

Introduction:

- A story is told of a manufacturing company that began ordering source parts from a new company. When they placed their first order they stipulated that their quality control standard was "1.5% defective parts." The new source company shipped the order in two separate containers--one large and one small. The smaller container arrived with the following note: "We don't know why you want 1.5% defective parts, but for your convenience, we've packed them separately." **APPLICATION** We might not expect perfection, but God does. His quality standard is 100%, and he makes no allowance for "defective" parts. It's a good thing that "He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness 100% right! of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Illustration Exchange | Date Posted: 2012-10-24
- How do we get the righteousness of God? Or how do we become the righteousness of God?
- More pointed: Do you possess the righteousness required to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?
- *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20, ESV)*

I. The Problem of the Pharisees

A. Was their emphasis on the appearance of the outward.

1. A good description of many a Pharisees' spiritual life: Outside they gave a great show! Looks awesome! But inside they were a mess. Ie. Have you ever seen the outside of something...house, car, restaurant...only to find out how bad the inside was when you went in? This was the condition of many a Pharisees' heart, outside looked good but inside was a mess.
2. They built the outside to be seen. And in Matthew 23 he rebukes them harshly: *"You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean."* (Matthew 23:26, ESV) Make it a priority to clean the inside, first! The reality is that they have no way to make the inside clean.
3. When we depend upon our works/appearance, we are neglecting the condition of our heart. While at the same time, we are depending upon what we can do for ourselves in our own strength.
 - a) This leads to pride for then we can boast look at what I have done.

- b) This leads to alienation from God and from others...we don't need him nor others, since we are better than them. A 'showy' Christian life gets us nothing from God.
- B. Jesus was was challenging their hearts. Righteousness could not be accomplished by effort because it leads to pride. God looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16:7, Man looks at the outside. God looks at the heart. Listen to Jesus challenge.
1. *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:1, ESV) key: in order to be seen by them.
 2. *“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, ... that they may be praised by others....”* (Matthew 6:2, ESV) key: in order to be praised by others.
 3. *“And when you pray, ... don't stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, to be seen by others...”* (Matthew 6:5, ESV)
 4. *“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites...”* Mt 6:16
 5. We must move beyond a showy christian life to one that trusts in Christ.
- C. When we try to obtain righteousness within ourselves it always leads to pride.

II. The Truth of the Matter

Jesus lays out a hard core fact.

- A. *“Unless...you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”* Unless what??? Your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees. Jesus lays out a scary fact!
1. Jesus is making a serious connection between righteousness and entering the kingdom of heaven.
 2. Jesus is also making a shocking statement by announcing that the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees is not enough.
 3. The scribes were known for their knowledge of the word. The pharisees were known for their 'show' of keeping the law. The people looked to these two groups to receive direction on how to keep the law. They were seen as righteous because of their appearance to the people.
- B. Righteousness is the issue. Jesus has lots to say about righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount.
1. Righteousness is an issue because it was the loss of righteousness that got Adam removed from the Garden and from the presence of God.
 2. The law was given to get man back into a place of righteousness or relationship with God.
 3. The scribes and pharisees were greatly lacking in righteousness.
 - a) Theirs was a skill in 'doing' based on their own ability in 'showing' off their 'righteousness.
 - b) In other words it was outward for others to see and not inward for God to see.

(Since He looks at the heart.)

- C. It is a fact that we must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees.
1. Ie. Let's say you get invited to a black tie event. All these important people are there. There are a few Hollywood stars in the mix. Dutch Sheets, Chuck Pierce, Craig Nau are all there. And you show up in jeans and t-shirt.
 - a) Now you have been invited, but are not allowed in simply because you are not prepared to enter.
 - b) To arrive before the Father at the marriage feast of the Lamb dressed in your own righteousness will have a very similar result. You will not be allowed in.
 - c) Yes, you were invited; but, no, you will not get in.
 2. So how do we obtain the righteousness that God requires?

III. The Righteousness That Exceeds

- A. Learning from Abraham. We can learn from Abraham because something unique happens to him and God says something amazing about him.
1. Joshua 24:2-3 tells us that when Abraham was called he was living in the land of Babylon. His family was heathen/unbelievers. And there is no indication that Abraham was a believer. He starts like all of us...sinners, separated from God.
 2. Acts 7:2-4 says that God appeared to Abraham while he was living in Mesopotamia. We do not know if it was a dream, literally appeared or vision. What we do know is that Abraham did not deserve this call, he did not earn it, he just said "Yes" to God and obeyed. He left his country following God.
 3. Abraham is careful to obey and follow God. And in chapter 15 of Genesis we read these astounding words: **"And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness."** (Genesis 15:6, ESV) Thats amazing!
 - a) Abraham was living a life of faith in God. When God promises him a son from his own wife Sarah he believed God.
 - b) Abraham believed
 - c) God declared him righteous. In right standing with God. AMP Set-Right-With-God MESSAGE BIBLE.
 4. It is a miracle! He believe and in believing he enters into this wonderful relationship with God.
 5. In fact James the apostle says this: **"and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God."** (James 2:23, ESV) Make the connection: faith, righteousness, friend!
 6. If you want to obtain a righteousness that exceeds the pharisees then you need a

righteousness that comes from God! A righteousness that comes by faith.

- a) "For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."" (Romans 4:3, ESV)
- b) "just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6, ESV)

B. To obtain righteousness requires not only faith but humility not pride.

1. Compare Matthew 5:3 with 5:20. In 5:3 the Kingdom is given to the poor in spirit. In 5:20 the Kingdom is withheld from the proud and self sufficient.
2. There are two words for 'poor' in the Greek that can be used in 5:3.
 - a) penes - which speaks of a person who lives from day to day. No savings, nothing to draw from just life from day to day. The day laborer. Like those hired to work and they all get the same pay at the end of the day. They are the surviving. These are not the poor that Jesus speaks of.
 - b) ptochos (πτωχος)- these are the homeless, the totally bankrupt. The word carries the connotation of cowering in fear. These people are not even surviving. They are dying, right here, right now. They are people who have nothing...they are without. In our society they are often referred to as worthless vagabonds. These are those Jesus speaks of in 5:3. They can only beg. You cannot have pride and beg! To beg you have to lose your pride. The pharisees were filled with pride therefore they could not access the Kingdom of Heaven.
3. Jesus' blessing was not for the ptochoi but for the ptochoi in spirit! No ptochoi could survive a day if they allowed themselves to be governed by pride. They were saturated with humility!!! Pride could only produce starvation.
4. Jesus is proclaiming that the poor in spirit were the luckiest people alive. The happiest people alive. THAT IS SHOCKING, RABBI!
5. Our false pride means that we would rather die than admit what we really are - bankrupt with out God. This false pride causes us to live with self sufficient hearts like pharisees.
6. The Truth
 - a) Only those totally destitute of their own righteousness, will the Kingdom of Heaven come to.
 - b) The Kingdom is a direct result of those who seek Him in total spiritual poverty. The Kingdom arrives to the spiritual beggar who has lost all pride and calls for mercy. The Kingdom of Heaven spoken of is the same as the Kingdom of God's reign. *"The Kingdom of God is for the desperate. The secret is to keep yourself in the place of desperation."* Tim Franklin

C. To obtain righteousness requires that it come from God and Him only.

1. Only through Jesus are many made righteous.

- a) *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)
- b) *For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."* (Romans 5:19, ESV)
2. Only by faith are you made righteous. *I want to be... "found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—" (Philippians 3:9, ESV)*
3. It is not earned it is given as a gift. He takes our sin, we get His righteousness.
4. You cant work for it, it is already paid for. le. Hymn *"There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."*
5. Once you have it you will have to work very hard to lose it!

Conclusion:

- *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20, ESV)* I have showed you how to do that this morning.
- *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1, ESV)
- *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"* (Romans 3:23-24, ESV)
- You will not receive the Kingdom of heaven...unless!... you become the righteous of God in Christ. 2 Cor 5:21