**“You Have Heard It Said…”**

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his audience, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). He then proceeded to outline several doctrines that their leaders had distorted or misapplied that illustrated their spiritual inadequacy.

Apparently, the people had been taught that mistreating and disrespecting your brother was OK as long as you didn’t kill him. They had been led to believe that purity of heart was not important as long as you didn’t actually commit adultery. The Jewish leadership had demonstrated a blatant disregard for the sanctity of marriage, and personal integrity. Their brand of righteousness included revenge and hatred for their enemies. Jesus made it clear that this twisted view of righteousness is not good enough for the person who wants to enter the kingdom.

**“You have heard it said…”** Jesus’ words sound a sobering warning even today. Now more than ever, we are constantly inundated with a barrage of information and misinformation from every direction. With the advent of social media, seemingly everyone is offering their advice about everything from removing stains from carpets to pleasing God. Of course, listening to bad advice regarding carpet care is, in the grand scheme of things, of little consequence. But what about spiritual guidance?

It is not possible to over-emphasize the danger of listening to the philosophies of men in the spiritual realm. “I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus Himself said, “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15:14). He emphasized that teaching for doctrines the commandments of men will render a person’s worship vain (Matthew 15:9).

**“But I say to you…”** Every time Jesus corrected a misconception in this passage, He was perfectly comfortable appealing to His own authority, and His confidence did not escape the notice of His listeners. At the close of His sermon, we are told that “the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

The Hebrew writer began His discourse by stating that, in these last days, God has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). Peter told Jesus that following anyone else would have been foolish; “You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His disciples, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

Don’t ever let any person tell you what righteousness before God looks like unless they can show it to you in the pages of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed…” (Romans 1:16-17). You need to ignore what you have heard and listen to what Jesus is saying to you.

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