

The Difference Between the Good and the Righteous

I am amazed at the lengths some people will go to maintain a righteous life. Spiritual disciplines—like prayer, Scripture reading, meditation, fasting, and so forth—have great value in helping us maintain purity and live like Christ, but have you ever known anyone who did it a little *too* much?

Take Simeon Stylites. Early in the 5th century, Simeon just wanted to pray and meditate. He joined a monastery, but he was so simple and stern in his approach that even the other monks—who were *known* for their simplicity and asceticism—kicked him out.

He tried to confine himself in a small hut in a mountainous region, but people kept seeking him out for advice. But all these people wanting him to pray with them didn't leave him enough time to pray, (Yeah, go ahead and read that again.) So what do you do when you want to be righteous and spiritual without being pestered by people?

Simeon climbed up on top of a pillar—and stayed there for 37 years.

That's a man who climbed to new heights to focus on his righteousness.

We may admire certain qualities in a person like this, but few of us want to be like him.

Let's admit it. Other people are just more likeable. People like Mother Teresa, Franklin Graham, and that preschool teacher at church, who loves our kids. She is there week after

week to love, teach, and care for them. Those are *good* people. They love others and will go out of their way to help.

As we say in the South, "She's good people."

Do you see the difference between the righteous and the good? One may give the appearance of being good, but the other shows it. Our response to them is equally different. We like—even love—one, but the other we just admire from a distance.

Jesus said it this way:

"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die" (Rom. 5:7).

The world thinks God loves those who are over-the-top righteous, and He likes people who are good. And they're right, but Jesus goes away beyond that. He loves those who are *not* righteous and those who are *not* good.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8).

Try to be as righteous as you want; you're still a sinner. Try to be as good as possible; you're still a sinner. But Jesus still loves you. And He proved it.

Jesus didn't get on a 50-foot pillar; He got on a cross—and He did the greatest good for us: He took away our sin. He was righteous and good for us—even when we didn't deserve it.

