

## Righteousness That Exceeds

by John Isaac Edwards

In the great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus announced, “That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:20). Let me call to our attention some characteristics of righteousness that exceeds.

### 1) *Does Not Seek A Sign.*

The scribes and Pharisees, of Jesus’ day, were sign-seekers, saying, “Master, we would see a sign from thee” (Mt. 12:38). Some today are always looking for some kind of sign. This has caused folks to overlook the value of Christ-centered preaching (1 Cor. 1:18-25).

### 2) *Lays Aside Tradition Of Men And Holds The Commandment Of God.*

The scribes and Pharisees had this backwards! They were laying aside the commandment of God and holding their human traditions (Mt. 15:1-6)! Many are guilty of this very thing today!

### 3) *Honors The Lord With Heart And Mouth.*

Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “... well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with

their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Mt. 15:8). Where is your heart? Do you need to put your heart where your mouth is so that both are in tune when it comes to honouring the Lord?

4) *Worships In Truth.* The worship of the scribes and Pharisees was of no value. Jesus declared, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9). The only kind of worship that is worth anything is the kind Jesus described to the woman at Jacob’s well: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

5) *Says And Does.* The scribes and Pharisees were good at saying, but when it came to doing they were weighed in the balances and found wanting! Jesus uttered, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Mt. 23:2-3). They would “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Mt. 22:4)! Paul asked the Romans,

“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?...” (Rom. 2:21).

6) *Does Not Do Works To Be Seen Of Men.* The motive of the scribes and Pharisees was “...to be seen of men...” (Mt. 23:5). Some examples: (1) They made broad their phylacteries (little scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written paragraphs of the law); (2) They enlarged the borders of their garments (Mt. 23:5); (4) They were trumpet-sounders (Mt. 6:1-2) and face-disfigurers (Mt. 6:16). Jesus stated, “... Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Mt. 6:2).

7) *Is Humble.* The scribes and the Pharisees were not the humble kind! They “...love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi” (Mt. 23:6-7). In fact one of their temple prayers was on this wise: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Lk. 18:11-12). Pretty conceited wasn’t he? Jesus taught, “And whosoever shall exalt himself

shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mt. 23:12).

8) **Is Genuine.** The scribes and Pharisees were not real. Jesus called them “hypocrites” seven times in Matthew 23 (vv. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). They were actors or stage-players! Matthew 24:51 reveals, “...with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

9) **Understands The Kingdom Is Open To All.** The scribes and Pharisees were kingdom shutters! Jesus pronounced, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Mt. 23:13). As the song *The Kingdoms Of Earth Pass Away* suggests, “The kingdom of God is now open to all, E’en the vilest may now enter in; There’s a welcome for all who will turn to the Lord, Full salvation and pardon for sin.”

10) **Is Not Partial In The Law.** Again Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “Woe

unto you...for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, 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” (Mt. 23:23). They were so strict in some areas, but left others out altogether! Remember what the Lord through Malachi said of the priests of his time? “...ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law” (Mal. 2:9). Psalm 119:6 records, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.”

11) **Is Clean Within.** The scribes and Pharisees “...make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within are full of extortion and excess” (Mt. 23:25). They were “...like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:27-28). The Lord’s message to these was, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of

hell” (Mt. 23:33).

12) **Is Not Given To Fault-Finding.** Some are professional critics; their occupation is that of finding fault in others. The scribes and Pharisees were good at seeing everyone’s faults but their own! Mark 7 is one of the fault-finding scenes. “And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault” (Mk. 7:2). No matter what you do, there are some folks you will never please! “For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” (Lk. 7:33-34). So, we best just be like Enoch who “...pleased God” (Heb. 11:5). After all, our destiny is in His hands!

May we develop righteousness that exceeds so as to enter the kingdom of heaven!

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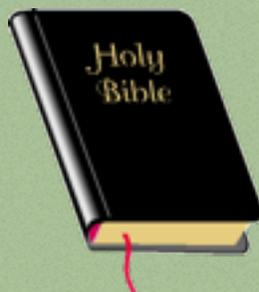
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