

# Christ, The Law and You

by Tim Conway

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**Scripture:** Matthew 5:17, Romans 8:1, Galatians 3:10, Ezekiel 36:27, Romans 3:31, Romans 8:1, Galatians 3:13

**Topics:** "Fulfillment of the Law", "Transformation through the Holy Spirit"

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## Description

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## Transcript

We're in the midst of a study of the Sermon on the Mount, which is Matthew 5, 6, and 7. One of our Lord's longest sermons as recorded for us in the pages of Scripture. Matthew chapter 5, we begin reading in verse 17. Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, not a jot or tittle, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. So, I look at this, I don't know how many of you paid really close attention to what was just said there, but I find a lot of questions pop up in my own mind.

Like, what did we just read? Think about it. Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. Well, what's that? What's the Law and the Prophets? I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

What's that? What does it mean to fulfill? For assuredly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. Well, what does that mean, until

all is fulfilled? Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Well, what does that mean? Least in the kingdom of heaven? Does that mean just lower grade blessing? Or is that actually a curse? Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For, I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees. Now, how did the Scribes and Pharisees get in here? You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. So, I mean, there's a lot of questions that pop up.

But here's the thing. Before you just tune out, before you shut down, before you say, well, there's deep things here. I don't know if I can really understand everything here.

There's concepts that seem confusing to me. I mean, what does that mean? Before you just shut off, I would say this. Notice the word for at the beginning of verse 20.

You'll see it. Little three-letter word. F-O-R.

Now, I want to draw your attention to that one little word. Because that's a pretty critical word here. For, I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

This is verse 20. You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, think about the word for.

Why would it be stuck right there? Well, for is a conjunction. And you know what it does? The least we could say about it is this. It ties verse 20 back to 17, 18, and 19.

Well, that's critical. Because what that little word for means is you introduce a sentence with that when you're going to clarify what you just said. Or you're going to come to some conclusion about what you just said.

But the big issue here is this. It's not an island to itself. It's connected.

It's a truth that's being drawn from what's just said. Why am I hitting on that? For this reason. Look how it ends.

You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you know what this means? You see, you don't want to shut down. Unless you don't care whether you enter the kingdom of heaven.

Does anybody not care? Anybody here today and it's... I mean, listen. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. If anybody knows about the truth, he came to bear witness of the truth.

And he is here to tell us this truth. And this truth is just not about some guy that happens to be over in Leeds right now or over in London. Somebody over in Thailand or somebody over in India.

It's not about that. You want to notice the pronouns here in verse 20. For I say to who? You.

He's saying you. You. You.

If your righteousness... And see, this is being drawn from what he just said. There's something about all that he just said that has to do with our righteousness. And obviously, the people who excel, you want to be like that.

The great in the kingdom of heaven, you want to be like that. The least, he's explaining himself. Does least simply mean lower blessing? No.

For I say unto you. If you're like the scribes and the Pharisees, you don't enter. And you know what's very easy to do? What's very easy is to say, I'm not like them.

Do you know what Jesus says at the end of this sermon? He says, many are going to say to me in that day, Lord, Lord. You know what the problem is? You've got all sorts of people in this world that are just like the scribes and Pharisees. But if you say, are you a scribe or a Pharisee? No, I'm not like that.

People always want to take the best estimation of self and put themselves in a camp where they're not like that. When the reality is the vast majority of religious people. Because remember what he says at the end.

Not everybody that says to me, Lord, Lord. And what are they going to say to him? Lord, we prophesied. We cast out demons.

We did many mighty works in your name. And you know what he says? Same thing he says here. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

You see, this has to do with law. Do you recognize the whole sermon on the mount? This verse 20 is a lead in to the vast majority of the rest of the sermon on the mount. Because what the rest of the sermon on the mount is, is him opening up what the law keeping of the Christian looks like.

That's what it's about. And if your righteousness doesn't reflect the sermon on the mount, he says, you're not going to inherit the kingdom. And there's a lot of religious people in the world who, they're religious and they've got a type of morality.

See, the scribes and the Pharisees had a righteousness. In fact, the scribes and the Pharisees had such a predominant righteousness, that in that day, most people considered them to be the most religious people. You know, we look at it as a negative thing today.

But back in that day, no. If you were a scribe, you were basically, you were one who copied the scriptures. You were known to know what the word of God was all about.

The Pharisees, they prided themselves in knowing the law. You see the problem about it? Was that they didn't keep it. Jesus came along and he said, you know what? By your traditions, you undo.

And they not only undid the commandments of God, they taught other people to undo them. Oh, but did they have an external righteousness? You better believe they did. Did they show up at the synagogue? Did they come to church? Was their place empty? Nope, no.

Their place was not empty. Did they cart around the Old Testament scriptures? Yeah, they studied them. They knew them.

They memorized them. You see, brethren, the thing is, we can very easily say, well, I'm not like that. But see, you don't want to just do that.

What you want to do is you want to look and see. We want to look very closely. Next week we'll probably look really close at the scribes and the Pharisees.

But this week, we basically want to take our Lord's words here in the first three verses and try to unpack them a bit. Brethren, I'm stressing this because I don't want you to shut down. Because if you just get to the place, well, I don't know what the Law and the Prophets is, and I don't know what it means to fulfill, and I don't know what it means to be the greatest in the kingdom.

But I'd say this. Don't tune me out. Don't start thinking about dinner.

Don't think about work this week. Think about this. If you value your soul, because Jesus is saying, look, you don't enter the kingdom unless there are certain things that are true about you.

This is life and death. I think about hell. I think about what the Scripture teaches about a place of punishment.

You know, Scripture talks about spirits in prison. A lot of my family, the vast majority of my family, lost, nominal, Irish Catholics on my dad's side. I don't know of a true Christian in my entire family.

My grandparents all died. They're in that place right now. Very likely.

And so is the vast majority. Jesus said, few there be that find it. Few there be that find it.

Why? You know why? Because people are content with a righteousness that's like the Scribes and the Pharisees. We are so used to, and I don't know if in England anymore, but I know that where we've had lots of exposure, like in the Netherlands, where you just grow up under the Scripture, Scribes and Pharisees immediately is negative. You see, the problem is that the kind of righteousness that sends people to hell does not automatically trigger a negative response.

You recognize what I'm saying? In the vast majority of churches, the kind of people that are religious and headed to hell and don't know it, the kind of righteousness they have is applauded. Now, if you say Scribe and Pharisee to them, they recoil. Oh, we know that's bad.

And yet, they're just like them. But they know it not. And you know what the thing is? They're not my responsibility right now.

You are. And one of the things that I believe God has sent me here is, brethren, I want to make it to glory. And I want as many of you as possible to make it with me.

And we need to be glued to the truth. And we don't want to shut down. I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of God.

And you know what? Jesus sees Judgment Day. And He sees it with 20-20 vision. He sees the multitudes.

Shocked! Lord, yeah, I was there that day when Tim preached, but I didn't think that was talking about me. I went out of there pretty much at ease. I was pretty smug.

I shut him off. I got thinking about other things. I didn't think that regarded me.

I go to church. Sometimes. I own a Bible.

See, He can see. He knows. He sees all manner of people who are religious.

And He says, many are going to say to me on that day. And you know what He sees? He sees Judgment Day with a lot of religious people that are shocked. Lord! I mean, it's not casual.

You don't just say, Lord, Lord, you know, I thought everything was okay. You're suddenly coming to realize, I thought I was okay, and I just lost my soul. These people are not casual in this.

They're screaming. They're pleading. They're desperate.

But it's too late. You see, death takes you, and your righteousness was like the scribes and the Pharisees. It's too late.

It's gone. Your chance is gone. This is death row.

Because we're all guilty. That's all this is. This world is death row.

And you've got an opportunity to plead for pardon. But this is your only opportunity. And the day of your execution is coming.

And it's coming quick. Our lives are very short. Just a vapor.

So here we have it. Now, I want to do hermeneutics 101 with you. Basically, hermeneutics is a fancy word for Bible interpretation.

Hermeneutics 101. I take it here, your colleges have 101 classes. That's like freshman course.

That's where you begin. You compare Scripture with Scripture. That is one of the most basic ways of interpreting Scripture.

So, what does the law and the prophets mean? We need to understand that. Because I'm afraid some people read it, it's like, you don't really know what, you may have some idea, but you're not really certain. What is that? Well, we need to know what that is.

Because it says, don't think I came to destroy the law and the prophets. Obviously, the righteousness that we have, whether it's like the scribes and the Pharisees, or not like the scribes and the Pharisees, it comes back to the law and the prophets. That's where he's starting out.

So, we need to know what that is. The prophets. What do you think the prophets is referring to? Obviously, the Old Testament prophets.

Give me the Old Testament prophets. All of them. Who? Isaiah? Jeremiah? Daniel? Ezekiel? Amos? Joel? Habakkuk? Keep going.

Elijah, Elisha? Which ones? Obadiah? Malachi? Haggai? Jonah? Hosea? Micah? Nahum? Anyways, some of the, Samuel was a prophet. Do you know that Scripture says that Nathan wrote, that Gad wrote? You know, typically, it's very likely that like 1 and 2 Samuel, they were written by Samuel. You get the other 1 and 2 Chronicles, many of these books, they were probably written by the prophets from back then as well.

Basically, when we think of the prophets, we're basically thinking of a vast portion of the Old Testament. When you connect the law and the prophets with it, well, listen. Philip found Nathaniel, and said to him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the son of

Joseph.

You see, typically when we think of law, we think Moses. And we think Moses, because the first 5 books, we call the Pentateuch. Those first 5 books is where we find, how many know, do you know how many laws were given? 613.

613. That's exactly right. And, of course the Ten Commandments are in the 613.

But they show up. You have the laws, the laws tend to come at us, in rapid succession, in exodus, and then of course you get Leviticus, where you get the laws concerning the sacrifices, and you come into Numbers, and there's many things said there, about the sacrificial system as well. And then the law gets repeated in Deuteronomy.

And so, that's basically what we're thinking about is the law. When you say the law and the prophets, when you combine those together, you basically are talking about the whole Old Testament. That was a very common way.

Do you recognize there was no New Testament? So nobody talked Old Testament. When you talk about the Scriptures in Jesus' days, you either called them the Scriptures, or you called them the Law and the Prophets. Sometimes you might say Law and the Prophets and the Psalms.

Jesus said it that way. Sometimes, like here, He first says Law and Prophets, and the very next verse He boils it down to just the Law. So, when you talk about the Old Testament, you might say the Law, you might say the Law and the Prophets, you might say the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms.

But listen, listen. This is the way the New Testament uses the terms. Luke 24, 27.

You don't need to turn and listen to this. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What I want you to hear is this.

Luke, right here, equates Moses and all the prophets to in all the Scriptures. That's basically, at that time, there was no New Testament Scriptures. So, all the Scriptures, listen to it again.

Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And Jesus said this. He said, all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

That's basically the way to say, God's voice spoke all the way up to the time of John the Baptist and the prophets and the Law. This was common. Acts 13.

You remember Paul and Barnabas, they came into a synagogue service. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Do you recognize what happened? They had a service.

And what did they do before the preaching? They read the Scriptures. That's basically what's being said there. It doesn't mean that they specifically were reading between Genesis and Deuteronomy and from Isaiah to Malachi.

That's not what that means. It means all of the Scriptures. That's basically how you said it.

Paul said this. I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets. Again, he's saying, I believe all the Old Testament.

Or Acts 28. Paul explained and solemnly testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets from morning till evening. So basically he's saying he's preaching the Scriptures.

And you know what's interesting? In Romans chapter 3, when Paul's unpacking the glories of justification by faith, he says this. The righteousness of God, in other words that righteousness that God imputes to us by faith, he says, it's revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. What's so interesting about that? Well in Romans 3, he says, this very doctrine of justification by faith, I didn't invent it.

You can find it in the Law and the Prophets. And you know what's interesting? When he unpacks it in chapter 4, where in the Law and the Prophets did he go? Two places. He went to Genesis chapter 15.

And he went to Psalm 32. As he unpacked it, he said that's where the Law and the Prophets. So it includes the Psalms, obviously.

Anyways, this is point made. That's what he means. So this is important.

This is critical. Because you want to, what we want to recognize is, what's Christ's relationship to the Old Testament? Was he a new teacher on the scene? Did he come to basically eradicate it and undo it? Because that would have been the question. That was always the question.

You see, when they're asking him questions like, what's the greatest commandment? You know what they were trying to do constantly? They were trying to get him to admit that he did not believe the Old Testament. All they had to do was show and prove he was undermining the Old Testament. And that was it.

But you know what he says? I did not come to undermine it. I did not come to destroy it. I did not come to abrogate it.

I didn't come to undo it. What our Lord Jesus Christ is saying here in very plain terms, in verses 17 and 18, do not think that I came to destroy the law of the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

He's confirming that the whole of the Old Testament, he's confirming it. He's putting his seal, his stamp of approval, his seal of authority upon the whole Old Testament canon. The whole of the law and the prophets.

He's not contrary to it. He never came to attack it or destroy it, but to uphold it, to honor it, and to fulfill it. Now, that brings us to the word fulfill.

What does fulfill mean? You see, there are people who will just basically say this. Yes, Jesus came to fulfill, which means he brought it to completion. He fulfilled it, wrapped it up, packaged it, it's done.

Now as New Testament believers, we don't really have anything to do with it. Well, that is not what he's teaching. You don't want to go there.

You don't want to think that way. Because if you think that way, you'll end up with a righteousness that's just like the scribes and the Pharisees. No, you don't want to think that.

You want to pay very careful attention. Now listen. Fulfill.

What does it mean? Yes, it means to complete. Yes, it means to finish, to bring to a designed end, to carry out, to bring to full expression. I think that's really where we want to go with it.

To bring to full expression. He came to uphold it. He came to bring this thing to full expression.

Do you know, there's another verse in our Bibles that uses fulfill with regards to the law. And it's a helpful verse for us to recognize how fulfill is used when it's used in relationship to the law. Listen to this.

All the law is fulfilled in one word. You know what word that is, right? What word? Love. So when you say that love fulfills the law, are you saying that love brings an end to the law? No.

What are you saying? And you're basically saying that the whole law has found its full expression in a single word. It's summed up under one head. That's the idea.

God's will is made known in the law. And it's obeyed as it should be obeyed in its fullness when we love. That's what it means to fulfill.

To fulfill the law means to obey it in the sense that we're loving one another. That's the idea here. Listen.

When you hear the law and the prophets, you know what you should hear? The law is summed up in love. It's fulfilled. And Jesus came to fulfill it.

Listen to what Jesus says. Teacher! That's not Him. That's somebody asking Him.

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to Him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Listen to this. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Did you get that? You want to know what the law and the prophets is? It's the Old Testament. Do you know what Jesus has in mind about fulfilling it? It's not that it has nothing to do with us. It's that every aspect of it that He wants us to be mindful of comes back and hangs on two great commandments.

Loving God with all our heart, our mind, and our soul, and loving our neighbor as ourself. That's the sum. That's how we fulfill.

And Jesus says, I did not come to destroy this. I came to fulfill this. I came to do this.

I came to live this out. You hear what Jesus is saying. Loving God, loving your neighbor.

All the law and the prophets hang on those two commandments. Love fulfills the law. There's a similar truth right here in our Sermon on the Mount.

It's the golden rule. Anybody know what it is? What's the golden rule? Do unto others. Matthew 7.12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.

For this is the law and the prophets. Isn't that interesting? You see, Jesus is saying, Do that. Not, we can just ignore it because Jesus went to the cross.

That's not what He's saying. He's saying, As you would have done to you, you do that. You love your neighbor.

That's what the law and the prophets is all about. And He says, I didn't come to do away with that. That's what this whole Sermon on the Mount is.

It's like, I came to teach you. I came to give you grace. I came to bestow power through my death, through my life, through my resurrection.

I came to make you new people. I came to do such things in your life that you will love your neighbors. That you will strive to these areas of purity.

You'll pluck out eyes. You see, this is, He really expects that we're going to live this. You see, the scribes and the Pharisees, He looked at them and He said, You don't keep the law.

None of you does. You see, they had an outward show. He called them whited sepulchres.

You know what a whited sepulchre is? You just basically go to a tomb that's painted really nice on the outside. We got a lot of religious people like that. A lot of religious people.

They talk God. They say, I believe in God. They may have a Bible at home.

They do a lot of things. But I'll tell you this. Do they love their neighbor? No, their hearts are full of lust.

Their hearts are full of pride. Their hearts are full of envy and jealousy. Their hearts are full of hatred and bigotry and prejudice.

Their hearts are full of a lust for money, a lust for sex, a lust for pleasure. They live for themselves and just selfish. They're self-absorbed.

They're selfish. They wouldn't give the clothes off their back to somebody on the road. They basically try to ignore the needy in the world.

Stay away from there. Don't look. Don't go in that part of town.

Don't open your eyes to those needs. Well, that's their problem. They got themselves into that.

This is what the Sermon on the Mount is basically going to unpack for us. It's going to unpack this kind of love. The real meaning of the word fulfill is to carry out and use this way.

Obviously, it can be used lots of different ways, but it's to carry out. It's to fulfill in a sense of giving full obedience to it. That's the issue.

Literally carrying out everything that's been said and stated in the law. Now, back to our text. Look at Matthew 5.17. Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets.

Now, what is it about the law and the prophets? You know the law and the prophets say a lot of things. They give us a lot of history. Do you know what he has in mind? He has in mind the commandments that

come from the law and the prophets.

How do we know that? Well, just look at verse 19. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments. When he's talking about the law and the prophets here, and all of it hangs on those two big commandments.

Love God. Love your neighbor. You see, it's the commandments that have to do with that.

It's his mandates for how... That's what he's talking about when he's talking about the law and the prophets. He's talking about the things that we have a responsibility to do. Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus came upon the scene. He came teaching.

Here's one who claims to be the Messiah. The question that would have arisen is this. Is he teaching absolutely new doctrine? Or is his teaching in harmony with the entire teaching of the Old Testament? I'll tell you this.

His teaching was not in harmony with the scribes and the Pharisees. In fact, there was an utter contradiction between him and the scribes and the Pharisees. But he says, when it comes to God's word, I'm in total harmony.

You know what that means? The scribes and the Pharisees were not in harmony with the Old Testament. They may have memorized it. They may have been able to quote it.

But Jesus himself said, you don't keep it. But you know what? Jesus defied them to find any fault with him. Do you remember what was said? Which of you convicts me of sin? Do you know Jesus said that to them? You guys want to stone me.

You guys want to kill me. You guys are saying all manner of evil against me. They called him a Samaritan.

They said he had a demon. They said all sorts of things. But he said, which of you? He defied them to find a single fault.

You know, Scripture says that he who knew no sin. You know what he said in John 12? He said, the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in me. If the devil had found one crack, oh, he'd have been on it.

But Jesus said, he sifted me. He has tempted me. He's never found a single fault.

And you know what Hebrews says. We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are. Yet what? Without sin.

You see, there was no blemish. Here's the first thing. Jesus came and he fulfilled the law in his own person.

Do you remember what was said in Galatians? What does Galatians teach us about Christ? In Galatians chapter 4. He was born of a woman. And it says he was born what? Under the law. You see, when God came into this world as the Son of God, he did not come and distance himself from it.

He came and he submitted himself. And his Father could look at him and say, this is my Son in whom I am well pleased. He came to do the will of his Father.

He came to keep the commandments. And he did it without fault, without blemish, without wrinkle, without any, even least infraction. Everything he did.

There's a beauty about the obedience of Christ. And there in Philippians chapter 2, it says he took his obedience all the way to the cross. There in Hebrews 5, it says he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Not that he was ever disobedient. But do you recognize this? Do you recognize that when obedience, it's like God says, obey me. I want you to put your hand in the fire.

You see, the more we suffer for being obedient, the more it tests just how devoted we are to that obedience. Christ obeyed even when it was absolutely difficult. Even when he said, I despair unto death.

Even when he sweat as it were great drops of blood. He still was rigidly determined to keep on the path of the will of his Father. Even when everything in him screamed, Father, if it's possible, remove this cup from me.

And yet, he stayed the course. When he was in the fire, when it hurt to obey his Father, when it hurt deep, when it hurt with the very wrath of God itself, when it was torment to his soul to obey, he still, he fulfilled the law of his Father. He fulfilled.

But here's the thing. Whenever you think about the cross, we're remembering the cross and the Lord's Supper. But you know what? You never want to think about the cross separate from the law.

Because you know what that cross speaks to us? Brethren, how badly we need to have a proper doctrine of the cross. Proper doctrine of the cross is to connect the cross and law. Do you recognize in the cross there was a fulfillment of the law? Because the law demands your head.

Do you know what Scripture says? Do you know what the old covenant basically was? You'll live if what? If you keep it. Yeah. If you keep the commandments, you'll live.

But everybody broke them. And Scripture says there's none righteous. We've all fallen short of the glory of God.

We've all sinned. We are broken people. We've all lied.

Liars have their place in the lake of fire. Don't think that God just sweeps that under the rug. Do you recognize on that cross what was happening? The law.

People just, my neighbor, she didn't know what the law of God is. I hope you know what it is. The law of God is the will of God.

The law of God is what God has expressed in His Word is required of us or is absolutely not required of us. And you know what? It is no light thing for man to raise his fist up to God. Because even when you sin, you call it a white lie.

But you know what? You're going to have to stand before God, the holy God. Holy, holy, holy. And if you write that off as a minor thing, you have not properly considered what it is to stand before a holy God and be in your sins.

The law was satisfied on that cross. The law says, you break me, you die. That is the condemnation of the law.

What is the condemnation? The condemnation is death. That is what happens in a courtroom. You break a law.

You go in. If you've broken that law and you go to the court of law and you are tried before that law and you are found guilty, you are condemned. It's only if you're found innocent are you justified and let to go free.

But we have broken God's law and there's a day coming and you can't run fast enough to get away from it because it says it's appointed for each one of us to die and then the judgment. And you've got your appointment there and you can't get away from it. And you know what? Jesus said His words are going to stand there in that day to judge us.

It's going to be the word of God. Did you live up to that light? Did you do His will? And I'll tell you what happened on that cross. The law was satisfied because what happened was that punishment, that law that pronounces death for every violation of it, God's law must be fulfilled.

It must be upheld. It must be fulfilled. And any lawbreaker, you know what? I can say it.

I can say it boldly. I can say it plainly. I can say it clearly.

We have a God who is in the business of forgiving sinners. But how does He do it? He doesn't do it by simply ignoring the law. That's His law.

That's His will. And He doesn't do that by ignoring it. That law, God's law must be fulfilled in the absolute sense.

And God has punished sin on that cross. God has punished the law-breaking. He who knew no sin.

He who never broke the law became sin. Sin is transgression of the law. That's how John defines it.

He became, in our place, the lawbreaker. And the law was satisfied there. Christ fulfilled the law on the cross.

Unless you interpret the cross and Christ's death upon it in the strict terms of fulfilling the law, you don't really have a scriptural view of this. He didn't just do that as some expression of love. It is that.

But it's not like, oh, look at that. Look how much He loved us. Shouldn't that melt your heart? There's a legal reality that took place on that cross.

There's an imputation. Our law-breaking is laid on His head. And He was dashed.

He was poured out like water. God's crushing wrath was in that cup. And He drank it to the last drop.

He put that cup through. Father, if it's possible, remove this cup from me. He called it a cup.

What's in a cup? And typically we have liquid. We have fluid in a cup. The fluid in that cup was the fluid of God's wrath.

And He drank it on that cross. But then here's the other thing. The law demands that we have a priesthood.

It demands that sacrifices be made every Sabbath and every new moon. The law demands that if we unintentionally sin, we offer sacrifices. The law demands what? It demands that there be a temple.

It demands that there be an outer sanctuary, an inner sanctuary, a holy of holies, an ark of the covenant. That's what the law demands. It demanded a red heifer.

It demanded ashes. It demanded certain watchings and atonings. That's what it demanded.

It demanded circumcision. And yet you come to the New Testament and it's like, wait a second. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing.

But the keeping of the commandments. That's what Scripture says. Well, wait a second.

I thought one of the commandments was to be circumcised. Well, you recognize this. There is an end to the shadows.

Christ fulfilled the law in that sense that He fulfilled all the shadows. He fulfilled all the types, all the prophecies. Do you recognize when that veil tore? And it laid open the holy of holies.

All the shadows were fulfilled. But we must go a step further. Jesus Christ fulfills the law also in us by the giving of His Holy Spirit.

This is clearly the promise of the New Covenant. Listen to this. You know this.

Most of you know this. Ezekiel 36, 27. God has promised under the New Covenant, I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.

And you will keep My judgments and do them. Did you get the connection? The Spirit. I'm going to get My Spirit and you're going to do them.

That's how it happens. You know what? This is no longer an external code written on two tables of stone. But I'm stiff-necked like the Jews and I just can never do this.

Nope. The law is no longer written external. It's now written on my heart.

And this happens with the giving of the Spirit. And so, Paul drives home this very point. And I do want you to turn and look at this.

Look at Romans chapter 3. Because Paul drives this point home. I was really expressing to you all just recently that we did kind of a study of the doctrine of obedience, a theology of obedience, when we were looking at wives submitting to their husbands from Ephesians 5. And one of the things that I wanted to do was point out that both ends of Romans, it's bookended by this concept of the obedience of faith. So if we really have eyes to see, the book of Romans, as much as being about justification by faith, it's really about the faith that justifies is also the faith that produces obedience.

That is really the emphasis of Romans. And I want you to see it right here. Romans chapter 3 verse 31.

Romans 3 verse 31. You see what happens is when we start talking about being saved by grace, suddenly there can be this attitude that well, I guess sin doesn't really matter. Because after all, Jesus died on the cross to forgive my sins.

So what does sin in my life really matter? That's what people do with the gospel. But Romans 3 verse 31. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not.

On the contrary, we establish the law. You see, true Christianity doesn't do away with the law, it establishes it. Now, when you go over to Romans 8. Go over to Romans 8. Because you really see this in just fantastic clarity.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Okay, we mentioned that verse already. For the law of the spirit of life.

Anyways, the law here is like principle. It's like the law of gravity. It's an operative principle.

It's a power of the spirit who is a person. But you put this spirit into an individual, and it frees a person from the law of sin and death. Just being in bondage to sin, which leads to death all the time.

How does this happen? God is done with the law. Weakened by the flesh could not do. See, what couldn't the law do? The law could never produce law keepers.

Because all the law did was set the standard. It never gave us any help in keeping it. And in fact, we're in the flesh.

And so, it was trouble. There's something within us that doesn't want to do God's law. We have an aversion to it.

And so that's the problem. And so the law couldn't do certain things. But God did by sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, like us.

He sent Him as a man. And for sin, He condemns sin in the flesh. Now here, notice this.

In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. There's that word again. Fulfilled.

Again, it means to do the law. To keep it. And notice what He says.

He makes the connection with the Spirit. It's fulfilled in us who walk. See, it's got to do with our walk.

He's not talking about justification here. He's talking about actually making a people that are holy. Law keepers.

That fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. The tyranny of sin is broken. That's the issue.

The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And you see, those who live according to the flesh, they set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who live according to the Spirit, they set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Set the mind on the flesh is death. Set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God.

Does not submit to God's law. See, that's the issue. He's talking about submission to His law and fulfilling the righteous requirement.

This is clearly talking about our sanctification, our law keeping. There's no question about that. Very clear.

Very evident there in those passages. So, back to Matthew 5.17. Just bear with me here, folks. We're moving quickly towards the end.

But if you go back to Matthew 5.17, and this is exactly the truth that Jesus is setting forth here. Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away. Do you see what He's saying? It's not just up until His time. What He's telling us is a principle that's good all the way to the end.

All the way until heaven and earth are dissolved. Until that happens, not one jot or one tittle will by any means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. He's saying that He has come to fulfill the law by producing a people who will fulfill the law.

How do I know that? Look at verse 19. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments. Do you see where He goes with it? He doesn't just keep this to Himself.

Well, see, I am a law keeper. Well, He did. See, I had no sin.

Which He didn't. But do you see where He takes this immediately when He talks about fulfilling? He takes it to us. This fulfillment, He's saying, I'm producing a people.

Why did Jesus give Himself up? To produce a people of His own possession that are what? Zealous for good works. People that are going to do the good. People that are going to do the law.

This is why He gave Himself. This is what He purchased. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least.

You see the therefore? That's the conclusion of the whole matter of verses 17 and 18. He's not just talking about Himself and Himself being a law keeper and fulfilling all the righteous requirements of it on the cross. He's actually saying what Paul just said.

He said God has done what the law could never do. By sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, what's He doing? He's producing a people that keep the righteous requirement of the law. And I would say this.

The righteous requirement of the law. You say, why do you emphasize that? Why? Because, think with me. Paul says, don't muzzle the ox.

Is that one of the least commandments of the Mosaic law? Yeah, he says whoever you need to do the least and teach to do the least. Whoever does not do the least commandment. He's not talking about just like ten commandments.

He's talking about the least of these. What's one of the least? Be not unequally yoked. That had to do with putting two animals together.

Don't muzzle the ox. That had to do with putting a muzzle on an ox's mouth. And yet, when you look at the way Paul unpacks that in the New Testament, what's he saying? Oh, this really hangs on those two great commandments.

To love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And to love your neighbor as yourself. You see, if we properly interpret the righteous requirement of the law, you know, 1 Corinthians chapter 9, was that Paul himself says, that thing about the oxen, muzzling the ox, he said, was that written for the sake of oxen? No.

No. Who is it written for? It's written for us. Listen, you know what this tells us? It tells us that we have to be careful that we interpret the righteous requirement of every jot and every tittle of the old covenant law, that we use the light of the New Testament to help us properly interpret.

Because, I'll tell you this, Jesus didn't keep just simply down to a man going and committing adultery. In the Old Testament, you were not stoned if you simply looked at a woman. But in the New Testament, clearly that's in the category of adultery.

Anger now becomes murder. Hatred becomes murder. I mean, we have to be very careful.

What we want to do is we don't want to negate the light of the New Testament as we're seeking to understand the righteous requirement of the law. But you see, you see, whoever does and teaches them is going to be the greatest. And whoever doesn't, whoever breaks one of the least of these, in the law and the prophets, and teaches men so will be called least.

And you don't want to just think, well, you know, that means that when I get to heaven I'm just going to be kind of in the back row. No, verse 20, that 4 means, here's some clarification folks. That's what the 4 means.

Do you want to know what I mean by least in the kingdom? I'm saying this, if your righteousness doesn't measure up, you don't inherit the kingdom. This is a big deal. Listen, just an in.

Let me plainly say this. We are saved by grace through faith. It's not your own doing.

It's not by your works. It's not the kind of salvation that's going to put anybody in a place where they can boast. We are entirely saved by the merits of Jesus Christ.

But let me tell you something. The grace of God that wipes away the guilt of your sin, is also the grace of God that turns you into a person just like John talks about. The commandments of God are not grievous.

They're not burdensome. That's what he says. Let me tell you this.

True Christianity. God makes you a new creation. A new creation in Christ.

And old things have passed away. That old man that saw, God's got a law, but everything in my heart doesn't want to keep it. Everything in my heart wants to be selfish.

Yeah, God's law says that. But I want to do my own thing and I want to go my own way. And so there's this constant battle.

Well, I better try better. I don't want to go to hell. It's just kind of a fear of, you know, yeah, I see this standard.

It's an external standard. No. What God does in Christianity is He gives a new heart.

And He actually gives us a love for God. And He gives us a love for His word. And He gives us a love for His commandments.

We don't keep God's law in order to get saved. The reality is we're miserable, broken, wretches of sinners. We don't come to God as law keepers.

We come to Him as law breakers seeking His mercy. But when He bestows His mercy, He changes us. And He changes us to the place that we take God's commandments seriously.

Listen, if you rarely or never read your Bible, you're in big trouble. Because it means that God has not wired you to see what Christ wants you to do with a heart that is willing to keep it. People who ignore that are going to wake up on judgment day in serious, serious trouble.

Serious. Paul himself poses the question, well let's just listen to this. This is Galatians 3. Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Wow. Cursed is everyone who doesn't do every single thing written in God's book of the law. That just undid all of us.

That put every one of us in a category of cursed. He goes on to say this. He says, But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident.

For the just shall live by faith. Yet the law is not of faith. The man who does them shall live by them.

But you know what? Paul himself poses the question. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin? That grace may abound. And he says no.

You can't. How can you? We've been raised to newness of life. We've died with Christ.

We live with Christ. He says you need to count yourselves dead to sin and alive to God. And sin no longer will have dominion over you.

Now you offer up your members as instruments for righteousness. This is what he teaches us. This is no more than what Christ is saying.

Christ is saying the people of my kingdom. They will by the grace of God. They will be made into people whose righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

That's the reality. That is the truth. And brethren.

Is Christianity, is salvation free? It's free. It's a gift. But you recognize what God gives us in the gift.

It's a new covenant. I give you forgiveness. Everybody likes that.

But some people stop there. But see he didn't just say that. He said I'm also giving you the cleansing away of all your idols.

Ouch. Because idols are things we love and it rips them out of us. It feels like it's tearing part of us out when we lose those things.

He also said this. I'm putting my fear in you so that you won't depart from me. He says I'm going to give you a new heart.

I'm going to take that heart of stone. That unfeeling heart insensitive to others. Doesn't love others.

Insensitive to God's glory. Isn't concerned. I'm taking that out.

I'm giving you a heart of flesh. Now flesh there isn't a negative thing like Paul uses it. Flesh means it's got feeling.

It's not calloused. It's not stony. It's soft.

He says I'm going to put my spirit within you. So see it's no more by your effort. That you're just trying to keep a law that's externally written on stones.

No I'm going to write it on your heart. And you're going to want to do it. That's what it means to write it on your heart.

It means you desire to do it. Suddenly you're not like you were before. Religion was a chore.

I just want to live my life. Yeah you do the religious drudgery because you want to pay your dues so you don't get to hell in the end. It's no longer that.

It's like now. It's like that sunshine coming through the windows. Sunshine comes through the windows of your soul.

Where there's light and there's bright. And now you see wow Christ. His ways are good.

They're desirable. They're not grievous. They're not burdensome.

This is no more than what Jesus is teaching right here. And that's what he accomplished for us. That's what this salvation is.

It's a complete salvation. So easy for people to say well my sins are forgiven. Well but the next question is this.

But has your life changed? Have you come to a place where you're keeping the righteous requirement of the law out of a heart that desires it. And loves it. And delights in it.

Because you now delight in God and you delight in His ways. And you're no longer living contrary to Him. You're just doing the religious thing.

That's what the scribes and Pharisees did. They just did the religious thing. But their hearts were full of all sorts of venom and wickedness and jealousy.

And they didn't have any problem extorting money right out of a widow. Oh but boy they talked so high and so religious. Their hearts were just full of dead men's bones.

There was rot in there. You see God doesn't just wash away our sins. God washes us on the inside.

He washes us. And He begins this process of making us like Christ. That's the power of this salvation.

Father I pray that the realities of this would definitely be seen in the people that make up Grace Fellowship Manchester. I pray Lord that these words would be clear and cleansing and very vivid in the eyes and minds of all that have heard these words today. Lord I pray.

Pray for just demonstrations of this radical salvation. That we would have that privilege to see these things worked out. Lord please might you allow us to see this worked out in our neighbors, in the people of our city, in the Jones family.

Lord please we want to see the reality of this. We don't want to just preach about it, hear about it, talk about it, see it on the pages of our Bibles. Lord we want to see this kind of salvation worked out in our generation, in our day, right here in our land.

Please Lord. We pray this for the glory, for the namesake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You're dismissed.

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