

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part Fifteen

“Two Kinds of Righteousness”

Review: A Major New Section of the Sermon

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:17

- Christ did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets (the Old Testament). The New does not do away with the Old.
- He came to “fulfill” the Law by giving it perfect obedience; He came to fulfill all of the more than 300 prophecies of Himself from the Old Testament!

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Matthew 5:18

- The Law of God is the will of God for the regulation of human behavior; it does not change because God does not change
- Whatever was written for Israel applies to the Church today

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but

whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:19

- The Lord here He assures us none of the Law is passed away and that we will be judged for what we preach and how we live.
- And now we come to the bottom line; our text for this lesson...

For truly 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 NKJV

- Here are 2 kinds of righteousness; the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees and the righteousness of those who truly belong to God

I. Two Kinds of Righteousness

A. What is “Righteousness”?

1. The term simply means to be right with God.

In both the OT and NT, righteousness is the state commanded by God which stands up to the test of His judgment. It is conformity to all that He commands or appoints.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

2. To be “righteous” is not only a position or a status; it includes behavior.

In the NT, the character of God is presented as absolute moral perfection. Therefore, righteousness in men becomes a name for that disposition and method of life which aligns itself with God’s holy will. In short, righteousness is Godlikeness or godliness.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

3. Jesus says righteousness is a “heaven or hell issue”!

For truly 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 NKJV

a. Imagine that Jesus walked in here tonight and said this to us. What say you?

4. Remember this: the Pharisees had a very impressive “kind” of righteousness:

- **They read their Bibles! Every Pharisee had to memorize the Pentateuch, the 1st 5 books of the Bible, known as the Law of Moses**
- **They were obsessive commandment keepers; they paid their tithes, gave alms, kept the Sabbaths, attended the Feasts, and brought all the offerings**
- **They wore special clothing; they held all the leadership positions in the Temple and in the courts...**

5. How shocking it was for Jesus to tell His disciples that this kind of righteousness would not be good enough to get them into heaven!

6. They were deceived! They thought...

- That it was within their own power to be right with God
- That thought that all that God required of them was obedience to the letter of the Law
- They did not know that...

Keeping the Law Cannot Make You Right With God!

7. They were committing the same mistake that all the religions of the world have always made; they thought that they could establish their own righteousness! So with all their religious activity, they could not be saved!

Romans 10:1-2

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel* is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Romans 10:1-2

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:1-4 NKJV

8. The Pharisees were ignorant of the kind of righteousness that God requires; the kind that goes way beyond the letter of the Law. This is why they...

- a. Sought to establish their own righteousness
- b. Refused to submit to the righteousness of God
- c. Did not understand that simple faith in Christ is the end of the Law as a means of being right with God!

9. This is the very heart of the Gospel.

Righteousness is not a reward to be earned; it is a gift to be received!

He saved us not because of the good things we did, but because of His mercy.

Titus 3:5

B. Righteousness is a Gift!

1. We can never be right with God by our own merit; the righteousness of God cannot be earned! It is a gift!

2. In Romans 5, Paul is comparing how all of us received death as the wages of the sin of Adam; but the grace of God in Christ allows us to receive righteousness as a gift!

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more *they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*

Romans 5:17

3. Because we are all the children of Adam, we are under judgement and condemnation because of his sin; but because of the righteousness of Christ, we can receive the free gift of God through faith!

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so *by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men* unto justification of life.

Romans 5:18

a. Adam's sin made us sinners; Christ's obedience makes us righteous!

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, *so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

Romans 5:19

4. The sin of the Pharisees was their self-righteousness; they were not "poor in spirit", they were "rich in spirit"; they felt no need for grace because they thought keeping the Law made them righteous; they disqualified themselves from heaven because there was no place for grace in their system of salvation!

"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.*"

Galatians 2:21 NASB

5. The Law cannot save us! If God intended to save us by the Law there would be no reason for Christ to come at all, much less to die!

6. Christianity is unique among all the competing religions of the world because it offers salvation without works!

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

(Leave this up)

7. All the good works and commandment keeping in the world cannot save you! Salvation is a gift! The faith to be saved is a gift! In the God-kind of righteousness there is no place for boasting or bragging because there is nothing we can do to be saved...except believe!

8. So let me close with the question that always comes up....

III. So What About Works?

A. Two Errors

1. The first great mistake you can make is to think that you can be saved by works.

2. The second great mistake you can make is to think that works don't have a place!

3. Look again at Ephesians 2:8-9; then read the next verse..

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

B. Righteousness with God is a Gift Verified By Works

1. We need to know that keeping the Law does not save us. Works do not save us. We are saved by faith. But the Apostle James assures us that...

“Faith without works is dead...”

James 2:26

2. Martin Luther was the “Father” of the great Protestant Reformation that restored the doctrine of justification by faith to the Church; that we are saved by faith alone. But he also said....

“We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

Martin Luther

a. He also said...

“Our good works do not generate righteousness; rather, our righteousness in Christ generates good works.”

Martin Luther

3. Anyone who tries to be righteous by keeping the commandments can never be saved; but anyone who claims to be righteous and doesn't keep the commandments is just as deceived.

“If you love Me, keep my commandments.”

John 14:15

4. How can we know if we are right with God?

By this we know that we are the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 5:2-3

C. Conclusion

1. We don't keep the commandments to be right with God; when we are right with God we will keep His commandments.

2. And next time, we'll show how deep it really goes.

REPEAT TITLE: TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS