

Pursuing Righteousness

Ponder: What are you pursuing?

Scripture: “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith. But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law” (Romans 9:30-32a, NKJV).

The new year approaches! Have you made resolutions? Lose weight; read the Bible all the way through; attend church regularly; etc. If we will diligently pursue those goals, we will be better for it.

God’s word sets forth specific goals we ought to pursue. In the New Testament, pursue is sometimes translated “follow after” or just “follow.” Negatively, it means to persecute (chase after people in order to harm them. Positively, it still means to chase after, but the goal is to improve yourself and help, not harm, others.

Goal #1 is a right relationship with God. In Romans 9:30-32, the Jews pursued righteousness (i.e. justification, a right relationship with God). But they did not attain it because they pursued it by the works of the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses lacked the blood of Christ, which is the only thing that can wash away sins and justify sinners.

The Jews’ problem, then, was that they ran down the wrong road in pursuit of righteousness. The Gentiles, on the other hand, didn’t pursue a right relationship with God, but when it was offered to them through faith in Christ, they gladly accepted it and were justified.

God offers justification everyone, just as He did to first-century Gentiles. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Pursue justification, for you desperately need it. But don’t waste your time and energy running on a road taking you in the wrong direction! Yes, it takes energy. You are active, not passive, in establishing and maintaining your relationship.

The pursuit of righteousness does not end as you are drying off after baptism! Paul instructed Timothy to pursue righteousness (1 Timothy 6:6; 2 Timothy 2:22). In those contexts, the pursuit of righteousness could include right behavior (doing that God’s word says is right). But it would also include the daily running after a right relationship with God, putting your confident trust not in your own personal goodness, but in Christ Who died for you.

If you are not in a right relationship w/ God, then that is the first thing you need to pursue. Don’t wait until next year! Now is the day of salvation!