

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

B. Christ's Description Of Truly Righteous People

(Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:20-26)

I. Introduction

- A. Isaiah 9:1-2 predicted that when the Messiah arrived and ministered in the spiritual darkness of Galilee, the people would see a Great Light, that this light would shine upon those who dwelt in the shadow of death.
- B. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount, a pre-evangelism discourse, provided His description of truly righteous people in Matthew 5:3-16 and Luke 6:20-26 to contrast His view of righteous people with the errant views of Israel's self-righteous religious leaders. We view these passages for our insight and application:

II. Christ's Description Of Truly Righteous People, Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:20-26. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 172-176)

- A. At the start of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave eight qualities of truly righteous people, Matthew 5:3-12:
 - 1. Truly righteous people are "poor in spirit," Matthew 5:3. "The word translated 'poor' is the same word translated 'beggar' in the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-22," Ibid., p. 173. The "poor" are those "who have no merit or righteousness of their own on which to stand before God," so they are "characterized by utter dependence on God" in contrast to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, of which righteousness they were "exceedingly proud," Ibid. Those who obtain God's righteousness by grace as opposed to that of the Pharisees were those who would participate in the kingdom of heaven, Ibid.
 - 2. Truly righteous people "mourn," Matthew 5:4, what is often associated with grief over one's sin (cf. Psalm 51; Daniel 9:3-5), Ibid. God would thus comfort those who acknowledge their sin to Him, Ibid.
 - 3. Truly righteous people are "meek," Matthew 5:5, those who submit to God's authority, and God will grant them access to His kingdom and let them inherit the earth under His coming world rule, Ibid., p. 174.
 - 4. Truly righteous people hunger and thirst after righteousness, Matthew 5:6. They long for the righteousness of God that they know they lack in contrast to the Pharisees who were self-righteous, so God will fill these who hunger with His righteousness in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, Romans 3:21-28.
 - 5. Truly righteous people are "merciful," Matthew 5:7, showing "loving care and concern for the needs of others" in contrast to the Pharisees who sensed "no responsibility to the poor, the sick, the infirm, and the lonely, supposing these to be signs of divine displeasure," Ibid. God will show the merciful His mercy.
 - 6. Truly righteous people are "pure in heart," Matthew 5:8. "God measures a person . . . by His own unchangeable, unalterable, absolute holiness," and one "who has received righteousness from God is constituted as pure in heart and acceptable to Him," Ibid. Those who have such purity in heart will be rewarded by seeing God in all His purity as an act of divine grace, Ibid., p. 174-175.
 - 7. Truly righteous people are "peacemakers," Matthew 5:9, those who themselves are at peace with God since they have obtained His righteousness by God's grace through Christ and can be messengers of the Gospel of peace, becoming true peacemakers among others, Ibid., p. 175. The Pharisees failed to be peacemakers for others because they themselves were not at peace with God as they relied on their own futile self-righteousness for salvation. They were not the children of God like the peacemakers were!
 - 8. Truly righteous people are willing to suffer persecution because of righteousness, Matthew 5:10. The Pharisees did not suffer persecution for righteousness' sake (cf. Galatians 6:12), but they instead persecuted the righteous (cf. Galatians 4:29; Ibid.) Accordingly, those who willingly suffered for the sake of righteousness would be greatly rewarded by God in the kingdom, Matthew 5:11-12.
- B. Christ then used two illustrations to describe the upright influence of truly righteous people, Matthew 5:13-16:
 - 1. Truly righteous people are like salt that was used in Jesus' day to create a thirst, so truly righteous people maintain a godly testimony that creates a thirst in the ungodly for righteousness, Matt. 5:13; Ibid., p. 176.
 - 2. Truly righteous people are like light that penetrates the world's spiritual darkness, their lives testifying of the truth and righteousness that is in God to the influence of others for Christ, Matt. 5:14-16; Ibid.

Lesson: Truly righteous people acknowledge their personal spiritual poverty before God and cleave to Him by faith for His provision of righteousness, experiencing God's transforming salvation with changed lives. The Pharisees relied on their own self-made righteousness and thus completely missed God's true righteousness and His blessing.

Application: May we acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy before God to obtain His righteousness and blessing.