

Subj: RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDING THAT OF THE  
SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

Matt. 5:20

It is of the greatest importance that we understand as accurately as we can, what is the nature of that righteousness which God accepts from us.

For heaven is only for the righteous; All the promises are to the righteous; It is the righteous man's prayer that availeth much.

The Scribes and Pharisees represent to us the formalists of all ages, and that in two divisions--the scribes, those who are formalists in their treatment of God's Word;

The Pharisees, the formalist in religious life.

God gave us His Word to be a light to our feet--a guide, and cheer, and strengthen to us in our way to Heaven. Therefore let us study the Scripture to find out what God has to say to us.

We need today not a Bible apologized for, but a Bible understood; not a Gospel harmonized, but a Gospel appreciated and loved, and lived.

The longer the world lasts, the more thornes will gorw over the narrow path, the stiffer turns the latches of the strait gate.

We need more firmness of hand to grasp the Word, more steadiness of step to tread the pathway of life, and more courage to look on the wounds of our pilgrimage, undismayed, with a firm determination to see the end of the christian way.

## I. The Righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

We must remember that the scribes and Pharisees were in many ways the most outstanding people of the nation. The Scribes were men who spent their time in teaching and expounding the law; they were the great authorities on the law of God. They gave their whole life to the study and illustration of it. They, more than anyone else, therefore, could claim to be concerned about it. They were the men who made copies of it, exercising great care as they did so. Their whole life was lived with the law, and everyone looked up to them for that reason.

The Pharisees were the men who were quite outstanding and famous for their sanctity, so-called. The very word "Pharisee" means "Separatist." They were people who set themselves apart, and they did so because they had formed a code of the ceremonial acts connected with the law which was more rigid than the law of Moses itself. They had drawn up rules and regulations for life and conduct which were more demanding than the Old Testament itself. For example, in our Lord's picture of the Pharisees and the publican who went up to the temple to pray, the Pharisee said that he fasted twice in the week. Now there was no demand in the Old Testament that men should fast twice in the week. The Old Testament asked for only one fast in the year. But gradually these men had elaborated the system and had actually brought it to the point at which they exhorted and commanded the people to fast twice in the week.

The Scribes and Pharisees constantly boasted about their much praying, they fasted twice per week, and they paid their tithes.

Now with that in mind, there are many which would say, Ah! there is very little hope for me ever being as good as the scribes or the Pharisees.

And I will say, there are many church members who do not do those things mentioned.

But then here comes Jesus, and he announces to these people, that unless their righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees they shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

This, is surely something of vital importance, and is ~~due~~ <sup>due</sup> our consideration. What is our conception of true holiness and sanctification? What is our idea of being religious? What is our conception of a Christian?

Our Lord declares that the every ~~last~~ Christian must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Holiness: Holiness is not an experience that we have. It is something we practice in our daily lives. Sanctification is an experience of the grace of God, and the fruits of this experience is a Holy Life, lived daily.

II. Let us follow our Lord's analysis of the religion of the scribes and pharisees.

1. The first and in a sense, the basic charge against them is that their religion was entirely external and formal instead of being a religion of the heart.

**"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts." Luke 16:15**

On another occasion our Lord said something like this to them. Some of the Pharisees were rather surprised at the action of His disciples, who came in from the market place and immediately

sat down at the table and began to eat without first washing their hands. "Ah, He said in effect. How careful you Pharisees are about the outside, but how negligent you are about the inside." "It is not that which goes into man which defiles him, but that which comes out."

It is the heart that matters, for it is out of the heart that comes evil thoughts, murder, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness and all these other things.

Then again in Matt. 23rd, chapt., Our Lord tells the Pharisees that they are like whited sepulchres the outside seems to be all right, but look at the inside.

The Kingdom of God is concerned about the heart; it is not my external actions, but what I am inside that is important.

If you want to know what you really are, you can find the answer when you are alone with your thoughts and desires and imaginations.

2. The Second charge which our Lord brought against the scribes and Pharisees was that they were obviously more concerned with the ceremonial than with the morals; and that, of course, always follows upon the first.

There is a type of religion, that teaches as long as you go to the house of God on Sunday morning it does not matter very much what you do the rest of the day.

The Lord's Day is a day that is meant to be given as much as possible to God.

3. Another characteristic of the Pharisees religion was that it was one of man-made rules and regulations.

4. Self-Satisfied--They were primarily concerned about themselves, and they were always glorifying themselves and not God.

Conclusion:

To receive the grace of God in Jesus Christ means not only that my sins are forgiven because of His death for me on the cross, but also that I have been given a new life and a new nature. It means that Christ is in me, that I have become a partaker of the divine nature, that old things have passed away and all things have become new. It means that Christ is dwelling in me, and that the Spirit of God is in me. That makes the righteousness of God to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. He is no longer living for self and his own attainments, he is no longer self-righteous and self-satisfied.

He has become poor in spirit, meek, and merciful; he is hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he has become a peacemaker, and His heart is being purified.

The commandments of God to such a man are not grievous. He wants to keep them, for He loves them.

Do you know God? Do you love God? Can you say honestly that the biggest and the first thing in my life is to glorify my Father which is in Heaven?