

THE PHARISEES' RIGHTEOUSNESS

(PART 2)

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Jesus warned us in Matthew 5:20, "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." We have seen that the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" refers to what they did wrong, not what they did right (Rom 10:1-3; Matt 23:23). Their "righteousness" also involved doing all their works to be seen of men (Matt 23:5), covetousness (Luke 16:14), and an attitude of despising God's word (John 8:47). There are some other aspects of their "righteousness" that we need to be aware of, so that we can avoid being like them and therefore miss being able to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Spiritual blindness

The Pharisees were blind to the inner man, and consequently to God's purpose for man. They were blind leaders of the blind, heading for the ditch (Matt 15:12-14; 23:16,17,19,24; John 9:40-41; 12:39-40). They could only see the outward actions, but were blind to the inner man (Matt 23:25-28). They did some outward actions that looked good (though for the wrong motive), but they omitted the weightier matters of the law (things of the inner man). They tithed, but omitted judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt 23:23-24). They also omitted the love of God (Luke 11:42). There really is nothing left after you've stripped away judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God!

The pride of life

The Pharisees were also extremely proud, which was certainly behind their enormous appetite for the glory of men (Matt 23:5; 1 John 2:16). Their great pride manifested itself in many ways. Even the name that they wore was a boast. The word "Pharisee" literally means *a separatist*. The Hebrew root word for "Pharisee" was "parash," meaning *to separate*. By their name, the Pharisees were boasting that they were the ones truly separated for God. In their pride, the Pharisees resisted the Lord's teaching. When God's word rebuked them, they justified themselves and derided Jesus (Luke 16:13-15). They also boasted that they would not have done what

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(PART 2)

(continued)

their fathers did, who had killed the prophets. But they did even worse by killing God's own Son (Matt 23:29-36; Luke 11:47-52)! The Pharisees trusted in and proclaimed their own righteousness and despised others (Luke 18:9-14). They condemned Jesus for eating with sinners (Matt 9:10-13; 11:19; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:29-32; 7:34-50; 15:1-32). God resists the proud (Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5-6), and He resisted the Pharisees. Humbling oneself and receiving correction is the pathway of understanding (Prov 9:6-9; 15:32; 19:25), which is why the Pharisees were without spiritual understanding (John 12:39-40). It is essential for us to look into the mirror of God's word with the intention of finding our own faults so that we can correct them (Jas 1:22-25).

Hypocrisy

The Pharisees' leaven is extremely dangerous. Jesus warned his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees, speaking of their doctrine (Matt 16:5-12; Mark 8:14-21). Jesus also identified their leaven as being hypocrisy (Luke 12:1-3). The Pharisees said, but did not do (Matt 23:1-3). Their doctrine was one thing, their actions another. Their name made it appear that they were fully separated from the world to serve God only (i.e. "holy"). Their clothes, prayers, choice of seats in the synagogues, titles, and their other outward actions made them *appear* to be righteous, but they were really wicked (Matt 23:25-28; Luke 11:43). This leaven is extremely dangerous because anyone who is like them will end up in the same ditch. The scribes and Pharisees that Christ warned his disciples about will be condemned on judgment day (Matt 12:41-45; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47), and so will all who are like them. They will be rooted up (Matt 15:12-14), and so will all who are like them. They face the damnation of hell (Matt 23:33). They will gnash their teeth upon seeing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom but they themselves thrust out (Luke 13:28). Jesus emphasizes in Matthew 5:20 that if we are like these Pharisees, we will face the same eternity they do!