Watered-Down Righteousness: Living Below Heaven's Standard

One of the most subtle spiritual dangers is the tendency of the religious person who is given over to sin to build himself a watered-down standard of righteousness, so that he can keep up the illusion that he is on the road to salvation. Instead of looking to the righteousness of God and conforming to that absolute standard, he redefines what it means to be "a believer", choosing a convenient version that asks for no self-denial, no real repentance and no deep change. This self-deception is fed by a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, which reveal God's plan: to bring man up to the stature of Christ. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." *(Ephesians 4:13)*

Most people base their hope of salvation entirely on God's mercy, without understanding that this mercy is not an excuse to stay unchanged but an opportunity God gives for transformation. The kind of thinking that says, "God is merciful, so I will be saved no matter how I live," ignores the fact that God's mercy always comes with the call to holiness. Instead of seeing grace as a help to rise to the stature of Christ, people use it to justify spiritual stagnation. And so they no longer seek a transformed life, only emotional comfort.

Scripture shows us that the grace of God is not meant to keep us in a state of spiritual comfort, but to lead us to a life transformed through repentance: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." *(Titus 2:11-12)* When grace is misunderstood, it becomes a pretext for avoiding a confrontation with sin, for avoiding self-denial and the painful but necessary process of sanctification.

This approach produces a watered-down version of righteousness, in which a person reserves for himself the right to decide:

- **Which sins are serious and which can be tolerated**

- **Which areas of life must change and which can stay as they are**

It is a subtle form of self-justification, in which sin is played down and the conscience is soothed by comparing ourselves with what others do, rather than by measuring ourselves against God's standard. Sins such as drunkenness, fornication or smoking are easily recognised as serious and worthy of condemnation. But the watered-down standard shows itself when other sins, more subtle or socially accepted, are ignored, played down or tolerated. This approach creates the illusion of a clean life, but in reality it hides a false righteousness, built on human criteria and not on God's standard.

God's call is clear: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." *(Matthew 6:33)* This is not an invitation to selective morality, but to a high calling, a life lived after the pattern of Christ. It is not about a few outward adjustments or religious gestures, but about a radical transformation according to God's heavenly standard. True righteousness is not relative; it is the righteousness of God: absolute, holy and unchanging. It does not adapt to man's preferences, but calls man to conform to the character of God.

Only by aspiring to this absolute righteousness can we be worthy of being "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God": "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." *(Ephesians 2:19)* In the light of this righteousness of God, we must examine ourselves not only for obvious sins, but also for those accepted by most people who consider themselves born of God, yet which remain sins in His eyes and make us unworthy of being fellowcitizens with the saints.

Examples of overlooked sins — watered down, yet real and not accepted in the Kingdom of God:

- Evading taxes and legal debts

- Slander or speaking evil of others

- Uncontrolled anger

- Consuming carnal content (TV, internet)

- Beaches and swimming pools – exposing the body

- Disobeying the authorities (driving illegally, breaking traffic laws)

- Theft by cheating (copying in exams)

In contrast to righteousness, a life lived in sin, even when it is disguised by a religious identity, brings restlessness, inner emptiness and discontent. The person who calls himself a believer but goes on living in sin does not find the rest God has promised. Sin is not limited to visible deeds; it also includes attitudes and choices that contradict the character of God. True righteousness requires a life that is clean not only in appearance, but in the depths of our motives and decisions.

One such area, often overlooked, is **dishonest gain**, a widespread sin that is rarely confronted. Although it is justified in many settings or ignored out of habit, this kind of gain, when practised by someone who claims to be born of the righteous God, is a grave offence against the righteousness to which Christ calls us and defies the justice of the Kingdom of God. More than that, a dishonest life brings reproach on the Name of God: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" *(Romans 2:24)*.

This booklet has been published because dishonest gain has become an alarming problem, worryingly widespread among those who consider themselves born again. It is meant to be both

a wake-up call and a help for those who have been misled into believing that dishonest gain is not a serious sin — serious enough to stand in the way of being born of the righteous God.

Source: *Watered-Down Righteousness: Living Below Heaven's Standard* — Unmodified Word
unmodifiedword.com/articles/watered-down-righteousness-living-below-heavens-standard