

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.

- One out of ten Jews was a Pharisee at the time of Christ. They were the only Jewish religious sect to survive Jerusalem's destruction, and they became the foundation of modern Orthodox Judaism.
- The word "Pharisee" means "separated one" and they felt their central task was to protect and propagate the laws of God. Their central Scripture was Leviticus 11:45 ... "For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."
- The Pharisees were dedicated national heroes; they accepted the Scriptures as God-given, studied them and kept all the ceremonial laws; they were fervent evangelists and sacrificing tithers; they even anticipated the Messiah's coming. **SO WHY DID JESUS CONDEMN THEM?**

Matthew 16:6,12 ⁶ Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees ... ¹² Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

- The disciples thought Jesus was talking about them forgetting to bring bread, but the astute Pharisees immediately caught the meaning of the Scriptural principle taught later by Paul.

Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ⁶ Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? ⁷ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

- Leaven is almost always used in Scripture to describe corruption. Like yeast, the Pharisees' influence is being kneaded into Israel and having an effect on the whole nation.
- **BUT JESUS SAID HE HAD NO PROBLEM WITH THEIR TEACHING!** Yes, but their influence comes from their example. "What you ARE speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you SAY."

1. THE PHARISEES TRUSTED IN THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE.

- By the time of Christ, the key philosophy of Phariseeism was "How do we look?" (That is, "Do we LOOK good?" instead of "Are we REALLY good?")
- Jewish scholar Kaufmann Kohler lists several types of Pharisees who were extremists in this:
 - * The EVER-RECKONING Pharisee, who was always counting his good deeds to see if they offset his failures.
 - * The WAIT-A-LITTLE Pharisee, who would ask someone to wait for him while he performed a good deed.
 - * The BLIND Pharisee, who would bruise himself by walking into a wall because he shut his eyes to avoid seeing a woman.
- For example, in the area of FASTING the Pharisees were only concerned that others knew it!
 - * **Matthew 6:16** Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
 - * Literally, "They already have their receipt!" – they have no more claim to any reward!
- Jesus hated the "sour puss sacrifice." He reserved his most severe comments for the Pharisees. He called them "whited sepulchres" (Matthew 23:27), "graves which appear not" (Luke 11:44), and "hypocrites" ("godless actors" – seven times in Matthew 23).

2. THE PHARISEES TRUSTED IN THEIR OWN ACTIONS.

- They had put up "fences" to keep a safe distance from the law. These were called "seyag" (meaning "fence"). For example, the law said "Keep the Sabbath holy." They put fence laws around this like: Don't work, Don't pick grain, Don't travel, Don't even heal someone!
- Out of seven disagreements with Jesus over the Sabbath, five were about healing! Jesus healed a withered hand, a case of dropsy, an invalid, a blind man, and a woman who had a bowed back for 18 years (his rationale was "you would loose your animal, why not her?").
- The Pharisees could get around fences laws for their own purposes! (Sabbath Day's Journey)
 - * **Matthew 23:1-4** ¹ Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, ² Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: ³ All therefore whatsoever they bid you

*observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. ⁴
For they 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.*

- THE FENCES WERE NOT WRONG IN THEMSELVES! In several places in the New Testament, Paul teaches things which are not direct commandments from God, but which he expects to be followed because they have grown out of his experience as an apostle or elder in the church. **1 Corinthians 7:6** – “But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment” **2 Thessalonians 3:6** – “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” **1 Corinthians 7:12** – “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord”) We never go wrong by submitting to the teaching of godly elders!
- BUT THE PHARISEES TRUSTED IN THE FENCES RATHER THAN IN GOD’S PRINCIPLES!
- Our actions – no matter how righteous – cannot make us righteous before God.

BEFORE PROCEEDING, LET’S ANSWER A QUESTION THAT BEGS TO BE ASKED ...

With their emphasis on right appearance and action, are Apostolic people Pharisees?

- The Pharisees refused to repent (Matthew 3:7-10), rejected baptism (Luke 7:30) and resisted the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51). Apostolics emphasize all three as the Apostles did, as vitals parts of the plan of salvation (Acts 2:38).
- The Pharisees rejected Jesus because they did not have a revelation that He was God come in the flesh (Matthew 21:41-46). Apostolics believe in the Oneness of God and the supreme deity of Jesus Christ (Colossian 2:9) even to the point of being criticized by other churches.
- The Pharisees did not believe that anyone should worship Jesus (Luke 19:37-39). Apostolics are often criticized for worshipping Him too demonstratively (Psalm 150:1-6).
- Pharisees would not be seen with sinners (Matthew 9:11). The mission of Apostolics is like that of Jesus, to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13).
- And please note that THE PHARISEES NEVER ONCE CRITICIZED JESUS OR HIS DISCIPLES FOR THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE. They were just waiting to find one flaw in Jesus in order to discredit Him and His teachings. The Pharisees were noted for being extremely “holy in appearance” but they found nothing to criticize in Jesus! Apostolic people – like Jesus and the disciples – evidence their inner holiness by their outward appearance.
- Jesus’ main problem with the Pharisees was not that they appeared holy, but that their outer holiness was only a façade to camouflage their inner sin. Paul consistently taught outer holiness, but he condemned some for merely “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” and admonished us “from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:5) Why? Because that attitude is Pharisaical; it is leaven which can quickly penetrate every area of your life.

3. WHAT WAS ULTIMATELY WRONG WITH THE PHARISEES WAS SIMPLY THEIR ATTITUDE!

- The Pharisees became “holier than thou” and wouldn’t even associate with those they thought were less spiritual. They hated the Samaritans, so Jesus went out of His way to commend Samaritans who had faith, like the leper who returned to give thanks. (“and he was a Samaritan.” - Luke 17:16) One of His most famous parables was “The Good SAMARITAN.”
- The Pharisees condemned Jesus for eating with publicans (tax-collectors). They taught that to deceive a publican was godly, and that publicans could never repent. Jesus went out of His way to commend the faith of Zacchaeus the tax-collector in Luke 19. He also told a parable about two men praying at the Temple in Luke 18 ... a Pharisee and a Publican.
- Notice the reason Jesus told this story, given in Luke 18:9 – “*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*”
- There are two lessons in this parable:
 - * God’s goodness should make us feel “humble” before Him not “better” than another.
 - * HELPLESSNESS is always your best prayer! (“God, be a mercyseat to me, a sinner!”)
- The attitude of the Pharisees is perhaps best expressed in the modern religious idea that “I’m a good person” or “I’m as spiritual as someone else so I’m okay.” That is Phariseeism!
- Leaven is a creeping influence, and this attitude has slowly infected almost all of Christianity!
- **TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST EXCEED THIS!**