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Righteousness Action The Service of God

Joshua 24:15; Psalm 91:4

God never intended us to pursue perfection. God asks us - instructs us to pursue righteousness. Righteousness is about service. Righteousness is about actions that are pleasing to and glorifying to God. The pursuit of perfection is not liberating. It holds us hostage to the law of God and not His Spirit. It does not reconcile or bring people of God together. It alienates us all, from the church and from God when we see that the pursuit of perfection is an exercise in futility. For many it is easier for us to pursue perfection than righteousness because the pursuit of perfection is about us. It involves the individual. It is not concerned, in most cases, with anyone else but oneself. Wherein righteousness always points outside of the individual to the ethical right action toward others.

The pursuit of perfection is always exclusive in its concern. The pursuit of perfection is not concerned with anyone else except the individual. This pursuit has been reduced to individual salvation as being the only thing many believe God is concerned about. However, if the New Testament is truly born out of the prophesy and hope of God for the world, then the pursuit of righteousness is at the heart of the biblical message. Its requirement demands action and our involvement in the lives of people and the church. I often speak of the church's role in the life of men. Salvation and Righteousness are not separate nor are they independent of each other. They go hand in hand. They are like hand and glove. They are divine fittings for the building of the Kingdom.

As we look back at 2020, we can see many "so-called Christians" practice their faith with righteousness. They have found an individualistic position that allows them to be connected to Jesus without being connected to or care about humanity. Many in God's church have chosen fellowship without service. We want to be Christians without pursuing righteousness, without giving service.

What connected the disciples to Jesus was not just faith, it was service. Being connected to Jesus was synonymous to service. They did not always get it right. But they understood the responsibility to Jesus was more than just believing, it was faith in action. It was pursuing righteousness. Pursuing righteousness is faith lived out in service.

But what is righteousness? It is not about perfection. It is about a spiritual connection with God that sees duty and service of God as inseparable. This is why Joshua could say to the nation of Israel when asked about faithfulness and his commitment to service, **"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)** I will be, my house will be, everything that is connected to me will be service to the Lord."

Service is different than a mere action. An action can be an isolated activity without any purposeful direction. Service is much more than that. Service is organized, it is directed and purposeful. When men and women join the armed forces, they are in service to the country. When you are in service, your "life" is given to the service you volunteered for. There is no going back. There is no change of mind. There is no confusion regarding what you signed up for. Service to God is about a life committed to righteousness. Serving others. Lifting others, rescuing others, seeing in others what no one else has taken the time to see in them. The pursuit of righteousness is about ethical conduct in the lives of people in the world. It is about righting wrongs both spiritually and socially. In the **Gospel of Mark 3:1-6**, it was a spiritual as well as a social and ethical wrong not to address the needs of the man with a withered hand. It was their spiritual disconnection that did not allow them to see how this man was being neglected. It was their callous attitude toward his wellbeing that invited their lack of care or concern. It was being morally bankrupt that blinded them to his needs.

When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, he saw the man in a way no one else had seen him. No one in the church or synagogue had looked at him as having potential or ability. No one had considered the possibility of him being transformed or changed. Jesus demonstrated a righteousness that comes from God. It was a righteous need that acted and acted in spite of the day - in spite of the laws that compelled men to pay more attention to the laws than to people. Jesus opposed those who were content with the man remaining in his diminished condition. The withered hand is a symbol of a withered life, a

withered attitude, or withered hopes and dreams. It also speaks to the weakness of individuals who attempt the things of God without including God. Without understanding God is in control of the outcome. Many things are too much for us but **"with God all things are possible."**

Righteousness reaches beyond itself. Our relationship with God is dependent upon God's righteousness toward us. We could not save ourselves. We could not help ourselves, so God provided a way out for us called the cross. Righteousness is and always has been about coming to the aid and defense of those who could not help themselves. God has even created within nature an instinct that moves animals to come to the aid of the most vulnerable. A true story is told of a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park. After the fire, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother remained steadfast. She had been willing to die so those under the cover of her wings would live. "**He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart." Psalm 91:4.**

God bless and remain safe,

Pastor Gool