

THE PHARISEES' RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jon Macon

In Matthew 5:19-20, Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" This is obviously a very serious point, as our eternity depends upon whether or not our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. We need to begin with a proper and thorough understanding of the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

Condemned for doing wrong, not for doing right

Jesus did not condemn the scribes and Pharisees for whatever it was they might have been doing right. For example, they were not condemned for having zeal. But they *were* condemned for establishing their own righteousness, and not God's (Rom 10:1-3). They were not condemned for their efforts to make proselytes, but they *were* condemned for what they converted men to (Matt 23:15). They were not condemned for tithing (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42), as tithing was a command of God under the law of Moses (Num 18:21; Deut 14:22-29). Jesus did not tell the Pharisees to pay attention to the weightier matters of the law *instead* of tithing. They were not to leave those things undone. Notice that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for what they did not obey, not for what they did obey. The Pharisees were never condemned for teaching the commandments of God (Matt 23:1-3). When the Pharisees "sat in Moses' seat," they were teaching the word of God. Jesus commanded the people to obey all of God's word when they were taught it.

They did not glorify God as God

The Pharisees' basic problem was that they did not love the truth about God. God is angry with all men who do not glorify Him as God (Rom 1:18-21). Living only for God (i.e. worshiping and serving only Him) is what it means to glorify God as God (Rom 1:25; see also Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8; 2 Cor 5:14-15; 1 Pet 4:1-2). God sends a strong delusion to all who do not love the truth (2 Thes 2:10-12). This is precisely what happened to the Pharisees (John 12:37-41). This happened to them because their hearts were far from God (Matt 15:8; Mark 7:6). They glorified and honored God with their mouths (Matt 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-7), but that alone is not sufficient (Matt 7:21-23). There are numerous specific examples of how the Pharisees did not glorify God as God with their deeds.

The glory of men

For one thing, the Pharisees loved the glory of men (Matt 23:5; John 5:41-44). They gave alms in order to be seen of men (Matt 6:1-4). They fasted in order to be seen of men, and man's glory was their reward (Matt 6:16-18). They prayed in order to be seen of men, and man's glory was their reward (Matt 6:5-8; 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47). They dressed to be seen of men, to

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receive glory from men (Matt 23:5; Mark 12:38; Luke 20:46). They chose their seats to be seen of men, to receive glory from men (Matt 23:6; Mark 12:39; Luke 11:43; 20:46). They had greetings and titles to receive glory from men (Matt 23:7-12; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43; 20:46). *Everything* they did was to receive glory from men (Matt 23:5). Man's glory became their reward (Matt 6:2), but they had no reward from God (Matt 6:1). Glorifying God as God requires complete rejection of the glory of men (Rom 2:28-29).

Covetousness

Another major problem the Pharisees had was covetousness (Luke 16:14). They loved the world and the things of the world. Jesus said that they were of this world, not of God's world (John 8:23). The gold and the gift were sacred to them, not the temple and altar of God (Matt 23:16-18). For their love of money, the Pharisees devoured widows' houses (Matt 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47). Their inner man was full of extortion and excess (Matt 23:25-28; Luke 11:39-40). Mammon was their master, not God (Luke 16:13-15). Because of this, they would die in their sins (John 8:21,24). Glorifying God as God requires complete rejection of the things of this world as a master (Matt 6:24; 2 Cor 4:18; 1 Tim 6:6-11; 2 Tim 4:10; Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

Attitude towards God's word

Along with loving the glory of men and material things, the Pharisees also despised God's word. The Pharisees taught for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7). They broke God's commandments and taught others to do so (Matt 5:19; 23:13; Luke 11:52). They established their own traditions which transgressed God's commandments and their worship was vain (Matt 23:1-9; Mark 7:1-13; Luke 11:37-38). They bound heavy burdens on men which they themselves would not lift (Matt 23:4; Luke 11:46). They established their own righteousness, but did not know and did not submit to God's righteousness (Rom 10:1-3). The Pharisees rejected God's miracles, His witness on behalf of those through whom He spoke (John 5:18,31-36; 12:37-40), and thus were guilty of calling God a liar (1 John 5:9-10). For example, they attributed Jesus' casting out of devils to Satan (Matt 9:32-34). They also condemned and even sought to kill Christ for healing on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 5:1-18; 7:19-23; 9:1-16). Perhaps worst of all, they rejected the resurrection of Christ (Matt 27:62-66; 28:11-15). They were displeased with fulfilled prophecy when God was praised when Jesus entered Jerusalem (Matt 21:15-16; Luke 19:37-40). Glorifying God as God requires our having the proper attitude towards His word. Proverbs 13:13 says, "Whoso despises the word shall be destroyed: but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded" (see also Num 15:31; 2 Chr 36:16; Isa 5:24; 30:9-14).