must never be found guilty of delaying the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth, when God will deal with the problems which are plaguing mankind today. This world has no solutions, but God does, and the sooner Christ rules this planet, the better for all. When Christ returns, Satan, the author of sin, will be removed, and all authority will be given to Christ and His saints. It is then—not before—that the world will be ruled with equity and justice. The Family of God will unselfishly bring peace and joy to this earth. No crooked and corrupt politician will be allowed to exert any more influence on others. The times will be over when selfish leaders are trying to rise to, or stay in power, no matter what the cost.

As selfishness will be a thing of the past then, so it should be already for us today. It would be inherently selfish to believe that all we need to do today is to "get ready," individually, for Christ's return, while neglecting to participate in our collective responsibility to warn the world and to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

The more we are involved in God's Work, the more we will be able to overcome our sins. Part of the reason is that doing the Work shows an attitude of selfless love for others, and love is the exact opposite of sin. And it is with the Holy Spirit in us that we CAN be victorious in our efforts.

When we agree that God called us today to do a job, which will ultimately help to bring righteousness and justice to this unrighteous and unjust world, then we must continue to put our shoulder to the plow and not look back. It is only those who endure to the end who will be saved. This means, then, that those who refuse to do our God-given job won't be saved. What is of foremost importance NOW is to continue to fulfill our responsibilities faithfully and unselfishly—without being motivated by improper goals, as so many are doing today. In laboring collectively and individually, we will be counted worthy to become born-again members of the Family of God at the time of Christ's return.

In Christ's Service,



Rene Messier