

Christ Reformed Baptist Church – New Castle, IN
Sunday School Class Series: Inspiring & Maintaining Our
Personal Gospel Witness.

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PART FOUR:

The self-righteous person

Today is our fourth class that related to what I am entitling ‘Maintaining our Person Witness’ which collectively are aimed at encouraging us to individually share our Christian faith...the Gospel with others individually.

For those who have not been with us for the previous classes, we FIRST discussed the various concepts and challenges related to the maintenance of our individual duty to share the gospel with others, then SECONDLY we spoke about the condition of the unregenerate / un-belivers conscience with whom we will be communicating with and then THIRDLY (last Sunday) we started to look at specific ‘biblical startagies’ when interacting with various ‘catagories / types’ of unbelievers...specifically we examined how Jesus engaged one particular type of unbeliever known as THE IGNORANT and INDIFFERENT PERSON.

Today we shall again look to our blessed Savior and learn from Him as he deals with what is perhaps the second largest class of unbeliever that we will encounter while individually witnessing the Gospel and that is THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PERSON.

If you really think about it, self-righteousness is clearly one of the universal truths of all ‘works’ religions, whether Judaism, Catholicism or Islam...or any other non-Christian religion or cult. All seek to elevate in some way or another man’s capacity to achieve some degree of moral excellence and/or attainment.

Also, we would be correct in saying that self-righteousness truly lies at the heart of all forms of nominal ‘Christian’ liberalism which scoffs at the idea the need of real, experienced, personal salvation...and may even be offended at the idea of such teachings.

We must understand that this category of unbeliever is a proud and self-confident type of a person. They are completely satisfied with themselves and usually possess a sense (even if it’s a secret) of being superior to the general class of people in society.

They greatly magnify all their attributes and good deeds, but greatly minimize, excuse and even ignore their weaknesses and faults.

Now, prior to learning from Jesus’ dealings with Nicodemus in the Gospel of John Chp.3 we need to understand self-righteous person’s way of looking at righteousness itself.

One of the best biblical illustrations of how most self-righteous people understand righteousness is recorded in the OT book of Job. For the sake of time, we can’t unpack all the text that record Job’s interactions with his “comforters / friends” however for those who have heard teachings and/or studied that particular

portion of Scripture know that his supposed ‘comforters’ believed in a form of righteousness called ‘reasonable righteousness’.

You see to them, they did not believe that anyone could obtain ‘perfect righteousness’ but rather that they (not Job, as evidenced by his sufferings) had attained an acceptable level, or better called a ‘reasonable righteousness’ and thus were acceptable unto the LORD while Job on the other hand must have had some serious, secret iniquity in his life.

This proud view of ‘reasonable righteousness’ held by Job’s friends is precisely the view held by most self-righteous people...and its this wrong view that underestimates the holiness of God and the seriousness of sin. Its precisely this view that attempts to pull down Almighty God from His throne to man’s level while raising Himself up to God’s place.

WELL...HOW DID THE LORD JESUS DEAL WITH the self-righteous person? Together let’s first look at JOHN CHP. 3 at the record of Jesus’ interaction with Nicodemus.

➤ EMPHASISING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE JOHN 3

Perhaps the most important lesson to learn from our Savior’s encounter with Nicodemus, is the need to emphasize SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

Note with me that throughout the text we just read our Lord spoke about an experience of new birth...of which Nicodemus had never known.

It is here that the tender spot of a proud, self-righteous person is best stirred...because its at this point that his spiritual bankruptcy is most obvious.

Why is this? Well because, as soon as we mention the experience of receiving new life and new character (following shame and repentance) the person who evaluates everything in terms of ‘accomplishments and attainments’ is left floundering and at a loss of boasting because the conversation has turned to something which he has never sought out and currently doesn’t possess.

The new birth, the SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE is the one thing that the self-righteous person cannot claim to have attained unto, or to be good at, and this is therefore the issue which we must continually stress.

➤ KEEPING MATTERS PERSONAL - LUKE 10:25-37

As we prepare to speak to those who are self-righteous we may wonder how we will do if a debate begins to develop?

Well, one strategy that the Lord Jesus employed to handle those who wanted to debate was to keep the matter personal.

➤ EMPHASIS THE SINS OF THE HEART – The Good Samaritan

The parable of the good Samaritan provides a perfect example of how to deal with those plagued by a self-righteous spirit.

It spoke to the heart sins...and thus we also must tell the self-righteous person that what matters is not outward cultural advantages, affections or veneers of courtesy, but inner motives and desires.

