

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

28- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 8  
The King Fulfills the Law and Brings in the  
Righteousness of Faith- Part 4

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Church September 11, 2022

## **Matthew 5:17-20**

**17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.**

**18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

**19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

**20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now after going through this Passage for a number of weeks, we have discovered at least five things:

1. What Jesus' reference to the "*Law*" in verse 17 is talking about
2. What Jesus meant when He said He was "*fulfilling*" the Law and not "*abolishing*" it
3. What Jesus meant when He said, "**until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**"
4. What Jesus meant in verse 19
5. What kind of "*Righteousness*" **surpasses** the "*righteousness*" of the Scribes and Pharisees

... so, in a nutshell, this Passage has to do with the Issue of “*how Human Beings obtain Righteousness*”

And we discovered that “*Righteousness*” ALWAYS comes by way of “*Obedience*.” Righteousness doesn’t rise up from the ground nor does it fall down from the sky. Neither is Righteousness created out of thin air. Righteousness is the Product of; or the Result of- “*Obedience*”. So, there is no such thing as anyone being Righteous, who does not obey God and His Word and His Will.

But that Reality *pre-supposes* that in order for anyone to obey God and His Word and His Will- they must *know and understand* God and His Word and His Will. So, Ignorance of God and His Word and His Will- will cause the individual to simply “*do what is Right in his own eyes*”- which will NEVER lead him into Righteousness.

But we have also seen that the Issue of “*Righteousness and Obedience*” only works in one direction. In other words, while “*perfect Obedience*” ALWAYS produces “*perfect Righteousness*”- “*imperfect Obedience*” does NOT produce an “*imperfect Righteousness*”. And that is true because there is no such thing as an “*imperfect Righteousness*”. Because an “*imperfect Righteousness*” is what is called, “*complete Unrighteousness*”.

So, the “*Issue of Obedience and Righteousness*” is a “*zero sum game*”. It is ALL or NOTHING. We are either *perfectly* Obedient- which also means we are also *perfectly* Righteous; or we are *completely* Dis-Obedient- which means we are also *completely* Unrighteous. And there is no middle ground. No such thing as a lost person inheriting eternal Salvation by being *somewhat* Righteous or “*sorta-kind*” Righteous.

But we need to realize that the Issue of a “*perfect Obedience*” that leads to a “*perfect Righteousness*” is NOT a discussion that only Theologians are interested in. *Everybody* should passionately care about this- because unless we obtain this kind of “*perfect Righteousness*”- we can’t go to Heaven. And that means we will spend all of Eternity in a devil’s Hell. And that is *why* the Apostle Paul was “*moved*” by God the Holy Spirit to write this down in **1Corinthians 6:9a**:

**... do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

... so, if you are Unrighteous at the moment you die- you will perish forever in the Lake of Fire.

And that means that the ONLY commodity that will allow us to inherit the Kingdom of God is this perfect Righteousness.

Now we must be careful here, because many would like to think that the “*Unrighteous*” mentioned here are the really “Bad” people like drug dealers; child molesters; and mass murderers. And that would mean that the rest of

us can breathe a sigh of relief. But the Reality is, *whoever* violates one single part of God's Law- is guilty of violating ALL of God's Law and is, by definition, "*Unrighteous*". The half-brother of Jesus wrote this in **James 2:10&11:**

**10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.**

**11 For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

... and then the Apostle John wrote this in **1John 2:29:**

**Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**

... and to be "*lawless*" is to be a "*Transgressor*" or a "*Violator*" of God's Law.

So, this means that every single Human on earth is a "*sinner*." And as a sinner- we have *violated* or *transgressed* or *ignored* the Law of God and thus are, by definition, "*Lawless*". And that means we are- ALREADY- *completely* Unrighteous. Which also means that, not only are we NOT going to enter into Heaven- but we are under the Damnation of a perfectly Righteous God!

You see, ONLY those who are *perfectly* Obedient and thus are *perfectly* Righteous may enter into Heaven. The Disobedient and Unrighteous will NEVER enter into Heaven. So, if any of us wants to escape eternal Damnation and dwell with God forever in Heaven with God- we MUST be *perfectly* Obedient to God's Law- in thought, word, and deed; twenty-four hours every day; and seven days every week- with Joy. And that *perfect* and *joyful* Obedience will *cause* us to be *perfectly* Righteous.

So, the \$64,000 Question is:

**How can fallen rebels attain to *perfect* Obedience- so that we can become *perfectly* Righteous?**

... and that is what every single Religion and Human Philosophy on earth seeks to answer.

Now as of the year, 2020, there were approximately 4,000 Religions on earth. And added to that are about 416 different forms of humanly engineered Philosophy. And those 4416 different Religions and Human Philosophies ALL teach the SAME thing:

**Unrighteous people have to "DO SOMETHING" to "earn" or "develop" their own, personal, intrinsic Righteous- to the point where it is "Perfect".**

... and this has played itself out in ten thousand sad examples- all throughout History.

It is *why* college educated Computer programmers drink poison and lay down and die. It is why 19 educated men would fly airplanes through buildings 21 years ago today- eviscerating themselves in an 1800 degree fireball. It is why thinking humans would stand in line and drink Kool Aide laced with strychnine. It is why Buddhist monks would dost themselves with gas and ignite themselves. And it is why those deceived by the Roman religious System will do whatever the Priest tells them to do in the Rite of Penance. They were all- ALL OF THEM- seeking to become righteous enough to deserve Heaven!

ALL false Religions teach that we MUST become just as Righteous as God Himself in order to go to Heaven! All of them! And the ONLY difference between the various Religions is in what they teach that their followers have to do to become Righteous.

Now this is NOT accidental. There is a reason WHY they ALL teach the SAME thing about us becoming Righteous: They are ALL products of the Fall. Please turn with me to read one of the most important Passages in the entire Bible from **Genesis 3:1-7:**

**1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"**

**2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;**

**3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"**

**4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!**

**5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

**6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.**

**7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.**

Now notice what the very first thing that Adam and Eve did after they sinned and fell:

**... the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.**

Now WHY was this the first thing they did? The Bible says they sowed fig leaves together and made loin coverings because of two things being true now that had NEVER been true until they sinned:

1. Their eyes were opened
2. They knew they were naked

So, after they ate the fruit and rebelled against God- Moses was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write down that they KNEW they were no longer “*clean*” or “*innocent*”.

And suddenly they are Self-conscious about their bodies. Why? Before their Rebellion against God, Moses was careful to tell us that there was no Shame. **Genesis 2:25** says,

**And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

... but now they have sinned- and they are ashamed. So, now Shame *dominates* them. Why?

Well, it isn't because they somehow became unattractive. Their personal Beauty was NOT the focus in **Genesis 2:25** and the *lack* of Beauty is NOT the focus here in **Genesis 3:7**. So, why is there Shame? There is Shame because the *Foundation* of “Covenant-keeping Love” collapsed in, by, and through their Rebellion. And with the collapse of THE single most important Love- the sweet, all-trusting Security of Marriage disappeared forever.

You see, the *Foundation* of Covenant-keeping Love between a Man and a Woman in Marriage- is the unbroken Covenant between them and God. You see, before the Fall, the Covenant of Marriage was this: God agreed that He would govern them for their ultimate Good; and both the Man and the Woman agreed to enjoy God in that Security by relying on Him. But when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil- that Covenant was broken; and the *Foundation* of their own Covenant-keeping in Marriage collapsed with it.

And they experienced this Collapse *immediately* in the corruption of their own Covenant Love for each other. And that happened in two ways- and both relate to the experience of Shame.

1. In the first Case, the one viewing the other's Nakedness is no longer trustworthy, so they are *afraid* they will be shamed.

2. In the second, each one is no longer at Peace with God, but each one feels Guilty, Defiled, and Unworthy- so they know they *deserve* to be shamed

In the first Case, Adam is now Self-conscious about his body, and he feels *vulnerable* to Shame because he knows Eve has chosen to be *independent* from God. She has made *herself* “central” in the place of God. So, Eve is now essentially a Self-centered and Selfish person. And from that moment until she died- she will put herself *first*. She is no longer a Servant. And that means she is no longer Safe.

And Adam feels very vulnerable around her, because she is very likely to put him down for her own Sake. So, suddenly, Adam’s Nakedness is precarious. He doesn’t trust her any more to love him with pure Covenant-keeping Love. And that’s one Source of his Shame.

The other Source is that Adam himself (not just his spouse), has also broken Covenant with God. And if she is Rebellious and Selfish, and therefore Unsafe- so is he. But the way Adam experiences this in himself is that he now feels Defiled, Guilty, and Unworthy. Which is *exactly* what he is.

You see, before the Fall, what *was*; and what *ought* to have been- were the SAME. But now, what *is*; and what *ought to be*; are NOT the same. The Humans in the Garden SHOULD be humbly and joyfully submissive to God. But now they are NOT. And this huge Gap between what they *are*; and what they *ought to be*- dominates everything about them- *including* how they feel about their own bodies.

So, even if Adam’s Wife is the safest person in the world- now that Adam is *dominated* by his own sense of Guilt and Unworthiness- he still feels *Vulnerable*. The simple, open Nakedness of his Innocence now feels *inconsistent* with the guilty person that he is. And so, for the first time- Adam now experiences deep and abiding Shame.

And this “*Shame of Nakedness*” arises from two Sources- and *both* of them flow out from the collapse of the Foundation of Covenant Love in Adam and Eve’s Relationship with God:

1. Eve is no longer reliable to cherish Adam. She has become Selfish; and Adam feels vulnerable that she will put him down for her own selfish ends.
2. Adam knows that he is guilty himself. And the “Nakedness of Innocence” *contradicts* the Truth of his own Unworthiness- and he is ashamed of it

**Genesis 3:7** says that our first Parents tried to cope with this new horrible Reality by making themselves a Covering for the Nakedness that they now realize. But their Effort to clothe themselves- *without* God and *without* Grace- was, in

Reality, a *sinful* Effort to try to hide what had really happened. They tried to close the Gap between what they *used* to be; and what they now *are*- by covering what *is*- and then expecting God to receive them as though nothing has happened.

So, Adam and Eve tried to *re-establish* their Relationship with God- BY WHAT THEY DID FOR THEMSELVES- rather than by what God did for them. And this “*sinful Independence*”- is the Foundation of every single false Religion in the History of the world.

But what does it mean that God Himself clothed them with animal skins? Was He *confirming* their Hypocrisy? Was God “*aiding and abetting*” their Pretense? If they were naked and Shame-free *before* the Fall, and if they put on clothes to *minimize* their Shame *after* the Fall, then what is God doing by clothing them even *better* than they can clothe themselves?

I think the Answer is that God is giving Adam and Eve (and us) two Messages: one- Positive and one- Negative.

**Negatively**, God is saying, “*You are NOT what you were; and you are NOT what you ought to be. And the Chasm between what you are; and what you ought to be is huge. And so, covering yourself with clothing- due to your Shame- is a correct Response to this Sin: not to Conceal it, but to Confess it. Henceforth, you shall wear clothing, not to Conceal that you are not what you should be, but to Confess that you are not what you should be.*”

And one practical Implication of this is that “*Public Nudity*” today is NOT a return to Innocence- but a *further* Rebellion against “*Moral Reality*”. God ordains clothes to witness to the Glory we have lost. Which means it is *added* Rebellion to *not* wear clothes.

But for those who rebel in the other direction and make clothes themselves a “Means” of Power and Prestige and “attention getting”, God’s Answer is NOT a return to “*Nudity*” but a return to “*Simplicity*” (1Timothy 2:9&10; 1Peter 3:4&5).

So, clothes are NOT meant to make people think about what IS under them. Clothes are meant to direct attention to what is NOT under them: Merciful hands that serve others in the Name of Christ; Beautiful feet that carry the Gospel where it is needed; and the Brightness of a Face that has beheld the Glory of Jesus.

**Positively**- God didn’t merely speak- He acted. And God Himself clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins. And this was not only a Witness to the Glory we lost; and a Confession that we are NOT what we *should* be. But it is also a clear Testimony that God Himself would one day “make us” to be what we *should* be.

God *categorically* rejected their own “*Self-clothing*”. Yet He didn’t leave them Naked. So, God clothed them by slaying an animal; shedding its blood; and covering their Shame (Sin) by what He alone did for them.

And that Divine Covering in **Genesis** pointed to the future “*Day of Salvation*”- when God would solve the Problem of our Shame and Guilt *decisively* and *permanently*. And God did that with the Blood of His Own Son. He did it by clothing repentant believers with the perfect Righteousness of Jesus Christ. And God did it with the Radiance of His Own Glory (**Galatians 3:27; Philippians 3:21**).

And that means that the covering of our Nakedness now is a Witness- both to our past and present Failure; as well as to our future Glory. They testify to the great Chasm between what we *are*; and what we *should be*. But they also testify to God’s merciful Act in *bridging* that Chasm through Jesus Christ and His Life, Death, and Resurrection for our Sins.

And this is why every false and man-made Religion or Philosophy *encourages* their followers to keep on trying to clothe themselves with their own Man-made or humanly engineered righteousness. They are hoping that God will notice how hard they are trying to be righteous; and allow them into Heaven- based solely on the *intensity* and *sincerity* of their own Efforts.

Only “*Biblical Christianity*”<sup>1</sup> teaches that lost sinners must trust in Jesus, *personally* and in His finished Work- in order to be “MADE perfectly Righteous” by Faith alone.

And this is why Jesus’ sinless Life is so important to our Salvation. Jesus lived 30 years BEFORE He ever began His Ministry- without committing a single Sin! And He did that- so He could FULFILL the Requirements of the Law of God. **Romans 4:13** says,

**For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

Now I told you in the beginning of this Series that there were at least four different kinds of “*Righteousness*” described in the New Testament:

1. Human Righteousness
2. The FALSE Righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes
3. The Righteousness of Faith
4. The Righteousness of Obedience

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term to try to distinguish “*Biblical Christianity*” from other factions, that call themselves, “*Christians*”- yet who do NOT hold to the “*Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone*”.



**Human Righteousness** is the Righteousness that we are born with- as fallen sinners. This is the kind of Righteousness that people cling to- thinking that because they haven't raped a child or committed mass murder- that God will allow them entrance into Heaven. And this is the kind of Righteousness that the Old Testament Prophet (Isaiah) said was "filthy rags".

**The FALSE Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees** is the kind of Righteousness that these religious Hypocrites THOUGHT they had. So, in reality, this Righteousness doesn't actually exist. It was a figment of the Imagination of the most Unrighteous men, who ever lived.

**The Righteousness of Faith** is what lost sinners receive from God when they put their Hope and Faith and Trust in Jesus personally and in His finished Work. This kind of Righteousness is what allows guilty sinners to enter into Heaven with God. This is Jesus' personal Righteousness that He developed by living a sinless Life on earth and fulfilling the Requirements of the Law of God. And it is "imputed" or "credited" to us- by Faith alone.

**The Righteousness of Obedience** is the kind of Righteousness that we develop AFTER we have been saved and begin to struggle to obey Him.

But now I want to show you something about the **Epistle to the Romans**. We are going over this Book now in our early morning Bible Study. So, I want to show you how important our Obedience was to the Apostle Paul. So, please look at **Romans 1:1-6**,

**1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,  
2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,  
3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,  
4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,  
6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;**

... now look at the *last* Chapter of **Romans** and read **Romans 16:25-27**:

**25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,**

**26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;**

**27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.**

So, Paul begins and ends this Masterpiece that we call, “**Romans**” with a “type” or “kind” of Obedience, that he called, the “*Obedience of Faith*”. Now we have already seen a “*Righteousness of Faith*”- but now we see the underlying Obedience that *produces* the Righteousness; and this Obedience is also “of” or “by” Faith.

Here is the Old Testament Command that ALL saved people MUST obey:

### **Genesis 15:1-6**

**1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."**

**2 Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"**

**3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."**

Now Abraham lived during the “*Age of the Patriarchs*”. And Abraham; Isaac; Jacob; and Joseph are the main characters we are given for this Age.<sup>2</sup> This was the “Age” where the wealth of an individual was measured in land holdings and amount of slaves- rather than money. And this is the “Age” that was *primarily* addressed in the last two-thirds of the Book of **Genesis**. Now Job also lived during this time- even though the Book that bears his name was not written until many years after his death.

But a common Custom in those days was for couples- who had no children- to adopt a male slave to be an heir to take the place of a “firstborn son”. There is ample Evidence to suggest that “*Eliezer of Damascus*” was a “senior slave” of Abraham’s, who was in charge of all his possessions. And, if true- it was this same man, who, many years later, was commissioned by Abraham to go and find a wife for his son, Isaac, from among Abraham’s own relatives in his native land as discussed in **Genesis 24:1-9**.

According to that infallible Passage, Eliezer traveled some 450 miles, where he found Rebekah in the town of Nahor in Mesopotamia. And by offering water to Abraham’s slave- Rebekah revealed that she was God’s chosen wife for Isaac. Eliezer gained Permission and a Blessing from Rebekah’s brother Laban to present

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<sup>2</sup> Adam; Enoch; and Noah lived BEFORE the Age of the Patriarchs.

her to Isaac (verses 10–59). Then Rebekah returned with Eliezer and married Isaac (verses 60–67).

So, in his speaking with God here in **Genesis 15**- Abraham was saying that, since he and Sarah had no “first-born” son of their own- all of Abraham’s possessions would be inherited by Eliezer when Abraham died. But look what God told Abraham next:

#### **Genesis 15:4**

**Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."**

Here, God speaks to Abraham about what God will do. And he tells Abraham, *“No! My Promise to you will NOT be fulfilled in the normal humanly possible Way of using your beloved slave to be your legal heir. My Way will be completely impossible: you will become a great Nation through your own physical Seed — your own biological son!”*

So, what does God require from Abraham so that this Promise will happen? God does NOT require that Abraham work hard to obey Him- and thus earn his own Righteousness. What God requires is that Abraham believe Him; trust Him; and put his “*present Faith*” and his “*Joy of the Future*”- in God; and in God’s Will and Word.

Now we know that God told Abraham all of this while they were inside a tent- because to make sure that Abraham is trusting in Him and believing in what He just told him- God then takes Abraham outside and says to him in verse 5,

**And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

Now to be told by God- *anything*- is enough. Abraham is already blessed because God is speaking to him. And so, just the fact that God is telling him anything- is a blessing beyond words.

But God wants MORE from Abraham. He wants this sinful idol worshipper to believe and trust Him. He wants Abraham to find the fulness of his own Joy- in Who God is and in what God alone will do. And so, God takes this guilty rebel- who had NO righteousness of his own- outside the tent and told him to look up and count the stars if he could.

Now just a few years ago, Abraham was building totem poles to worship his pagan gods on his father's land. And now he is speaking with the Owner and Creator of the Universe- who is telling him that his descendants will be as the stars in the sky! And Abraham has done NOTHING to deserve or earn this Favor with God. And now God is promising that He will bless this childless man with billions of heirs! So, what is Abraham to do about all of this? What would you do? Here is what Abraham did:

### **Genesis 15:6**

**Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**

Abraham *believed!* He put his Hope and Trust in God- that God was NOT a liar and that He would do *exactly* what He promises here He would do!

And that is what ALL saved people are commanded to "DO". We are NOT going to be saved by keeping God's Commandments- precisely because we CANNOT keep them- perfectly. And yet, God DOES require ALL lost and unsaved people to obey one thing- in order to become Righteous- so we may enter into Heaven: WE MUST BELIEVE! And that is the "*Obedience of Faith*".

And various writers said the same thing- using different phrases and words. For example,

### **Isaiah 28:16**

**Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.**

... which is why the Apostle Paul said,

### **Romans 10:9-10a**

**9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

**10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness...**

Now keep in mind that the GOAL of Salvation is NOT merely that we get to go to Heaven. All saved people WILL go to Heaven and Heaven will be absolutely wonderful- so I am NOT minimizing the Beauty and Glory of Heaven. But there is something else that is infinitely BETTER than Heaven. Here is what Paul said in **Romans 5:10:**

**For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

... so, the Goal of Salvation is that we are “reconciled to God”- because God is BETTER than Heaven.

If Heaven is everything the Bible talks about and yet, God not be there- all that Heaven would be is a nice vacation spot. What makes Heaven to be Heaven- is that God will be there! And that is why John said this in **The Revelation 22:1-5**:

**1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,**

**2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

**3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;**

**4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.**

**5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.**

But in order for us to be “reconciled to God”; and see God’s Face; and have His Name in our foreheads in Heaven- we must become MORE than merely Forgiven- we must also become RIGHTEOUS! And that is why Paul said this in **2Corinthians 5:20&21**:

**20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

**21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

So, what we are COMMANDED to “DO” in order to become *totally* Forgiven of ALL our Sins (Past, Present, and Future) and to become perfectly RIGHTEOUS- is to OBEY the Command to BELIEVE!

So, the “*Obedience of Faith*” that Paul talked about at the Beginning and the Ending of **Romans** is when lost sinners hope in God. It is when they trust in Jesus, personally and in His finished Work. It is when they place their “present Faith” and their “future Joy” in the Lord Jesus Christ and in what He alone has done for us- in His sinless Life; His vicarious Death; and in His bodily Resurrection!

So, we are NOT forgiven and made Righteous by obeying God's Law. And anybody who teaches that- is a demon. He is in league with satan and is a false Teacher. And any Teaching or any Religion that promotes that sinful humans are forgiven and made Righteous by keeping God's Law- is a Doctrine of Demons.

We are justified by Faith and by Faith ALONE! We are Forgiven and made Righteous by what we believe in; what we trust in; and what we confess and NOT by what we "Do". And THAT is the very Core and Heart of the biblical Gospel- that MUST be preached and taught and understood- or there is NO Salvation at all!

And that is what Jesus meant when He said this in **Matthew 5:20**:

**For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

... which is where the "*Righteousness of Obedience*" comes in.

Now the Scribes were the religious Lawyers of that day, who *designed* the entire Man-made System of Religion that the Jews followed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And the Pharisees were the ones, who put that System into practice.

And to the untrained, naked eye- the Scribes and Pharisees were THE most Righteous people on earth. ALL they did- ALL day long- was to work as hard as they could to earn God's Righteousness. That's ALL they did. I mean, they even tithed their seeds!

And yet Jesus never said anything Good about them. For example, in **Matthew 23**- Jesus issued the single most damning; violent; frightening; vitriolic; and eternal Condemnation against these men that is found anywhere in the Bible. Jesus even went so far as to say that the wicked, sexually perverted men of Sodom and Gomorrah, who wanted to rape angels, were not as evil as the Scribes and Pharisees.

So, these men wasted their entire lives- pursuing a humanly engineered Righteousness that didn't actually exist. ALL their Rules and Ordinances and Ceremonies and Rituals did- was to clean up the outside of the vessel- while leaving the inside completely untouched.

Now why did they do that? Were they *trying* to go to Hell? No, they were working *harder* than anybody else to go to Heaven. So, why didn't they touch the inside of the human heart where Sin abides? Because they couldn't. Their false Religion had no Power to forgive a single Sin or save a single soul.

But that is the way it is with ALL false Religion. All Religions beside biblical Christianity can ONLY do something to the outside, external part of the human. Their false, Man-made Religion has NO Power to cleanse the human heart from Sin. And that is why they have all those elaborate Ceremonies with all the colors and all the external; earthly, carnal, worldly exhibits.

It is why today so many in the modern church seek to look and act like the lost world. And so, they play their music loud and fast- wrongly thinking that volume and energy and enthusiasm earns Favor with God. It is why they make the room dark and have colored lights and smoke machines- they wrongly think that by being very energetic and having all the special effects- they can mimic a genuine “Move” of the Holy Spirit. Like the Pharisees, they incorrectly think they have the ability to get people “in the mood” to be saved. And like the Scribes- they think that by “designing a Worship Experience” that looks like a sinful, worldly rock concert- they will attract more people and get more people into the Kingdom. But also like the Pharisees, eventually, ALL who follow those false Religions become nothing more than religious Hypocrites- who go in the “Name” of God- but who are far from Him.

It is ironic to think that the closer the Pharisees thought they were to God- the further from Him they became. The harder they ran after God- the further away they actually were. And the more Rules and Rituals and Ceremonies and Commands they added- the less godly they became. And Jesus categorically condemned them.

So, when Jesus said, “**unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees**”- He was NOT telling the people to work harder than the Scribes and Pharisees- so they could earn Favor and Forgiveness and Righteousness from God. He was simply telling them to believe and receive the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ. Because THAT Righteousness is pure and perfect and there is NO kind of Righteousness that surpasses that.

Okay, we now know that for ALL our Sins to be forgiven and for us to become perfectly Righteous- we MUST believe in Jesus and in His finished Work. But what do we do AFTER we are saved? Do we then strive to obey ALL of God’s Commands? Yes! But we do so- NOT to earn Heaven- but precisely because we are already saved and now we genuinely love God.

So, it is true to say, “*God saved me because He loved me!*”. That is true and we rejoice in that Truth! But even though it is a true Statement- it is also an incomplete Statement. So, we must finish the Statement by saying,

**“God saved me because He loved me- so that by saving me- I will love Him!”**

You see, if we stop with that first incomplete Statement- then WE become the Center of all that God is and does. And when that happens- when Man becomes the Center of all that God is and does- we call that a “Man-centered” Theology. This is a Theology where Man robs God of His Glory and where people actually think that God exists for no other reason than to make our lives better down here. And that is the Basis of all the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity

Teachings that have warped people's minds and brought forth the most "Self-centered" and "Self-absorbed" and "Self-indulgent" Generation in the History of the world.

This is the, "*It's ALL about ME*" Church; the Church that lines its walls with mirrors so that the people can see how magnificent they are; how deserving they are; how spiritual they are; how powerful they are; how important they are; how beautiful they are; and how much Faith they have. This is the Doctrine that teaches that the person with the MOST toys at death- wins. It is the Teaching that ignores the biblical Warnings about Covetousness; and loving Money; and lusting after MORE of this world's Goods. It is the Theology of Worldliness.

Ian Murray once said,

"Worldliness is departing from God. It is a "man centered" way of thinking; It proposes objectives which demand no radical breach from man's fallen nature. It judges the importance of things by the present and material results. It weighs success by numbers. It covets human esteem. It wants no unpopularity. It knows no Truth for which it is worth suffering. It declines to be a fool for Christ sake. Worldliness is the mind set of the unregenerate. It adopts idols. It is at war with God."

Instead, we need a "God-centered" Theology that heralds the glorious Truth about the magnificence and the breathtaking Glory of God. It is a Theology that ALWAYS has, as its Goal- God being exalted and glorified and made much of. It is a Teaching that rejects Man-made gimmicks and instead seeks for God Alone to be seen and heard and worshipped and honored. This God-centered Theology teaches that it takes a dead and risen Jesus to accomplish anything of value; and that the ultimate Value of the Universe- is NOT our good health or our wealth or our possessions- but Jesus Christ.

It is a Theology that understands that the Grace of God in Salvation honors and glorifies God MORE than the creation of a Galaxy far, far away; and that Who Jesus is and What Jesus alone has done- is not only worth believing in- but is worth dying for. It is a Theology that makes men tremble as they are reduced in importance; while those same small men find the fullness of their own Joy in God alone being exalted.

It is a Theology that requires that sinners must come to the Cross to die; and that only by them dying to Jesus will they live eternally. This unpopular Doctrine requires that people become humble; and that Greatness is found in being reduced in their own eyes- so they may serve rather than be served. And those who would embrace this Theology would rather die than sin against God.



I say to you- it is this Gift of Love for God that the chosen seed receives in the Miracle of the New Birth- that empowers and enables those saved souls to struggle against the Lusts of their Flesh (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in their daily Lives- all to the Glory of God.

And that powerful; all-conquering Love will enable us to obey God more and better than we thought Possible. And so, while we will NEVER be sinless- we WILL sin less as a result of dying daily to Sin and living every day to God's Glory. And that is why Jesus said,

### **Matthew 5:16**

**Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

... and in that way- the Righteousness that we develop AFTER we are saved- that we work on every day- NOT so that we may earn Salvation- but so we may demonstrate our Love for God- will greatly *surpass* that of the Scribes and Pharisees. And God will be glorified.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

