

EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED MATTHEW 5:17-20

Text: Matthew 5:20

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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.

Introduction:

Having laid a foundation with the beatitudes, and illustrating them with salt and light, the Lord moves on to discuss our righteousness.

Notice:

1. CONFESSION (VS. 17, 18) – “THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO DESTROY BUT FULFIL”

Matthew 5:17-18

¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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.

Our Saviour was commencing his earthly ministry, and He wanted to explain His purpose and ministry. By

opposing the teaching and philosophies of the Scribes and the Pharisees, some no doubt would try to charge Him with intentionally trying to destroy their law, and to abolish the customs of their nation.

Thus, He confessed to them that He did not come for that, but to fulfill or accomplish what was in the law and the prophets.

The Law of Moses contained many sacrifices and rites which were designed to shadow the coming Messiah who has now come and who was teaching them.

The prophets contained many predictions respecting his coming and death. These were all to be fulfilled and fully accomplished by his life and his sufferings.

2. COMMAND (VS. 19) – “WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS”

Matthew 5:19

¹⁹ 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: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The word break means to violate or disobey.

Today like the Pharisees then people have divided the precepts of the law, “right and wrong” into grays instead of black and white.

They had the philosophy that there were some sins that were ok because they were not a “great” sin.

Christ teaches that in his kingdom they who make this distinction, or who taught that any laws of God might be violated with impunity, should be called least; while they should be held in high regard who observed all the laws of God without distinction.

Matthew 23:23

²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

We learn:

- That all the law of God is binding on Christians.

James 2:10

¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

- That all the commands of God should be preached, in their proper place

- They who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of his kingdom
- True piety has respect to all the commandments of God

Psalms 119:6

⁶Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

3. CONTRAST (VS. 20)

Matthew 5:20

²⁰For 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.

A. Two kinds of people

1. Pharisee

- He was a spiritual leader among the people. He was known and respected as a man of God
- He knew the Scriptures
- He would have prayed at least three times every day. They loved to pray loud, long and public prayers

Matthew 6:5-8

⁵ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. ⁷ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

- He fasted twice every week. The practice of the Pharisees was to make their fasting very public. They would not comb their hair or wash their faces, and they wore the most wrinkled and rumpled clothes they could find. They even put ashes on their faces to make themselves look as though they were pale from fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

¹⁶ Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ¹⁷ But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; ¹⁸ That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

- He tithed on everything he possessed, even the herbs that grew in his garden. The Pharisees were noted for making a public show in their tithing.

Matthew 6:1-4

¹ Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. ² Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ³ But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: ⁴ That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. ⁴² And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. ⁴³ And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: ⁴⁴ For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

2. Publican

- He was a spiritual outcast. The Jews hated him and looked down on him.
- He was a tax collector. He worked for Rome, the nation that dominated and ruled Israel at the time
- As a tax collector, this man would have been known for his greed and his dishonesty

Close:

Our Saviour tells us that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.