

Guest Preacher

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[0 : 00] Well, now we go to look at the passage of Scripture which we read in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5.

And as God would help me, I would like to concentrate on verse 20. The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 20.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Every word in the Bible is true. Every word. There is no word in the Bible we should not pay close attention to.

[1 : 18] But, if there is anything that's underlined, surely it's when the Son of God himself is speaking.

And if there is anything that the Son of God says in the Scripture that should be underlined and we should pay particular attention to, surely it's when he's preaching.

Are we not reading the Sermon on the Mount? Now, as I understand it, the Sermon on the Mount was primarily addressed to disciples.

But you'll see it's when he saw the crowds that he spoke to the disciples. So he spoke to the disciples in the presence of the public.

And it would seem to me that throughout the Sermon on the Mount, while he's primarily addressing Christians, he does, as it were, now and again, turn to the crowd and say, Strive to enter into the kingdom.

[2 : 31] And can you not imagine the Son of God now saying in the Sermon on the Mount, turning to the crowds and saying, Unless, assuredly I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, this righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was, I think we can say, humanly speaking, unattainable by normal people.

You see, the scribes and the Pharisees had a system. And in that system, I've read there were 248 regulations plus 365 prohibitions in their system.

How would you like to be under that system? 248 regulations, 365 prohibitions. How would you like to be under that system?

The Savior condemned it. The Savior called them hypocrites in Matthew 23, 23, when he said, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

[4 : 19] For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law.

Are you having Lou's lamb for lunch? Tell me, how much mint will you put in your plate? How much mint?

Have a look at it. The scribes and the Pharisees would tithe it. We've just read it. Matthew 23, 23.

That's the system of righteousness adopted by the scribes and Pharisees. Do you know what Jesus is saying? Brothers and sisters, it's not enough.

It's not high enough. It's not good enough. Salutary, isn't it? Now, first of all, before we look at this standard, do know a couple of things about the kingdom of heaven.

[5 : 37] First of all, it is something to be entered. Nobody is born in it. Nobody is born in it. Nobody just lands some way or another in it.

It is something consciously entered by his people. Not also, who makes the laws for entry into the kingdom of heaven?

Scribes and Pharisees? mercifully, no. Mercifully, no. Oh, the government! No, no, no, no, no, no, no!

Look at the mess they're making of things. Who make the rules of entry into the kingdom of heaven? Well, you know, there's no such thing as a kingdom without a king.

The king makes the laws. The king can, of course, delegate it to democracy like he does in our country. But the king of the kingdom of heaven has set the rules of entry.

[7 : 04] It's a kingdom of righteousness. Romans 14, 17. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 1, verse 8. quoting from the Psalms, the Old Testament, but of the sun he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. Well, how, then, can we enter the kingdom of heaven?

If the standard is the standard of righteousness, what is righteousness, of course, first of all? Well, righteousness is perfect conformity to God's law.

in thought, in word, in action. Perfect conformity.

[8 : 29] Conformity. That is total harmony with God's law. Properly balanced, consistent, perpetual, conformity, agreement with it.

Proceeding, proceeding from a correct motive. It's not just that you have to do everything perfectly, but it's to be done from a right motive.

And that correct motive is to please God. You see, some commandments are easy to keep because we like them. We want to do it.

But we have to keep the commandments for the right to please God because God wants it.

Everything we do has to be for his glory.

Now, if the scribes and Pharisees with their 248 regulations plus 365 prohibitions, if they can't do it, how do you expect to do it?

[9 : 52] How do you expect to do it if they couldn't do it? Answer? You know what the answer is? We can only exceed the standard of righteousness required.

We can only reach it in Christ Jesus, through Christ Jesus, who came to keep that standard on our behalf.

Verses 17 and 18. Do not think I came to abolish the law. He came to fulfill it in our place.

Mercifully, thankfully. You see, Christ is the saviour of Christians in, we can say, in two ways.

First of all, by his death. His death at Calvary was substitutionary death. He never committed a sin.

[10 : 55] sin. And you can't talk about death unless you talk about sin. So why is he dying? Because he chose to die in our place.

And his death paid for all the sins of every person who will be in heaven. heaven. And every person who will be in heaven is every person who trusts Christ for taking them to heaven.

Who believes that he satisfied the anger of God when he died on that center cross of Calvary.

that all that did, reverently speaking, was bring your account and my account to the all square level.

Christ's death atoned for all our sins. If you think of our account with God like a balance sheet, our account is in the red of our massive debt we go to God and we can't pay it.

[12 : 10] But Christ's death brought the believers account with God up to the all square level. The all square level.

But that's not enough to get into heaven. It has to be in the positive. So you say, oh well we'll do some righteousness.

But what does the Bible say about our righteousness? It's as filthy rags. So as we try to improve our situation, we do so imperfectly.

So that's more sins. That puts us down back in the red. We cannot lift our account with God into the credit balance. God's love.

That's God's love. That's why there's a second aspect of Christ's saviourhood. His death atoned a peace for the negative value in our balance sheet.

[13 : 14] But Christ's life was full of righteousness. And that righteousness is given to us. God's love. And that's the only way we can be right with God.

The only way we can get into heaven is not by being good enough ourselves, but by depending on Christ's righteousness being given to us.

And here's the gospel. You give your sins to Christ and Christ will give you his righteousness.

There's no bargain like that in the universe. You give Christ your righteousness and he will give you his righteousness.

You give Christ your sins. You give him your sins. Yes, and your righteousness because they are sins as well. They're not good enough. They're unacceptable. Give Christ everything and he will give you his righteousness.

[14:24] The gospel is wonderfully presented. Well, Romans 5 19, is it?

Yes, Romans 5 19. Let me read it. Here's the gospel. As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.

So, by one man's obedience, that one man's Christ, by his obedience, many will be constituted righteous.

That's the only way you can be righteous. It's the only way I can be righteous. Not by keeping the commandments to a high enough standard, but by depending on Christ, following Christ, sticking with Christ.

Philippians, Philippians 3, 9, are wonderful, are wonderful.

[15:32] Not having a righteousness of my own, that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. That's the gospel. That is the only hope there is. It certainly is for me, and it is for you. This righteousness of Christ was designed for transferring to those unable to keep God's standard themselves.

This righteousness of Christ can't be given to an angel. When an angel sins, he's damned forever. No hope, no mercy, no gospel, no savior.

That's why the angels can't understand this wonderful, wonderful gospel for human beings that blew it all. There's only two qualifications for the gospel.

[16:51] To receive the blessings of the gospel, there's only two qualifications. Number one, that you are a sinner. No angel, the gospel is not for angels, for sinners.

Blood and red and guilt. You have, in the free church, you had, I should say, a theologian professor, was he? Certainly a lecturer, I think it was a professor, Robbie Duncan.

Very subject to depression, apparently. And on one occasion he was so depressed and he came along to his students, I think it was, and said, my only hope is my sin.

sin. My only hope is my sin. That's the gospel. I'm a sinner.

Therefore, I can apply for mercy. I can apply for forgiveness. I can ask Christ to give me his righteousness in exchange for my sins.

[17:59] that's the only hope there is, friends. It's the only hope I know of. It is most certainly the only hope I have of reaching heaven.

Christ's righteousness cannot be abolished. It cannot be broken down. It reaches up to heaven. It goes into the innermost depth of our hearts. It covers every point of every law. And it lasts throughout all eternity.

Every dimension, height, breadth, depth, length. So, do you qualify for this salvation?

Are you a sinner? It's for you. What's the other qualification? Faith. Trust.

[19:05] Depending on Christ. Christ says, come to me. I will give you rest.

Why are you trying so hard to be righteous? You can't. Just come to me and take my righteousness.

Take my righteousness. It's for free. It's by depending on me. It's by faith. looking to me.

It's for me. Spurgeon once was preaching, I think it's from Jeremiah 45, was it?

I say 45, 22, I think it was. Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. And he says, there's life for a look at the crucified one.

[20:12] And he said this, I found it hugely encouraging. He said, a blind man can look. He may not be able to see, but he can look.

He can turn towards and look in the direction of. and he said there's life for a look at the crucified one. Two qualifications for salvation, that you are a sinner, and you can look.

You can look in the right direction. Look to Christ. Look to Christ crucified. Dying to pay for sins.

That's the gospel. That's the glorious, glorious gospel. Now, how do you obtain this righteousness by faith?

Remember, you cannot, as I said, Christ in the gospel says, come to me. Come to me. You cannot get Christ's righteousness without getting himself.

[21 : 30] you go to him. Now, some people might look, I just want his righteousness. I don't want anything else. I just want him.

I just want his righteousness. But listen, do you not want Christ's love? Do you not want Christ's power?

The power of his resurrection? Paul said he would give up his two PhDs. Those who study Paul say he had by the time he was 21, by the time he was 21, he had the equivalent of two PhDs.

but he says I count that as rubbish in comparison to getting Christ and the power of his resurrection. Philippians 3 that we looked at. Do you not want that power? Do you not want to be loved by him? But he says come to me and I will not only give you my righteousness, I will give you my love and I will give you my power.

[22 : 45] You'll have power to rise at the last day and be welcomed into heaven. Do you not want his plan?

It's a tremendous plan for believers. Do you not want that as well as his righteousness? You see, some people, they just want out of hell.

As long as I don't go to hell, I don't care. Well, that's at least sensible. That's at least wise. But how about grace?

How about spirituality? We need Christ himself. To get his righteousness, we come to him.

And when we come to him, he not only exchanges the sins we give to him, he not only exchanges it for righteousness, he exchanges it for love.

[23 : 48] If you're a Christian, Christ loves you. If you're a Christian, the power of Christ is within you.

It's within you. the Holy Spirit indwells you. Half the time we don't realize the blessings we Christians have. You have the Spirit.

But if you come to Christ, you also are in his, have subject to his plan. And his plan, what a plan. What a plan he has for your life.

But you must go to him. You must surrender to him. you must love him. You must trust him. You must follow him.

All the promises, every promise he makes is in him. All the promises of God find their yes in him.

[24 : 53] 1 Corinthians, sorry, 2 Corinthians 1.20. Check it out. All the promises are yours. in him. Do you know, well, our time's up.

Christ is very, very near us right now. How far away is he? I bring near my righteousness, Christ says, I bring it very, very near.

Do you know how near it is? Do you know how near Christ is to you? There's not even air between you and Christ in here at this moment as we preach the gospel.

there's not even air between us. He's that close. He's that near. And the slightest contact with him secures eternal life and blessing.

to the degree that even desiring Christ, even wanting Christ constitutes faith.

[26 : 21] Have you got that? Even desiring Christ, even wanting Christ constitutes faith. love.

There's a poem I always remember hearing.

I don't think it's a hymn. It might be. I don't know. I just don't know. Here it is. If you the least desire now have to be redeemed by me, then it must be the Holy One gave that desire to thee.

it's natural not to want not to go to hell, but do you want Christ?

Do you desire Christ? I think that constitutes faith. Listen, if you the least desire now have to be redeemed by me, then it must be the Holy One gave that desire to thee.

Well, we close. Have you got your own righteousness? Are you depending on your good works and the things you do? You'll never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[27 : 45] do you have Christ's righteousness? Remember, the slightest contact with Christ secures salvation.

But without him, there's no salvation, there's no heaven. But the slightest contact with him secures salvation.

may God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth, effectual to everyone that's listening.

Let's bow our heads. Our Father in heaven, we bow our heads before you and ask for you to unite all of us to your Son, the Lord Jesus, in a vital, living, saving faith.

We pray that you might do that for us, eternal God. We are totally unworthy. We do not deserve it, but you said you do it.

[29 : 14] Give us your Holy Spirit who is present that he might draw us to your Son in a vital, living faith.

Hear in mercy, answer in peace, as we pray only and all in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake alone.

Amen. Let's conclude our service of worship by singing, joining and singing, the last four verses of Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter.

That's verse 25. Psalm 73 at verse 25. Whom have I in the heavens high, but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire, besides thee, there is none.

And the last verse, but surely it is good for me that I draw near to God. In God I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad.

[30 : 30] Psalm 73 at verse 25 to the end. Psalm 73 O God, I live in the heaven's sky, but He, O Lord, alone.

And in the air, whom I desire, besides me there is now.

My flesh and heart, O little, I thought I'd fail me ever.

For on my heart, all years of strength and hope shun forever.

For on my heart, all years of strength and hope shun forever.

[31 : 49] And that, O pouring from below, thou hast been so redone.

But surely it is true for me that I don't need to hold.

In God I trust that all thy words I may declare upon.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Now and forevermore. Amen.