“An Example of Self-Righteousness”
Luke 15:25-32
Sunday, February 12, 2017

Introduction: The prodigal son in Luke chapter fifteen is an example of true repentance. True repentance involves and change of mind and heart followed by action. Remorse feels bad about what was done and wishes it could be undone, but has no action. Judas was remorseful, but he did not repent.

The older son in Luke chapter fifteen is an example of self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is a mistake many people make today and the consequences are tragic.

When the Bible talks about righteousness, it is simply talking about being right with God.

Let me ask you an important question. Is your soul right with God? That is not just an important question, it is the most important question.

- Your soul cannot be made right with God by what you do. Good works no matter how good they are or how many they are cannot make you right with God. This contradicts what every religion except Christianity teaches! This contradicts what the Mormon church teaches. This contradicts what the Jehovah Witnesses teach. This contradicts what some Protestant churches teach. This contradicts what many good and moral people believe that have nothing to do with a church. This perhaps contradicts what some of you believe.

Illustration: Romans 10:1-4 makes a distinction between God’s righteousness and man’s righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 the Bible says, “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

- Your soul cannot be made right with God by being baptized into a church. This contradicts what the Catholic church teaches about salvation.
**Application:** Our soul is made right with God by the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:8-9).

**T.S.** The older brother in the parable of the prodigal son symbolizes the Pharisees who were the self-righteous in Jesus’ day.

**Text:** Luke 15:25-32

The context of Luke chapter fifteen is that Jesus told the three parables in the chapter to justify receiving tax collectors and sinners (15:1-2).

- The Pharisees were zealous Jewish leaders.
- They developed 613 laws from the first five books of the Old Testament.
- 365 of these laws were negative and 248 were positive.
- The 10 Commandments were part of the 613 laws.
- Jewish Rabbis developed hundreds of additional laws to interpret the 613 laws.
- They had 39 laws to explain keeping the Sabbath day.

**Four Warning Signs of Self-Righteousness:**

1. **believing that works make you right with God**

- The older son felt that his work should have been rewarded (15:25,29).

- He felt like his work had not made him at least equal to his prodigal brother (15:29).

**Application:** Your works do not make you right with God. It is His work on the cross that makes you right with God (2 Cor. 5:21). It is not Jesus “plus” that makes you right with God. It is Jesus “period” that makes you right with God. It is not your righteousness that makes you right with God. It is your trust in His righteousness that makes you right with God.

2. having no real sense of sin

- One of the amazing things in this story is that the older brother did not see his sin.
- He was filled with anger (15:28).
- He was filled with jealousy (15:29-30).
- He was prideful (15:30).
- He had a judgmental attitude (15:30).

Application: Until you have a sense of your own sin, your soul will never be right with God.

Illustration: The apostle Paul saw his own sins. He said, “O wretched man that I am” (Romans 7:24). Paul said that he was chief among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

3. having no real love for the Father

- If the older brother had deeply loved his father, he would have responded to his father’s request (15:28).
- The parable does not tell us if he ever went to his brother’s celebration.
- What we do see in the parable is that the father never gave up inviting his son to the celebration.

Illustration: What a picture of the Heavenly Father.
**Application:** God never gives up on us. Like the prodigal’s father, our Heavenly Father says “come.”

4. **having no real interest in repenting sinners.**

- The older brother should have been rejoicing that his younger brother had repented and come home.
- He had no interest.

**Illustration:** In many churches, there is no real interest in people being saved. People being saved is not the only thing in a New Testament church, but it is the main thing. To keep the “main thing” the “main thing” is the greatest challenge a New Testament church faces.

**Application:** Let me ask you a question. Do you have a real interest in people being saved? Do you pray daily for people to be saved? Do you tell people what being saved has done for you? Do you share with people how to be saved? Do you rejoice when people are saved?

**Conclusion:** Here is the situation. All of you are good people. You do good things. You come to church. You give to the church. You help people as you can. And these things you should do, but don’t think that is how you will one day get into heaven. In God’s sight, all of your righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

**Invitation:** Two things are involved in being saved. There must be repentance and there must be faith. They are two sides of the same coin. You must repent of your sins which involves turning from them and you must have faith in the work Jesus did on the cross. Apart from repentance and faith you will not be saved. You cannot have your sin debt paid by your good works regardless of how good they are or how many they are.