# Bringing Back Ethical Righteousness

Sometimes it would be very convenient if living a Christian life was like some would have us believe. I have seen "Christians" who, although they are not particularly "bad" people, do not have any desire to live apart from the world. One could observe them in everyday life and never tell any difference between their conduct and someone of the world.

This reveals a very disturbing trend. Satan is victorious when he makes it appear as if a Christian is not any different from a worldly person. More harm can be done to God's cause by a Christian acting inappropriately than an ungodly person worshipping Satan. The difference is influence. Someone who appears to be "correct" will have much more sway than some fanatic who no one will ever believe. This lays a great burden on the shoulders of those who want to be children of God. This is a call to righteousness.

Righteousness has always been one of the greatest virtues of religion. In a broad sense, being righteous is simply being in an acceptable condition with God. Over 2,500 years ago, Micah brushed aside sacrificial ritual and upheld the primary tenant that ethical righteousness was God's major concern: *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"* (Micah 6:8). Because human nature is always pretty much a constant, the essential requirements of religion are always fundamentally the same. Hosea said, *"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"* (6:6). Paul told the Romans to *"yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God"* (6:13). These men wrote 700-800 years apart, but the principles were consistent throughout the ages!

Along with righteousness, there is another matter to consider. If you were to look up "ethics," your dictionary would probably say, "The moral principles which determines the rightness or wrongness of particular acts or activities." These "moral principles" are more than just abstract ideas on a piece of paper. You see, too many people want religion or "righteousness" without ethics. They want to feel close to God, but do not want heavy "principles" burdening them. They want to feel holy without giving up the sin which defiles them.

Micah taught us that religion and ethics cannot be separated. If we want to be children of God, zealous for every good work, then we must live as God commanded. As we have studied before, a major factor in someone's

decision to obey the gospel is their acceptance or rejection of certain moral principles. In other words, following Christ means altering your entire way of life. One must personally decide if Christ merits such a drastic change of life. No one can make that decision for you.

This was essentially the charge given to the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22 (*"Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."*), but he would not change his way of life for the Lord. I certainly do not want to discourage people from obeying Christ, but please be aware of the commitment. It can mean your soul!

Kyle Campbell