

Doctrine of Leaven and Righteousness

1. The primary goal of every Christian is to be righteous before God.
 - *Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

2. The word for “first” is *protos*, and means “chief”, or foremost in importance, and not first in a sequence of events.

3. One of the most frightening statements of Christ is found in Matthew 5:20.
 - *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.*

4. Concerned believers should take seriously the words of Christ. Righteousness is important.

5. The righteousness in view here is not the righteousness of faith that justifies. Perfect righteousness can only come through the imputed righteousness of Christ to a believer’s account. Christ is the believer’s perfect righteousness.
 - *1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

6. The righteousness of which Christ refers is the righteousness of a pure heart and rectitude, or quality of life, produced by the Holy Spirit, which God sees manifested in daily living.
 - *Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*
 - *Ephesians 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

7. The Reformers understood that Christians are saved by grace through faith alone, but not by faith which is alone, for saving faith is always accompanied by good works.
 - *James 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

8. At the same time (“sec pecetre”) a person is just and unjust by the righteousness of Christ at the moment of justification. But, justification does not stay there, for the believer moves on to sanctification according to the will of God.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;*

9. Unless the believer's righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, it is not genuine. Faith is to be shown by works. Sanctification is where spiritual growth takes place in righteousness.
10. Consider then, the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Special Note.

Their righteousness was impressive, for the Pharisees emerged in the midst of a post-exilic people who had forgotten the Law of God. The Pharisees wanted to restore righteousness to Israel. They were the conservatives of the kingdom of Israel. They wanted to obey the Law of God. They were spiritual reformers. Because they wanted to pursue righteousness, they separated themselves from others who were not as devout, and as sincere.

11. Though Jesus denounced the Pharisees, He did recognize their zeal.

- The Pharisees were zealous in witnessing and making converts to Judaism. They were evangelical. They had a zeal for evangelism that reached around the world to make one convert. *Matthew 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*
- The Pharisees were scrupulous tithers. They were careful to give to God what was due Him. They were generous to the Temple with their resources. Today, only four percent of evangelical Christians are known to tithe. *Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

Special Note.

Historically, in an agricultural society, the tithe was paid in animals and crops. The charge of the prophet Malachi is that the people had robbed God. *Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.* Question. "How can a person seek the kingdom of God while robbing God of His kingdom treasury?" While the tithe was conserved by Jesus to be a lesser part of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith, were of paramount importance. The concerned Christian will be careful to show justice and mercy to others, and to increase in faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Pharisees spent time in disciplined spiritual exercises, and in prayer. They were known for their long prayers. *Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive* The Pharisees were students of the Scripture. They believed in the inspiration of the Bible, the infallibility of the Bible, and the inerrancy of the Bible. They memorized the Scriptures. But, it never got into their spiritual bloodstream. *John*

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- 12.** The Pharisees were the teachers, the preachers, the evangelist, the spiritual leaders of Israel, but it was not authentic religion. Their religion was strictly external, and so they were designated by Christ as a “play actor” (hupocristos, hypocrite).
- 13.** The Christian cannot dispense with the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible study, giving, good deeds, and attending worship. However, the Christian faith must not be reduced to externals only, for God is looking on the heart.
- 14.** It is not the letter of the Law, or the spirit. Godliness is the letter of the moral Law of God, and the spirit. The outside and the inside of the life of a Christian must unite.