

Killing the Sin of Self Righteousness

Opening Discussion:

The Pharisees and Scribes

- avid studiers of the word of God (word studies, memorized entire portions of scripture)
- they defended against the world's influence on their religion
- prioritized giving

Yet in Matthew 5:20, Jesus says:

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Why does Christ say that and where did they go wrong?

What is self righteousness?

- Any attempt that we use to make ourselves right with God through human effort
- To portray to others a holier life than we have instead of relying on the grace of God for true authentic change
- Worst of all, in our self righteousness we do not depend on God's grace for change

This leads to:

- Looking horizontally rather than vertically. This leads to pride and judgmentalism.
- Fencing: applying our own manmade practices to the Word
- Putting on a mask: To show a holier version of our self we hide our faults and magnify our strengths
- An increasing amount of legalistic practices

Philippians 3:9:

“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

Where is this most seen?

- Words: slander, malicious, gossip, boastful
- This is a deep rooted sin that comes out in different physical sins
- Heavier pride when things are going good and greater self condemnation when things are bad (Ephesians 4:14)
- Hardest to know we have, yet strongest rebukes for in the Bible and by Christ
- Creeps in slowly and we gradually become less dependent on Christ and more reliant on our own wisdom and ourselves.

Some forms and or causes:

- We want to be our own God and want our own way
- Seeking the wisdom of God to lift up or exalt ourselves rather than knowing God
- Noble objective achieved through man's efforts while overlooking or minimizing scripture

John 5:39-40:

“ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”

In this sin we tend to judge other's sins over our own:

Charles Swindoll:

“Knowledge can be dangerous when it isn't balanced by love and grace. Such knowledge results in arrogance, which leads to an intolerant spirit.. And exclusive mindset.”

- The pride of self righteousness leads to separation rather than servant hearted love

Although we are continuously told not to judge others, in our self righteousness we tend to look down on other's sin (Matthew 7:1-5)

- As we judge others in their sin, we then receive judgement
- We can tend to use specks in other's eyes to exalt ourselves, forgetting about our sin, or as Jesus says the log in our own eyes.

Killing the sin of self righteousness:

Now these things, brethren I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf one against the other. For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:6-7

All that we have, we received from our gracious Father:

- We must seek to be aware of where we pursue self righteousness
- We must check our motives for what we are pursuing
- We must be humble before God, understanding He desires us to serve rather than to be served. Through servanthood, we must fight against the “I'm better mindset.”

- We must depend on prayer that the Lord would show us our sin and change our hearts to be like Him.

John White in *The Fight* wrote:

“Knowledge especially biblical knowledge has the same effect as wine when it goes to your head. You become dizzily exalted. But Bible study should be conducted not with a view to knowing about Christ but to knowing him personally.”

Bottom line:

We must not let our tendencies to look horizontally (the lost or other Christians) feed our inner Pharisees. We must keep our eyes vertically upon Christ and the fact that though He sat at the right hand of God, He left the throne, served us to the point of death, so that we be made righteous through His sacrifice and through His covering of our sins.