

## Christ: The Fulfillment of the Law #5

Matthew 5: 17-20

Tonight as we continue our study in this powerful message that Jesus preached, we come to a definite shift in His message. He has dealt with the blessedness of life in the Beatitudes and the responsibility of believers as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Here in [V.17](#) the Lord begins a discourse that deals with the righteousness of God and how humanity obtains such righteousness, as well as the effect that it has on life.

Clearly one cannot have a right relationship with God apart from His righteousness and the only way that we can obtain His righteousness is through the only begotten Son. Once that righteousness is obtained through salvation in Christ we are obligated to live according to the standard that God's righteousness demands. Yet again this is impossible without the help and guidance of the Lord. As I considered this passage, it became profoundly evident that we are dependent on the Lord to receive His righteousness and we remain dependent upon Him to live a life according to His righteousness.

As we come to the text this evening, Jesus is addressing an issue that was prominent in that day. Many of the Jews with whom He spoke had a distorted view of how one was considered righteous in the eyes of God. The majority of them were depending on their lineage in Abraham and a strict adherence to the law of God to achieve righteousness. Many of them viewed Christ as a threat to the law; they felt as if He sought to destroy the law and annul it. Jesus reveals that He came as the fulfillment of the law. I want us to consider the [elements](#) of that fulfillment as we think on: [Christ: The Fulfillment of the Law](#).

**I. The Purpose of the Lord** ([17-18](#)) – In these verses Jesus deals with His purpose for coming to this earth. First of all He addresses:

**A. The Confusion about His Purpose** ([17a](#)) – **Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets:** There was a great misconception about Christ that brought tragic results for the vast majority of Jews. As He came a man of meager existence, He did not fulfill the grand expectations of the Jews. They looked for Messiah to be one who came in royalty and great grandeur. They could not accept this Man who had no place to lay His head as the Christ.

- We need to consider their standard of expectation for righteousness as well. The Pharisees held the Scriptures in high regard, as we all should. However, their view of Scripture was based upon the interpretation of the scribes. Anyone who held a view other than that which the scribes taught was thought to be an infidel.

- They also held a strict adherence to the traditions of the Pharisees. They had developed an oral law that most revered on the same level as the Holy Scriptures. Anyone who disregarded these traditions or challenged them in anyway was thought to be a heathen.
- As we study the ministry of Jesus we discover that He often challenged them on their traditions and even their interpretation of Scripture. [Mat.15:3 – But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?](#) Because of that, most viewed Him as one who sought to destroy all they held dear as the basis of life and practice.

**B. The Confirmation of His Purpose** (17b) – [I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil](#). Among the confusion Jesus declares that it is not His intention to destroy that which God had said; He had come to fulfill the plan of God, according to His Word, not contrary to it. Every prophecy that was given concerning His birth, life, and death, He would fulfill. There was not one word written in Scripture concerning His earthly ministry that He did not fulfill. He will fulfill every word concerning the second coming as well.

- Every word that Jesus spoke, every miracle that He performed, every rebuke that He gave to the religious elite, His birth, life, and death were all according to the plan of God revealed in His Word. Never once did Jesus stray from the will of God or act in such a way that was contrary to what the Lord desired. His life was lived in full submission to the Lord.
- It would have been impossible for Him to have acted contrary to the Word because He is the embodiment of the Word. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us! He was God, living among sinful men. Sadly many in that day thought they knew more about the Word than the Word Himself. We too see that in our day.

**C. The Completion of His Purpose** (18) – [For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled](#). Jesus reveals that He had come to fulfill the law and He would accomplish that. All that the Word proclaimed would come to pass; [not one jot or tittle](#) (the dotting of the i's and crossing of the t's) would fail. Let's take a moment to consider all this reveals. It speaks much concerning the Word of God.

**1. The Preservation of the Word** – Jesus proclaimed that the Word would endure; God will preserve His Word. This is an entirely different study that we don't have the time to adequately address, but rest assured that God's Word will endure when all else is gone. The scoffers and naysayers will pass from this life; kings and kingdoms will come and go; economies will rise and fall; heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of God shall never pass away. It is forever settled in heaven and preserved for eternity! [Mat.24:35 – Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away](#). [Ps.12:6-7 – The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver](#)

tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. [7] Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

**2. The Perseverance of the Word** – For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. The scribes and Pharisees may have sought to hinder Him and challenge His fulfillment of the Word, but they would not be able to. God had provided His Word and that Word would persevere. No matter how much they opposed the Lord and the fulfillment of Scripture, the Word would prevail.

- The world still seeks to hinder the Word of God and the furtherance of the gospel, but they too shall fail. Every promise that God ever made will be kept. Every prophecy that He proclaimed will come to pass. Every judgment and warning the Bible reveals will be brought about according to God's plan. The world may deny Him and reject His Word; they may proclaim that it is all a myth and foolishness, but the Word will persevere. It may be disregarded and neglected, but God will do what He said He would do! All will be fulfilled according to the divine plan of God. Ps.119:89 – For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. 1 Pet.1:25 – But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

## **I. The Purpose of the Lord** (17-18)

**II. The Proclamation of the Lord** (19-20) – Here the Lord addresses man's obligation to the Word of God and the righteousness required to enter heaven. Notice:

**A. He Speaks of Recklessness** (19a) – Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: Clearly He is speaking of those who are born again because He refers to their standing in the kingdom of heaven. We must realize the importance of what Jesus has said. These are strong words that offer a clear warning. Those who knew the Word of God and disobeyed or ignored its teaching would be held accountable. Those who purposely sought to bend the Word or alter it to suit their agenda or lifestyle were guilty of breaking the commandments.

- This warning was extended to those who misinterpreted the Word of God to others. Jesus was aware that the Pharisees were guilty of such conduct. They had developed a form of religion, consisting of traditions mixed with the Word, and often ignored the true teaching of the Word.

- This is a sobering rebuke for all of us, but especially those who handle and teach the Word of God. We had better be sure that we have rightly divided the Word and are not teaching contrary to the whole counsel of God. We must guard against seeking to manipulate the Word to fit our ideas or desires. God has said what He meant and He meant what He said.
- I don't want to stand accountable to the Lord for willfully disobeying His Word or being deceptive in my teaching of the Word. God's Word was not given as a tool for men's devices. Many today build doctrines around Scripture that is taken out of context. This is an act that will be judged of God. May we seek to live according to His Word and teach it within its context, rightly dividing the Word of truth. [2 Jn. 8 – Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.](#)

**B. He Speaks of Reward** (19b) – [but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.](#) Just as there are those who are reckless with the Word, there are those who are faithful to the Word, seeking to live by the Word and share it in truth and uprightness. Those who are reckless with the Word will stand accountable to the Lord and those who are faithful to the Word will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

- We are entrusted with the Word and have certain obligations associated with the Word. It is the basis for all of life's faith and practice. Our lives must be lived in light of God's Word. We are obligated to know the Word and share it in truth and proper understanding. [1 Thes.2:4 – But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.](#) [1 Thes.2:9 – For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.](#) [1 Thes.2:13 – For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.](#)

**C. He Speaks of Redemption** (20) – [For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.](#) Keep in mind the setting and the audience to which Jesus spoke. He was dealing with the Jews who were taught to live according to the traditions and standards of the Pharisees. Jesus reveals profound truth regarding redemption in this verse. Consider:

**1. The Priority** – He is dealing with entrance to heaven and what is required to gain that entrance. The basis for anyone's entrance to heaven is righteousness. Jesus declares that we must be righteous if we are to be granted entrance to heaven. He says nothing about works; He doesn't speak of baptism; nor does He say anything about being a part of the synagogue.

He declares that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, thus revealing the need for righteousness. We must be counted righteous if we are to enter heaven.

**2. The Purity** – **except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.** That reveals a profound truth; we must be righteous, but the righteousness of even the most diligent religious men is insufficient. Our righteousness must exceed even the most committed and devout of the religious elite. In essence, the righteousness that men possess will never satisfy the Lord. We must possess His righteousness and that is only obtained through salvation in Him.

- We could adhere to every moral code known to man; we could attend church every time the doors were open and even when they weren't; we could memorize and quote the whole New Testament, and yet we would be lacking. Righteousness isn't obtained by the works of men. The righteousness of the Son is applied to our lives when we are saved. God takes our unworthiness and offers the holiness of His Son. [Rom.10:2-4 – For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. \[3\] For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. \[4\] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.](#)

**3. The Poverty** – **For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Many in Jesus' day thought they lived good enough to merit entrance to heaven. They were depending upon their works of righteousness to please God. Jesus declares that man's righteousness must exceed that of the most religious or he will in no way enter heaven. In essence, this is impossible to achieve.

- Many thought they were rich in their own righteousness, but in God's eyes they were poor and undone. He was not pleased with what He saw and it would never be enough to please Him and merit eternal life. I fear that many in our day are depending on the life they live or some other moral standard to be accepted of God, but their righteousness is lacking. Spiritually they are bankrupt before God. [Mat.7: 21-23.](#)

These have been humbling verses, but they reveal great truth. Christ is the fulfillment of God's eternal plan. He came to fulfill what the law could never do and that was to provide redemption for all humanity. We are blessed to have a copy of the written Word that reveals the living Word. It will endure forever, even when this earth ceases to exist.

What have we done with that Word? Have we allowed it to transform our lives? Do we live according to the will of God revealed in His Word? We will stand accountable for what we have done with what we have been given! What are you trusting in for salvation, your works or the finished work of Christ upon the cross? He is the only way of redemption!