

“Unless Your Righteousness Exceeds...”

I. Introduction

A. In His “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus referenced a group known as the scribes and Pharisees. While this group was not entirely bad (cf. **Acts 23:8**), Jesus pointed out the need for having a righteousness that exceeds theirs. Consider some things Scripture teaches related to this theme. **Matthew 5:20**

II. Unless We Heed All of God’s Will for Us...

A. Part of the scribes and Pharisees’ problem was “picking and choosing” certain commands to emphasize, while ignoring others. We must avoid such inconsistencies. **Matthew 23:23-24**

III. Unless We Are Righteous Within...

A. The “weightier matters of the law” omitted by the scribes and Pharisees generally involved God’s will concerning the *inward* man. The scribes and Pharisees tended to focus *only* on how they appeared on the outside. This is a pitfall we must avoid. **Matthew 23:25-26; Luke 16:15**

IV. Unless We Have Pure Motives...

A. One way this disregard for the inward man was manifested was in doing deeds that were outwardly good, but with wrong motives. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, we must do the right things for the right *reasons* to please God. **Matthew 23:27-28; Luke 12:1; Matthew 23:5, 13 (or v. 14)**

V. Unless We Refrain from Covetousness...

A. The scribes and Pharisees’ “heart problems” also included the sin of covetousness. We must have a proper view of temporal things and base our contentment on God, unlike the scribes and Pharisees. **Matthew 23:13 (or v. 14); Luke 16:14; Luke 12:15**

VI. Unless We Avoid Self-Righteousness...

A. The Pharisees were also guilty of self-righteousness. Instead of sincerely examining themselves in light of God’s standards, they often compared themselves to others in areas they deemed most indicative of righteousness. Thus, their view of self was far different than reality. **Luke 18:9-14; John 7:47-49**

VII. Unless Our Doctrine is Pure...

A. Moreover, the areas the scribes and Pharisees deemed most indicative of righteousness were often manmade traditions, rather than *God’s* instruction. The tendency to elevate traditions of men to the level of God’s commands is a grave danger today, as it was then. **Mark 7:6-9**

VIII. Unless We Practice We Preach...

A. Some of the scribes and Pharisees’ teaching really was from God, but even with this, it often was not applied to themselves. We must not be people who “say, but don’t do,” like the scribes and Pharisees were. **Matthew 23:2-4**

IX. Unless We Love Sinners...

A. Though the scribes and Pharisees themselves were not righteous, their attitude toward some living in sin was one of condescension and avoidance. Their attitude toward sinners was very different from Jesus’. **Mark 2:15-17; Luke 15:1-2ff**

X. Unless We Humble Ourselves...

A. Not only did the scribes and Pharisees have a condescending attitude toward others, but they also *sought* preeminence and self-exaltation. Their proud lust for the praise of men contributed to a distorted and superficial view of serving God, as it can today. **Matthew 23:5-12**

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