

CHURCH OF THE
E T E R N A L

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.” – Matthew 24:14

February 15, 2010

Dear Members, Co-Workers and Friends,

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

When we first saw this Scripture, what was our reaction? Our first thought may have been that this was a tall order and nearly impossible to accomplish. Having gone through a captivity in the past because of their sins, the Jewish leaders at the time of Christ, not wanting to experience such slavery again, thought they could avoid it by becoming sticklers for their own brand of the law.

The impression that they gave was that in certain respects they were going above and beyond the law of God, while in other areas, they in reality violated or did away with God’s law in order to keep their own human traditions, which included laborious ritual washings and other physical demands. Having thus placed a yoke on people which no one could carry and setting such a “high bar,” how was the average person then going to fulfill Matthew 5:20?

As we know, the problem with the scribes and Pharisees was that their “righteousness” was actually self-righteousness (Romans 9:31-32). They had set “the rules,” and in their pride and vain-glory, they demanded that others follow them. In addition, even though they might have taught to an extent the law of God to the people, they themselves did not keep it. Considering this, the level that we, as Christians, must attain to surpass them is replacing our righteousness and “standards” with the righteousness of God. It is Godly righteousness which we must be striving to attain (Matthew 6:33).

Because the Israelites were ignorant of God’s righteousness, they sought to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:3). This is why they fell short. If we do the same, their lot will befall us. Instead, we are to put on the righteousness of God and not make the same mistake that the so-called religious leaders of Jesus’ time made—and which so many are making today.

The Bible states in Psalm 85:13: “Righteousness will go before Him, And shall make His footsteps our pathway.” Our aim is the extensive example Christ left for us within the pages of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:21). Our goal is to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6) and to imitate His every thought and action (1 Corinthians 11:1). This is the loftier aspiration that we are to be striving for, to be righteous as Christ was and is righteous.

This cannot be accomplished on our own. If it were, then we would again establish our own righteousness. Rather, Godly righteousness is God’s gift to us, but we must accept and use it. We must allow Jesus Christ to live His righteous life in us, by following His lead and allowing Him to do, through us, what He wants to be done.

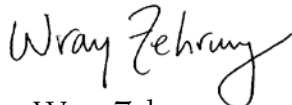
But when is it that we will have fully achieved this objective and have completely put on all the righteousness of Christ? When have our pounds reached their ultimate increase, and when have we grown into the full capacity of our talents (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27, Authorized Version)?

We can never assume that we already have accomplished this, or that we will make it that far in this physical life (Romans 3:23)! The danger in presuming that we consider ourselves “good enough” is tantamount to believing that we have five talents, when we only have one. It is akin to our one pound not having made any gains (compare Revelation 3:17-18). We must be careful that we do not bury the opportunity that God has given us.

Now (and everyday afterwards) is a good time to evaluate the righteousness that exists within us. We have been given a one-time opportunity to become truly righteous; to replace who and what we naturally are with the righteousness of Christ. We have been given everything that we need to allow this to happen. We have all the help necessary to accomplish this task. There has never been a better deal. It is there for the taking, and all we need to do is fulfill our part.

As we go through this present life, we need to make the most of our calling—especially now and especially today. We need to become more righteous than we were yesterday. Now is high time to excel beyond what we are and transform ourselves into the Christian that God knows we can and ought to be.

With brotherly love,



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