

Just such were the Pharisees. Their outward goodness made them to appear holy in the eyes of men: but in the sight of God they were unclean, and their prayers be put away. Why? Because their hearts were full of wickedness. God looks within the cup: and prayers from a heart that loves sin are an abomination to him.

There are many little Pharisees. When a child reads the Scriptures daily, and commits portions to memory, and prays morning and evening, and all this to have people say, "What a good child that is!" what is he but a Pharisee? When he is pleased with his own goodness, and thinks himself better than others, what is he but a Pharisee? When children love the praise of man more than the praise of God, what are they but Pharisees? Though God says, "My child, give me thine heart," they give him the lip, and no more: they give him words only; but he will accept of no prayer untill the heart is given to him.

In the Bible we read of a Pharisee, who became a good man. His name was Nicodemus. He wanted to get to heaven, and he came to Jesus to inquire the way, for he knew that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, and able to tell him. What was the Lord's answer? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus marvelled, and asked how a man could become a child, and be born of his mother a second time. But Jesus told him that the new birth is not of one's parents, but of water and the Spirit. It was as if he had said, "The cup—that is the heart—must be cleansed as with water; and it is not of man to do this, but the Holy Ghost."

Children, what Jesus said to Nicodemus he says to you. Except your heart is thus cleansed by the Holy Spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of God.