> Matthew 5:20 (ESV)
>
> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

## What Did Jesus Mean by This?

This statement by Jesus is part of His famous Sermon on the Mount, where He lays out the values and standards of the Kingdom of Heaven. At first glance, it seems shocking. The scribes and Pharisees were considered the most devout and religiously upright in Jewish society. They were strict law-keepers, experts in the Scriptures, and seemingly moral men. So how can our righteousness exceed theirs?

## The Problem with Pharisaic Righteousness

The righteousness of the Pharisees was external, performative, and self-righteous. They focused on outward obedience while

neglecting the internal condition of the heart. Jesus repeatedly condemned this superficial righteousness.

> Matthew 23:27–28 (ESV)
>
> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Their righteousness was built on legalism — trying to earn favor with God through human effort and strict adherence to the law. However, Scripture makes it clear that no one can be justified before God by works of the law:

> Galatians 2:16 (ESV)
>
> Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ...

> Romans 3:20 (ESV)
>
> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

The Righteousness That God Requires

The righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees is not more rules, rituals, or religious acts — it is a deeper, inward, and spiritual righteousness that comes from faith in Jesus Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

This righteousness is:

Imputed Righteousness – the righteousness of Christ credited to us through faith.

> 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) –

> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Regenerating Righteousness – the internal transformation that changes the heart and produces obedience born from love, not duty.

> Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV)
>
> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you... I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Sanctifying Righteousness – the process by which believers grow in holiness and Christlikeness.

> Philippians 1:11 (ESV)
>
> ...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through

> Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

## How Do We Receive This Righteousness?

By grace through faith. It is not something we earn, but something we receive through trusting in Jesus Christ.

> Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)
>
> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

When we believe in Jesus, His righteousness is credited to us, and our sins are forgiven. This is what theologians call justification — a legal declaration by God that we are righteous in His sight.

## The Result of True Righteousness

True righteousness leads to a transformed life. It produces

spiritual fruit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and more — through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22–23).

Unlike the Pharisees who obeyed to appear righteous before men, true righteousness results in a life lived for the glory of God, from a heart that has been changed.

> Romans 6:18 (ESV)
>
> And, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

A Warning and an Invitation

If you’re relying on your own good works, moral behavior, or religious activity to be right with God, the Bible says you’re still lost. Salvation cannot be earned — it is only received by trusting in Christ.

> Romans 10:3–4 (ESV)
>
> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Come to Christ. Trust not in yourself, but in His perfect life, His sacrificial death, and His victorious resurrection. Receive the righteousness that God freely offers — and let His grace transform your life from the inside out.

> Titus 2:11–12 (ESV)
>
> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Conclusion

The righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees is not about doing more — it’s about becoming new. It is the righteousness that comes by faith, through grace, and is lived out by the power of the Holy Spirit.

> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
>
> Matthew 5:6 (ESV)

JIUNGE NA GROUP LETU LA WHATSAPP HAPA >> WHATSAPP GROUP....

Share on:
WhatsApp