



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Purpose of the Scripture.

Matthew 5:17-20, *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. ¹⁸For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Luke 18:9-14, The parable that our Lord gave which we looked at in detail last week.

There are some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. Self-righteousness, the religion of human achievement.

To those people, Jesus told this story. "

As a Pharisee, he was the most religious person in his society. In his own mind, he was convinced that that was true. He was thanking God that he wasn't like other people that he went beyond the behaviour of other people and fasted twice in the week.

The least esteemed man in Jewish society was a tax collector because he was a Jew who worked for Rome. He exacted taxes from his own people. He was hired by Rome. He was the ultimate kind of traitor. He was despised by his society. He had opted out for money. He had forsaken his loyalty, his nationalism, his religion, if you will, for money. This one is in a corner, beating on his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Jesus gave the point of the story. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalted himself shall be abased and he that humbled himself shall be exalted."

The story was about the bad man that went to heaven and the good man that went to hell.

Most people in human society believe that if you are good enough, you will get there and if you are bad, you won't. But Jesus told a story in Luke 18 that said the very opposite.

V 20, *For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Jesus is saying here that if you're going to get into heaven, you must be better than the scribes and Pharisees.

The very best people in the society of Israel will in no ways enter into the kingdom of heaven based on their goodness. The worst in Israel's society, a tax collector, a traitor, went home justified.

How good do you have to be to get to heaven?
What is the criteria?"

Jesus is answering the question here.

The Pharisee's were always dealing with the external.
Jesus was always talking about the internal.

Jesus having established that He is King in the first four chapters, He launches into this sermon. In this sermon, He wants them to know that His message is not something new. It is not something that is a dramatic change.

He is not rejecting The Old Testament. He clarifies that He has a total commitment to The Old Testament revelation.

Jesus gives four great truths about The Old Testament.

V 17, the pre-eminence of the law. It was authored by God, affirmed by the prophets, and accomplished by Him.

V 18, presents the imperishable of the word of God. When Christ came the first time, He began to fulfil the law. He is still fulfilling it and will fulfil it even in His second coming.

V 19, relevance of God's holy Word. If you don't hold on to it and preach it then you will be highest in the kingdom, if not you will be least in the Kingdom.

V 20, The purpose.

Why did God give the Scripture?

The purpose of God's law was to show you that you had to have more righteousness than you could come up with on your own.

Galatians 3:24, *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

The law was the schoolmaster or the disciplinarian to bring us to Christ. The law was the perfect standard which would show us our sin. That was its purpose.

The law was to show us that we couldn't do it on our own, that even the best - the scribes and the Pharisees, with all their

religiosity, ceremony and ritual could not gain the righteousness required to enter the kingdom.

The law was given with the purpose of frustrating us, showing us our inadequacy.

The law wasn't to tell us how good we are, the law was to show us how rotten we were.

The theme of His whole sermon in Matthew **5-7** is true righteousness.

The Old Testament is the source of true righteousness.

The Old Testament gives the absolute standard.

The law came with the purpose of showing us that the very best men among us couldn't make it into God's kingdom.

The kindest and the best, the noblest, the most religious, if they were depending upon their goodness, would be excluded from the kingdom. Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

You can't come into the Kingdom.

You can't even be a part.

This is the standard of true righteousness.

1. Who were the scribes and Pharisees?

Scribes were those who dealt with the letter of the law, the interpretation of the law, the recording of the law.

- They wrote down the law.
 - They studied the law.
 - They were authorities on the law.
 - They were scholars of the law.
 - They were those who struggled with the fine points of the law.
-
- There were scribes among the Sadducees who were theological liberals.
 - There were scribes among the Pharisees who were theological conservatives.

The scribes' jobs were simply to copy the law, to study the law, to get the basic text of the law, to interpret the law and so forth. These scribes later became known as rabbis. They really are the pre- runner or forerunners or precursors to the rabbis.

The term 'scribe' refers to an office. An office. They were official scribes.

In Israel, there were two kinds.

There were civil scribes and then there were ceremonial scribes.

Civil ones wrote down the affairs of government. They were like notaries, and they would take care of the civil duties.

There were the ceremonial or ecclesiastical, scribes and they were always involved in studying the Scripture and expounding it and determining what it said and what it meant.

They were the interpreters of the Law of Moses and originally came from the tribe of Levi. They gave literally their entire lives to studying The Old Testament and amazingly enough, they came up with the wrong conclusions.

The scribes and came up with the wrong answers.

The Sadducees and came up with the wrong answers.

The Pharisees. Came up with the wrong answers.

Don't be shocked if it happens today, because unless your heart is right and truly redeemed and taught by the Spirit of God, you are going to come up with a human conclusion even though you are using a divine Word.

The scribes did spend their entire lives in the text of The Old Testament. They were the official scholars.

What about the Pharisees?

'Pharisee' comes from a root word which means to separate. They were the separatists.

They were the fundamental legalists of their day. They separated themselves from everything.

They separated themselves from all Gentiles. They wouldn't get near one. They didn't want to be defiled.

They separated themselves from any Jew who lived with less concern than they had for the law.

The Pharisees lifted themselves out of Jewish society as an elite group who alone knew what it was to really walk with God. They convinced themselves that they were the real spiritual gurus.

Pharisees differed from the scribes in as much as they didn't particularly study the law as a scholar would. They simply developed out of the law a system of ritual. They developed a sect.

The Pharisees took the Word of God and developed a rigid, ceremonial, ritualistic system, not so much based on the Law of Moses as it was on tradition.

The problem was that they couldn't really keep the Law of Moses!

The Jews used to have a saying, "If only two people go to heaven, one will be a scribe, and the other will be a Pharisee." An average Jew would say that I can't be as good as a Pharisee! I can't be like a scribe. They study The Old Testament Day and night, and they have got every hair split and every fine point memorized, and they know that stuff cold.

Most scribes could probably recite verbatim the entire text of The Old Testament from copying it so many times.

Those people are so holy! Their whole life is given to the religious and the moral and the spiritual pursuit."

But our Lord says, "They are not going to make it."

You can imagine the shock!

2. What was the nature of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?

What were they depending on for their salvation?

a) Their righteousness was external.

The Scribe or a Pharisee depending upon the external. They were depending upon the system of human achievement.

They were holy on the outside. They have developed a whole system.

An outward observance of the law.

They didn't get involved in adultery, theft, murder, and idolatry. But they had a lot of impure and rotten thoughts and they coveted like mad, and they hated with a fury, and they were cold in their heart toward God. The inside was all fouled up, but the outside, they were able to maintain.

That is why, as the Lord goes on further and He illustrates the phoniness of their external religion.

Jesus says that it was told to you in the old, but I tell you,

Matthew 5:21-22, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Matthew 5:27-28, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Matthew 23 gives us a good picture of the external character of their religion.

Matthew 23:25-26, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.”*²⁶ *Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

You are great on the outside, but you don't do anything with the inside.

Matthew 23:27-28, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”*²⁸ *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

They were rotten on the inside, although they have cleaned it up on the outside. Exacting observance of ceremonies was the big issue, and their whole system was superficial.

Just examine your own heart in this regard because it is very easy to get wrapped up in a superficial kind of religion. It is very easy to go through the motions of prayer and go through the motions of reading the Bible and going through the

emotions of attending church or a Bible study and there's nothing going on the inside.

Life can be superficial.

That is why when they asked Him, "What is the greatest commandment?"

Jesus did not give them some external thing.

Matthew 22:34-40, *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

Matthew 23:1-3, *Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ²saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.*

They did have a seat of authority.

They were the ones who dispensed the Law of Moses.

When they sit in Moses' seat, and they preach to you Moses' Law, do it. In other words, even if anyone speaks the truth, respond to it.

But on the other hand, if an angel from heaven tells you something that isn't true, don't listen.

Galatians 1:8-9, *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

Matthew 23:4-5, *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. ⁵But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

Jesus began His speeches or His sermons with eight Beatitudes directed at the Pharisees primarily, and He closed His message to them in Matthew 23 with eight woes to fall upon them, one woe for every Beatitude they didn't respond to.

The scribes and Pharisees are working hard, shining up the outside and doing nothing at all with the inside.

That is why our Lord confronts them as self-righteous hypocrites.

Luke 16:15, *And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

They have got a great religious reputation, but God knows their heart.

Galatians 2:16, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

You cannot be justified by the law.

You cannot be justified by the flesh.

Impossible.

So, all their externals were fruitless and useless.

b) Their righteousness was partial.

Matthew 23:23, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

In those days, when they wanted to drink something, they had a little strainer to get gnats out of it. They were picking the little, tiny gnats out of things and then swallowing a whole camel.

The point that Jesus making here is just this. They were real big on the little things and the external things and ignored justice, mercy and faith. It was partial.

They only accommodated themselves to what they could handle. Nothing more. Ritual religion, making your religion fit your capability.

They had their own little traditions. In fact, they substituted them for the law of God. By keeping the traditions that they themselves had invented, they decided they were serving God.

Mark 7:7-9, *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such*

things you do.” 9He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

They abandoned the law of God that they couldn't live up to, invented their own and then convinced themselves that they were spiritual.

c) They refined their Righteousness.

They made up their own rules, so what they wound up doing was redefining everything. They proclaimed that this is what God said, but what He meant was this!"

They gave a new meaning. Just redefining it in terms of their own comprehension, taking an internal thing and making it external.

They redefined and invented a system they could maintain.

Leviticus 11:44, *"I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves. You shall be holy; for I am holy."*

What do they say?

I thank Thee that I am not as other men, and they go on to recite their own holiness. The standard of holiness was God!

Matthew 5:48, *"Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

The Bible was saying to them, "You are to be holy."

How holy?

As holy as God.

"You are to be perfect."

How perfect?

As perfect as God.

They knew they couldn't be that if they took the Bible at its face value, so they redefined it to accommodate their own unholiness.

They lowered the standard.

d) Their righteousness was self-centred.

They gained their own righteousness by themselves.

They did it on their own.

They weren't dissatisfied.

True holiness always comes out of dissatisfaction.

When you're dissatisfied with your life. When you hunger and thirst for a righteousness that you know you can't earn, then that's true righteousness.

They knew they were righteous and worked out their own righteousness.

They didn't need God to make them righteous. They were righteous already.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *"For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."*

They boasted because they had their own righteousness.

So, here they were, scribes and Pharisees, with righteousness that was external, partial, redefined, and self-centred.

3. What is the nature of the righteousness Christ requires?

He requires absolute holiness.

He requires absolute perfection.

He requires internal righteousness and external.

Psalms 45:13, *The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing is woven with gold.*

God wants you all glorious inside and pure gold on the outside. Just like He said about the Pharisees.

The standard of righteousness that Christ sets is absolute righteousness.

1 Samuel 16:7, *But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

How holy do I have to be to get into the kingdom?

Just as holy as God is holy!

No matter how religious I am, I can't do that on my own. I can't be as holy as God. I can't be as righteous as God. I can't be as perfect as God."

4. How this kind of righteousness obtained?

I can't do it on my own.

I can't be more righteous on my own than a scribe or Pharisee.

How am I going to get that righteousness?

Galatians 2:16, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have*

believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

How are we justified?

By faith in Christ.

How then are we made righteous?

By faith in Christ.

Romans 3:21, *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

You cannot attain the righteousness of God by trying, in your own flesh, to keep the law.

Romans 3:22, *even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;*

Where do I get that kind of righteousness?

By faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:3-4, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for*

righteousness.”⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

How righteous did Abraham have to be?

Just as righteous as God. Just as holy as God.

Abraham is not going to make it, because Abraham committed a lot of sin!

Right.

How could he ever attain that righteous?

He believed God and that was counted unto him for righteousness.

Romans 5:17, *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)*

The gift of righteousness.

It is a gift.

You can't earn it.

If you're trying to gain your own righteousness, you are going to become lost forever. If you want to reach out and take a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is offered to you.

Romans 5:21, *so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The only way that you can ever be righteous enough to get into heaven is by the Lord Jesus Christ imputing to you His own righteousness. It is a gift from Him that you could never earn.

Romans 8:4, *"Through Christ, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us."*

God has set a standard we could never attain, and then given us the fulfilment of that standard as a gift by simply putting our faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:3, *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

They are ignorant of the standard and they go about establishing their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

If you want to know what Romans 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 are about, they are all about how to gain a righteousness that's unattainable by receiving it as a gift through believing in Jesus Christ. That's how you obtain the required righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:30, *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*

When God looks at me, He sees me just as holy as He is.

When God looks at me, He sees me just as perfect as He is.

Why?

Because Jesus Christ.

When I put my faith in Him, imputed to me His own righteousness and I stand as pure as Christ, as undefiled as Christ.

That is my standing before God.

How good does a man have to be to get to heaven?

He must be as good as God.

How do you get to be as good as God?

Only one way, by having God give you His goodness.

How does God give you, His goodness?

When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the Bible says the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you.

Conclusion:

What is the result to those who do not obtain this righteousness?

What happens to people who don't ever take this righteous gift, who will very religiously work like mad to get in there?

It doesn't matter how religious you are.

It doesn't matter how good you are, you will be excluded from God's kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven is the sphere of God's blessing now and forever and you will never enter that sphere apart from faith in Christ.

Matthew 7: 13-14, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Do you know there are many people on the road to heaven?

Only two possibilities!

Narrow gate or broad way.

Matthew 7:21-23, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord,*

Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Examine your life.

Are you righteous or is it just a ritual?

Do you really know Jesus Christ or are you counting on your own goodness?

They had developed a religion of human achievement that was going to do nothing but damming them.

An illustration.

Imagine going to a football game and tickets are £10.00. And you arrive at the gate, and you object furiously, and you say, "I know both these teams well. Neither one of them is worth £10.00. I will pay only £5.00. No more."

The guy is going to say, "Get out of line. Let somebody else come up here. The tickets are £10.00."

No matter how much you hold the point of view that they are lousy teams, no matter how much you impose upon the gatekeeper, he is not interested in all your arguments. You either pay the £10 and go in or go home and forget it.

Why?

You are not in the business of fixing prices.

You are just in the business of responding to the standard.

God has set the standard and God doesn't want people coming up to negotiate. The standard is faith in Jesus Christ. It's God's heaven. God lays down the terms and all you can do is respond. You enter on His terms, or you stay out.