

The Better Way

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

THE SIN OF SLOTHFULNESS

J. Noel Merideth

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines sloth as a "disinclination to action or labor; sluggishness; laziness; idleness; indolence." Webster continues, "As one of the seven deadly sins, spiritual sluggishness and dejection; acedia; apathy and inactivity in the practice of virtue." This is the sin of laziness; dullness; sluggishness; apathy; lethargy.

In Proverbs, a sluggard represents the opposite of the diligent man, who carefully plans his course according to wisdom. These opposites constitute one of the contrasting pairs which are used to delineate the two ways of life open to every man: the way of wisdom and the way of folly. Thus in Proverbs, the way of the sluggard and the fool is also the way of the unrighteous, while the way of the diligent and wise is also the way of the upright before God.

In the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, we find a portrait of the sluggard. The sluggard likes to sleep and does not want to get up in the morning, he turns from side to side. **"As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard upon his bed"** (Pro. 26:14; ASV). **"Yet a little sleep," he says, "a little folding of the hands to sleep"** (Pro. 24:33). Or when at last he has brought himself to get up and sit down to the table, he is too lethargic even to eat. **"The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish, And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again"** (Pro. 19:24). Or if he raises the morsel to his lips, he does it with an air of indescribable languor and weariness. **"The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish; It wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth"** (Pro. 26:15). Then the time comes for him to go out to his daily duties. But he has a number of ingenious, though utterly absurd, excuses why he should not leave the house. **"The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way; A lion is in the streets"** (Pro. 26:13; cf. 22:13). If he is told that this is a delusion, he is prepared to argue the matter, he is quite scornful of all the people who assure him to the contrary. **"The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason"** (Pro. 26:16). To have a sluggard act as a messenger is very irritating. **"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, So is the sluggard to them that send him"** (Pro. 10:26). He is too lazy to work for a crop. **"The sluggard will not plow by reason of the winter; Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing"** (Pro. 20:4). As for his house, well, it is run down. **"Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks"** (Ecc. 10:18, NKJV). And his vineyard, here it is:

I went by the field of the lazy *man*, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it

and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man (Pro. 24:30-34; NKJV).

The New Testament strikes out against slothfulness in no uncertain terms. In condemning to outer darkness the one-talent man who failed to use what he had, his lord said: **“Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter”** (Mat. 25:26). Paul admonishes, **“In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”** (Rom. 12:11). Hebrew 6:12 says, **“That ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”** In one strong statement, Paul gives his verdict against the lazy: **“If any will not work, neither let him eat”** (2 The. 3:10).

The slothful person often says he will work tomorrow, there will be more privileges tomorrow, there will be better circumstances tomorrow. But alas, tomorrow he does not work either. Some wrongfully drift into slothfulness because of discouragement or failure. Many parents want their children to have it easy and not have to work very hard. But is this really best? Henry Ford has given this timely comment:

There is no place in civilization for the idler. None of us has any right to ease. Work is our sanity, our self-respect, our salvation. Through work and work alone may health, wealth and happiness inevitably be secured.

Slothfulness, like other sins, paves the road for further temptation. An old English proverb says, “An idle brain is the devil’s workshop.” Torpor will bring all kinds of trouble, failure and poverty. It breeds discontent and complaining. Idle members in the church who do nothing get into the “objective case” and the “kickative

mood.” Instead of always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58), they always abound in trouble. Paul writes:

For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now whose who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread (2 The. 3:11-12; NKJV).

A fine illustration to show how slothfulness destroys is seen in an aqueduct built by the Romans in Segovia, Spain, in A.D. 109. For about 1800 years that aqueduct carried sparkling water to the Segovians. Then about the turn of the twentieth century the citizens felt that the aqueduct should be replaced by modern pipelines and so they stopped the flow of water. Shortly, the aqueduct began to fall apart. The blazing sun dried the mortar and made it crumble, its stones sagged and soon it lay in ruins. What ages of service could not destroy, idleness, rapidly disintegrated! How true of our minds and spirits.

The answer for slothfulness is to see the foolishness of it and “buckle down” to work. What an example Christ was of work. **“We must work,”** He said, **“while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”** (John 9:4). **“Go to the ant, thou sluggard,”** said Solomon, **“Consider her ways, and be wise”** (Pro. 6:6). God calls busy people for His great jobs. Moses, Gideon, Amos, Peter, Andrew, John, James, Matthew and Paul were all busy when God called them to do His work.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.~

Deceased

NECESSITY OF EXCEEDING RIGHTEOUSNESS

L. O. Sanderson

Among the strictest sect of the Jews in the days of Christ were the scribes and Pharisees, and many are the complimentary remarks which might be catalogued concerning them. The scribes were those whose duty and privilege involved the copying, reading, teaching, and explaining the law, including even the adding of omitted minor details and sitting in judgment on disputed points. The Pharisees were formalists,

who preferred to refer to themselves as “associates,” and whose name implied “the separated ones.” Thinking of these in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord admonished:

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 (Mat. 5:20).

This text admits that the scribes and Pharisees were characterized by some degree of righteousness, for it would be foolish to urge that righteousness of His disciples must exceed something which did not exist. Righteousness, when applied to mankind, has to do with the quality of being just and doing right. In some way the scribes and Pharisees, it was granted, demonstrated some righteousness; but those who enter the kingdom must exceed any qualities for which these of the Jews might be credited. Hence, we inquire: (1) What of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? and (2) the necessity of exceeding righteousness?

GOOD QUALITIES OF SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

They believed in a resurrection. Paul, recognizing this conviction, used it to divide sentiment against him. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, nor angels, nor spirits; but the Pharisees did (Acts 23:7-9). Hence, they believed in immortality, in life after death, in a promised land after this vale of tears. That is commendable.

Their righteousness was according to God's law. All authorities grant that they were bent on strict observance of the law, even using "political means" for its preservation and observance. They used this strictness concerning the law in attempting to entangle Christ, and doubtless the recognition of this strict attitude caused Christ to assure that one jot or tittle would not pass away until all be fulfilled. True enough, their more detailed regulations and traditions came to be more sacred to them than the law itself; yet they prided themselves on being strict observers of the law.

Many of their practices were commendable. They boasted that they were not "**extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as**" the publicans. The record shows that they were people of prayer. Someone has said that they had "eighty set forms of prayer." They prayed as they entered a building; they prayed in the streets; they prayed everywhere. And they denied themselves of many pleasures. They fasted twice a week; and they not only tithed "**mint and anise and cummin,**" but by their own account they gave "**tithes of all**" they "**possessed.**" They sat "**in Moses' seat**" and practiced hospitality "**in the markets.**" They even acknowledged that Christ was "**the son of David**" (Mat. 22:42). They were careful of their associates, refusing company with publicans and sinners; they respected the Sabbath day; they washed

before eating and when they returned from the market; they believed in keeping the cup and platter clean, at least on the outside.

Their party, numbering some seven thousand, could boast great names. Paul himself lived after this strictest sect of their religion. He was a Pharisee, and his father was too. And there was Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night; Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, and said to be the operator of the school Paul attended; Joseph, who buried the body of Jesus; and many others. The Pharisees, under great leaders, were exceedingly zealous. Josephus credits them with regularly organized missions for conversions, and Christ said they would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte" (Mat. 23:15). But with all the striking traits, they were carnal in nature, selfish in spirit, and hypocritical in character. And except our righteousness exceeds theirs, we have no entrance into the kingdom. Hence, the necessity for exceeding righteousness is plain.

HOW OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST EXCEED

It must exceed in its origin. The Pharisees actually originated most of their own righteousness by their perverted details and traditions. Ours originates from God, through Christ, by the Spirit, and is confirmed unto us by the apostles. Interpretation must not pervert it; tradition must become no part of it; likes and dislikes cannot be added or taken away. What we are must be the result of the influence of the divine record and the great pattern of living revealed therein. All of God's commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:172); Christ is "**made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption**" (1 Cor. 1:30); the "**Spirit of truth**" convicts "**the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**" (John 16:8); the apostles "**reasoned of righteousness**" (Acts 24:25); and all this adds up to the word of our God, for "**all scripture...is profitable...for instruction in righteousness**" (2 Tim. 3:16).

It must exceed in its nature. The righteousness of the Pharisees was formal, material; ours must be clothed with humility and be spiritual. Theirs was hypocritical; ours must be prompted by genuine faith, fervent love, and sincere hearts. Theirs would cleanse the outside and they would outwardly appear beautiful; but true righteousness has to do with the inward man—a changed heart, a renewed mind, and a transformed life. If we cannot pray with the spirit and with the understanding, rather than to be heard

of men, we cannot enter the kingdom. Though we may tithe and more, it will profit nothing unless it be given cheerfully and willingly and to the extent we are prospered. The Pharisees “say and do not;” we must hear, and obey. Theirs was theoretical righteousness, written on parchments and on technical minds; ours must be practical, **“written in our hearts,”** performed in a **“faith that works by love.”**

There is a difference also in extent. The righteousness of the Pharisees was limited to their some seven thousand—they were “separatists.” Likewise it was limited to their own edited laws and traditions, which became a veil against any truth of God through Christ. Our righteousness can, and should, embrace all the world, lifting the sinner, edifying the saint. And it recognizes the place and purpose of all Scripture, the letter and the spirit of all applicable commands, and the fact that God, not man, is to be pleased. True righteousness glorifies God in all things. It is not enough simply to perform the deed; it must be done in a truly sincere spirit and in harmony with God’s truth.

Finally, *true righteousness exceeds in its effects.* Few could be influenced by the narrow, radical, perverted **“leaven of the Pharisees,”** though it was something of which the disciples must beware. Christianity appeals to many more, of every age and race, the rich and poor, the educated and uneducated. Its purpose is not to make a proselyte, but to transform a character; not the **“putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of, a good conscience toward God.”** True righteousness is of faith, not fancy; of hope, not haughtiness; of the spirit, not spite; of truth, not tradition. The righteousness of self could not reach beyond this life, but the righteousness of God is forever. And though there is none righteous, true faith will be counted for righteousness.~

Deceased

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Saturday, November 23rd:** Chili Cook-off at Burroughs Park. Sign-up sheets in kitchen.
- **Sunday, December 8th:** Youth Holiday Party after afternoon services.
- **Friday, December 13th:** Ladies’ Holiday Party at the home of Jenny Gunter.
- **Saturday, December 14th:** Holiday Hayride at the home of Ken & Nancy Cohn.

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2024

Announcements J.D. Gunter
Scripture Reading Bret Bailey
Genesis 2:18-25

Song Leader Jonathan West
Prayer J.D. Gunter/Stephen Cohn (AM)
 Joshua West/Gary Blasingame (PM)

Speaker David Brown

Lord’s Table (AM)
 (Luke 22: 66-71)

Gary Blasingame Joshua West
 Jonathan West Stephen Cohn

Lord’s Table (PM)

Eric Paluka J.D. Gunter

Audio/Video Monitor Eric Paluka
Camera/Door Monitor Gary Blasingame

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024

(via Zoom Meeting)

Announcements Bret Bailey
Speaker James Arline
Bible Class Teacher David Brown

FOR NOVEMBER

Prepare Communion Humphrey
Lock Buildings West
Prepare Bulletin Board West

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Devon & Juliana Paluka, Emma Gomez, Injured HFD Firefighter, Family of Marcelo Garcia (fallen firefighter), April McCain, Gayle Barnett, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Tania Turcios, Robbie Kirby, Edith Young, Zack Nero, Debbie Brannon, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Charles & Ann Nero, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orlinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

In what city was Paul born?

Answer to last week’s question:
 Master; John 20:16