

## Matthew 5:19-20

**Todd Fletcher** [00:00:03] Jesus says this, "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 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. Thus reads the words of the Lord, you may be seated. So again, as we come to this passage, we remember the importance of God's Word. If there's one thing you walk away from in this sermon on the Mount series, it's the significance of God's holy and perfect, inspired, inerrant word. The Bible is the foundation of the Christian life. Jesus is the Bible incarnate. He's the Word of God among us. He's the logos who came down and was born of a virgin. As we'll celebrate here in Christmas. We need to recognize that His word is perfect. Perfect. And our view of God's Word says a lot about us, doesn't it? How do we handle the word? How many churches today are apologizing for the word? They don't like the word. In fact, they've forgotten the whole counsel of God's Word. They read aspects of His Word, and they're ashamed that this is the God they serve. Let me tell you, I am not ashamed. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. This is God's perfect word. One day we all stand before him, and we will give an account to how we lived according to His word.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:01:44] And I pray that all of us on that day hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." That's the only thing any of us should want to hear. Not depart from me, for I never knew you! You workers of lawlessness. I pray that we would all strive to hear, well done. So, looking at our lives, what does your life teach? It's interesting James 3:1, a very well known verse says this, "let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." The reason teachers will, they will incur a stricter judgment is because they're leading others. And if they misrepresent God, then they'll be given account. They'll stand before the Lord and give that account, and they will receive a stricter judgment. That's why at the Chapel, we ensure that everyone who teaches and preaches goes through classes on interpretation, on how to teach, making sure they're clear and concise. We have a year long plus process to become a teacher here, so we're very serious about James 3:1. But also this Jesus is warning here in Matthew chapter 5, note this, does not simply apply to official or formal teachers. Look back at verse 19, "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." So we see here to this principle that can be extrapolated out of here, that all of us, in a way, are teachers. That our lives teach, that people watch us as Christians and as disciples of Jesus, they're watching what we believe according to how do we live. Because if you believe it, you're going to try to live it.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:03:30] If you desire holiness you're going to desire to walk according to God's Word. So what does our life say? What do we say about God's Word? When our family members are asking us our view of the Bible and they take us to hard passages, how do we respond? Do we apologize for what it says about hard cultural issues? What do we do? Maybe we say we believe the word but when it comes to actually pragmatism and practice, we don't actually do the word. Yeah, we might speak it on Sunday, but then we go the rest of the day and we don't actually do what Jesus says. It reflects your view of the Bible. Now, none of us are perfect, but all of us should strive to live in perfect conformity to

the scriptures. In every area where Scripture cuts at your sin, allow the scalpel of God to do its work. To remove the sin out of our lives. So do we aim to live a life of obedience to God's Word? Or are we living in disobedience to God's Word? Now, just a quick note on that, for those who aim to live a life in obedience to God's Word that's intentional, isn't it? Well, the very first thing, if you desire to live according to God's Word, you need to what? You need to know God's word. You need to believe God's word. So that's the aim of the Christian. That's the aim of the disciple to live in obedience to God's Word. But what about those who aim to live in disobedience to God's Word, is that intentional? Oftentimes it's just neglect, isn't it? We just forget God's word. We don't spend time in God's Word.

**Todd Fletcher [00:05:03]** And Charles Spurgeon said this to his congregation once. He said, "be careful that if your Bible has enough dust upon it that you do not write damnation on its cover." We need to know God's Word. So in this passage today, we recognize that there's two people, there's two groups that Jesus is talking to. There's believers and there's nonbelievers. And as Jesus always does this, He's always sifting the true followers from false followers. He's always sifting His disciples. And He's even willing to ask you the question, will you too walk away? And our response should be like Peter's, where else will we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. See, the words of eternal life are found in the Scriptures of God. So do we know His Word? Or are we like the Pharisees? Who think they know God's Word. Who think they know traditional religion, what's pleasing on the outside but inside their dead men's bones, whitewashed tombs. Looking gorgeous on the outside, but inside we're dead in our trespasses, as Ephesians says. So as we look at this passage, verses 19 through 20, let's read it again, and then we'll break it into three points. Verse 19, "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 Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Those are very serious words, aren't they? Very serious. We need to recognize that Jesus is not playing around. He's not kidding. He's being very serious. In fact, He's being deadly serious. So as we break these three point, these three points out, the first point is this, which is the first part of verse 19, in disobeying the law, what does it look like to disobey the law? The second point is this obeying the law. That's the second part of verse 19. What does it look like to obey the law?

**Todd Fletcher [00:07:06]** And then the final point is this, keeping the whole law, verse 20, the expectations and requirements of God Himself. So as Christians, this is the main point of today's sermon, is we must uphold the entire law and look to Christ's perfect righteousness in order to keep the whole law. Very important that we uphold the entire law, every word ever written by God's divine, holy inspired pen. Every ink that God spilt will be fulfilled and is eternally significant to us as His children. Every verse in the Bible is important. Every dot, every iota is important to God. Jesus will fulfill it. So as we turn to verse 19, the first part again, let me read this, "therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do to the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven." So with that, let's turn to Acts chapter 20. Acts 20 is an important passage. My good friend Alexander Strach wrote a book on this, on Acts chapter 20, and this book is written to pastors and how to pastor. Just for context here, Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders. This is the last time he'll ever see these men. He's labored among them. He sent the very best that he has to them. The church of Ephesus was very precious to Paul. As he leaves, they're crying, they're embracing, they know they will not see him again.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:08:29] And this is his final warning to the church at Ephesus in Acts 20, verses 27 through 30. He says this, "for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." What a pastor. A good pastor, a good preacher teaches the whole counsel of God. There are no "no go" zones in the Scripture. We go everywhere the Scripture goes. Whatever God's Word says, we say. And this isn't just for the preacher, this is for the Christian. Whatever God's Word says you say because you're a follower of Jesus. It's important that we don't apologize for the word, that we don't minimize the word, that we don't hopscotch around the word. Perhaps you've seen preachers that hit a passage that you've been waiting for them to hit on, and then they just jump over it and you say, well, what about that passage? And they say, it's just too controversial. We're not going to go there. That is. Absolutely horrifying that a preacher would skip over God's Word in any area. We must preach the whole counsel of God's Word. So Paul goes on to say this, "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God." Does that not strike fear into the pastor? "Which he obtained with his own blood." Then Paul looks at these men and just picture this. He looks at these men and he says this, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be alert." Can you imagine Paul sitting in a room with you, these men, that he has discipled these men he's poured his life out into and he says, from among you wolves will arise? That's so sad, but it's a reality. Some of our great heroes in the Christian, you know, tradition have apostasized. They've walked away.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:10:32] Some absolutely terrible things have been committed by pastors that many of us trusted. And Paul's not surprised by that because he says, from among you wolves will arise. Now turn to second Timothy 3. As we set up a proper theology of Scripture, we need to recognize how important Scripture is. If you say you love Jesus, but you don't love His word, the question is, do you actually love Jesus? Because His Word represents who He is. And so if you say, I love Jesus, but not His word, you have a false understanding of Jesus. That's a false Christ. We need to love His Word because that is who Jesus is. The word, the law, and the gospel all point to Christ. Now listen to this. This is Paul's last letter, these are some of the last words he ever wrote that we have available to us. He's writing to mainly his main disciple, Timothy. And he says this, look at chapter 3. Second Timothy, chapter 3, verse 14, "but as for you," it's in reference to Timothy, "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from who you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." And then two very important verses that I encourage you memorize. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." All Scripture is inspired by God. All Scripture is profitable to you for teaching. All Scripture will reprove you and correct you and train you in righteousness. It is all you need for every good work.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:12:24] Do you need anything else besides the Word of God and the Holy Spirit? You don't need anything else. Other things help you. Good books on systematic theology, creeds and confessions those are all helpful. But as I said last week, all things need to be submitted under the authority of God's Word and evaluated by God's Word. I desire to always be reforming. Always be being reformed by the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit. That everything I believe is always put in the crucible of the Word of God and is challenged and is worked through, and that all dross is removed from my belief system. I want nothing but God's Word, and I pray that's true for you as well. So as you're

dealing with the Old Testament, notice all Scripture would be primarily in reference to the Old Testament. All Scripture Paul is saying that all Scripture, including the Old Testament, has a massive significance for you, even as New Covenant, New Testament believers. So something I teach in my hermeneutics class is this what we call the principlizing bridge, which is that every verse in the Bible has a universal principle that not only applies to them in the original audience, but applies to us today. And the goal is to find what is that universal principle in every text that reflects the very character and nature of God, and that has meaning for us today, is profitable for us today. I would submit every single verse in the Bible has a universal principle that applies to us today that must be upheld even as New Covenant believers. And we're going to get into what that looks like specifically. But let's look at, turn to Luke 24 verses 27 and 44. I mentioned these last week, but they bear repeating because these two verses are are mammoth, they're massive. They're giants in the discussion of the believer's relationship to the law.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:14:19] Luke 24. Now our passage starts with, "therefore" Matthew 5 verse 19, "therefore." Now the question that you should be asking is what is the therefore there for? Therefore's are important. So we need to recognize we'll do a little recap of last week, but look at this Luke 24:27, "and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Now where are we? We're in the road to a Emmaus, one of my favorite passages in Scripture, where He's talking with two after his resurrection, and he goes through the Scriptures and says, this is how this points to Me, this is how this points to Me. And then they're not the only ones. Later on, He appears to all his disciples in the room He does the same thing. And then in verse 44 read this, "then he said to them," this is His disciples after the resurrection. "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." That is the entire Old Testament Scriptures, the Law, the Prophets and the writings. All three divisions are in reference to Jesus. And he says, they're all written about me. Now, is that a big claim? It's a massive claim, because He's saying that the Old Testament and the New Testament, all 66 books of the Bible, are about me. Now, there's an interesting difference between what we call a Christological type of interpretation, where we say everything is about Christ. And some have said that specifically, even the nails of the tabernacle represented the nails in Jesus's, you know, hands and the the ropes from the tabernacle represented the binding of Him on the cross. And that's not what we're talking about here.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:16:00] There's a teleological way of interpretation, which is that all Scriptures point to and find their end in Christ. That's the better way to interpret Scripture, is that all Scripture points you to Christ, and all Scripture is about Christ in the sense that all promises that God has ever given, everything that's ever been written, finds their yes and Amen in Jesus Christ. So we have to be very careful in our interpretation of Scripture. Now a couple things turn back to Matthew 5, and specifically verse 19. Let's be good Bible students and look at every word here, "therefore" we are, we said that requires recap. So what did he say? 17, "do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets." He did not come to get rid of anything, He did not come to throw anything away. He did not come to make up for bad mistakes that God made. No, He did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. In fact, He would say, perish the thought! God's word can never be made void. God's word is always applicable. "I've not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." That's a massive difference. There's not one drop of ink that God the Father ever spilled that God the Son removed and threw away. God fulfilled, Jesus, the Son of God, fulfills the Word of God. Every single word that God has ever written. God the Father is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Son accomplishes. He fulfills every single

word of the Bible. Verse 18 Jesus says, "for truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the Law until all is accomplished."

**Todd Fletcher** [00:17:38] Now this is fascinating. What is an iota? It's the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Some would say he's also thinking of the yod, which is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. What's a dot? That word literally means stroke. It's kind of a serif. Few language nerds in here, you know what a serif is, it's just kind of one little stroke at the end of a letter. If you're doing an A and you do one little, little final stroke at the end, that's a serif, that's a stroke, that's a dot. He's saying even God's flourishes will never pass away. Every single stroke of God's divine pen will be fulfilled by Me. I didn't come to abolish the law. Perish the thought. I came to fulfill it. That's the big difference. And if you want more on that, go listen to my last sermon, because we spent a long time working through that, so we dealt with the "therefore." Now we look at, "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." So a couple things, Jesus was not afraid to offend the oral law. What is the oral law? That's rabbinic law. In fact, Jesus loves offending Pharisees and scribes and Sadducees. He loves offending the religious elite. I love Jesus because every time He can offend them, guess what He does? He does offend them. It's like the Pharisees are like, don't step on that line on the Sabbath, on Jesus, like this line, and He steps on it. And that's why I love Jesus, because He's got a humor. He's an amazing Man as you study Him. But He's also the God-Man. So there's the oral law.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:19:16] But what Jesus is talking about is the actual law. The law and the prophets, the Old Testament. He has no concern about offending oral law, breaking religious tradition. What He's concerned about is the Word of God, and every single stroke of God's pen He will fulfill. He was not an antinomian. He was not lawless. He was a law for fulfiller. He fulfills the entire law as we just showed you. So He accomplishes all the law. Second Corinthians 1:20, write this down. Such an amazing verse. Second Corinthians 1:20, "for all the promises of God find their Yes in him." Every promise God has ever made finds it's Yes and Amen in Jesus Christ. Isn't that encouraging? That when Jesus came, He accomplished everything that God says. And He's coming again, He'll accomplish everything else when He returns. When you read the Old Testament, you'll see a lot of things that point to His first coming and then things that point to His second coming. But He will fulfill all promises of God in both His first and second coming. So let's look at this word "relaxes," verse 17, "therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commands." So what does it mean to relax? This is the Greek word *luo*, which means to loose, untie or to unbind, means to do away with or to abolish. So the idea being as you have someone bound and then you loose them and you release the bindings and you let them go free. So here we deal with this issue, "whoever relaxes" or releases, or unbinds, or abolishes one of the least of these commandments. So that word, least of these commandments is interesting, isn't it? Are there different weights to different commandments? Well, yes.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:21:03] What is the most important command? To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second is like it to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commands hang the entire law and the prophets. You see this, He also says, I give you a new command, that you love one another as I have loved you. So He set an example. That's a new commandment, because He showed us what it looks like to love one another. But what about the law to tithe on produce? How significant is that in comparison to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Let me give you a quote here. The rabbis recognize the distinction between light and weighty Old Testament commandments and advocated obedience to both light

commandments are those such as the requirement to tithe on produce, while weighty commandments are those such as profane in the name of God, or the Sabbath, or matters of social justice. Rabbi symbolized stated this, and this is a rabbinic tradition that many have agreed with, which is 613 commandments were revealed to Moses at Sinai. So 613 commandments is the command of the law. Those are the commandments of the law, than those are summarized in ten commandments, which then are broken into two tables. Love God, love your neighbor as yourself, which all boil down to one command, which is love others as I have loved you. It's an amazing thing, isn't it how Jesus works? But 613 commandments were revealed to Moses at Sinai, 365 now this is rabbinic tradition, 365 being prohibitions equal in number to the solar days of the year. Okay, that works, 248 being commands corresponding in number to the parts of the body.

**Todd Fletcher [00:22:38]** I don't know, maybe, I didn't do very well in that class in high school. I can't even remember what it's called right now. Um, but you see, what matters is, is that there are different weights to laws. But what is Jesus actually saying here, with that in mind? There's another passage where He's talking about tithing on mint or dill or cumin, right? That the Pharisees were so particular in their observance of the law that they made sure they tithe on every piece of mint that they harvested. And in fact, if they found a piece of mint on the floor, they would tithe on that mint. That's how meticulous they were about light things. So let's read Jesus again, "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." So he recognizes that there are light commands and there are weighty commands. But the problem is, is that if you minimize even the lightest command and tell people they don't have to follow them, what have you done? Turn to James chapter 2, verse 10. See what is the purpose of the law> if you've ever read the Old Testament and you've walked away saying, I could never keep every single commandment in the Old Testament, let me tell you, that's exactly how you're supposed to respond to the law. James chapter 2, verse 10. So you may say, Todd I've tithed on every piece of mint that I have ever found, every piece of spice that has been put on my burger. I made sure that that was pre tithed. James 2:10, "for whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it."

**Todd Fletcher [00:24:33]** So in the Old Covenant, if there was ever one piece of produce that you didn't tithe on, that makes you a law breaker. And you may say, well, it's just a light law. I've heard people say it's just a white lie. It's not that serious. Sure, I evaded taxes a little bit. That's okay. I didn't declare all the money that I made. I don't have to do that. Well, that makes you a law breaker. And that means the entire weight of God's law rests upon you, and that the wages of sin is? Death. So with that in mind, "therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teach others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven." Starting to come into clarity, isn't it? That if we lower any part of Scripture and we lead people into sin, even as a believer, which I think he's talking to believers here, even as a believer, your status in heaven will be lowered because you're leading others into sin. Now, why do I say that this is likely in reference to believers? Well notice, it's "least in the kingdom of heaven," meaning they're already in the kingdom of heaven. So what about works where two works come in? Turn to First Corinthians chapter 3. Because there are various statuses in the kingdom of heaven and give me a chance to defend myself. We're all children of God, if you're born again, you're a child of God. God loves all of His children equally, that you're in Christ and the same love that God the Father has for God the Son is given to you because you're in Christ. So God loves all of us equally, with the same passion and the same desire that He has for His Son.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:26:18] We're not talking about levels of love that God has for each of us, but there are levels of status or reward for Christians that we need to deal with. First Corinthians 3 looking at verse 10. Paul says this, "according to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. "Here's a command, "let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So Jesus Christ as a saved believer, as a born again Christian, we all have the very foundation of Jesus Christ that cannot be removed from us. Verse 12, "now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one of us has done." So work will be tested. Now, what do we think about this? Which works will survive the very test of God? All of us will stand before the beam seat judgment, before the throne of Christ. I believe everyone at this judgment is saved. It's an issue of rewards. Who will receive rewards and who will suffer loss? And what does it mean to receive rewards? So one question. Are rewards important? Should we care about reward? Paul cared about reward. He disciplined his body, he beat his body into submission so that he might not be disqualified. He trained as though, he ran as though, to what? To win the prize. Paul was serious about rewards. Are you serious about rewards? Well, what is a reward? Why does that matter? We'll see this in a little bit, but we'll, I think it's clear that rewards matter. We're going to visit that in just a second.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:28:11] But before we get into that, I want to ask you a question. With disobeying the law, making light of even lesser commands, it's just a white lie? It doesn't really matter if I evade taxes? That doesn't matter if I honestly honor my father or mother, which is a very weighty law? But today we wouldn't see that as a valuable law because of our culture. If you start disregarding aspects of Scripture, then you're on dangerous ground and you'll be called least in the kingdom of heaven. You will lose rewards hand over fist. When you start disregarding Scripture and even what you consider to be a light law. But can we, can we even lose the Word of God? Is that possible? Even as Christians, can we lose the Word of God? I would submit that many churches have lost the Word of God. Many churches this morning aren't even using God's Word for the sermon. Many Christians today don't even need a Bible to listen and to follow what the pastor is saying, and I think that's a travesty. In fact, we see this in the Old Testament, don't we? When the Jews, when the Israelites lost the word of God, remember the story of second Kings 22, where they find the Bible in the temple, and they read it and they say, oh, no, we're in a lot of trouble. They go to Josiah, and they're like, Josiah have you ever seen this book? And he's like, what book? And he reads it. He's like, oh no, we're in trouble. And he realizes that penalty, consequences, discipline is coming for the people of Israel because they neglected the word of God.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:29:36] And many today haven't read the Old Testament in years. Maybe they read the New Testament. Maybe they only read the red letters of Jesus Christ, and they forget about everything else. So you can be saved and still forget the word. This is the hard part. I knew a guy back in North Carolina who wrote a book on the red letters, and he said, I only use the red letters and I pray that book is out of production, it's not being made anymore. Because every single word is equally inspired by God. Now there's weightiness to the words, right? Jesus's words are weighty. The sermon on the Mount serious, but all of God's Word is inspired, equally inspired. Every single word matters. Now moving to the second point obeying the law. We just looked at disobeying the law that some throw aside, some cast aside different commands of God's Word, they say they're not essential. They're not important, they don't really have any value. But see, every word of God's Word has value. So looking back to the second point here, he says, "but whoever

does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." So when we looked at the old covenant versus the new covenant, we need to remember Romans 7, which is that Paul is comparing the old covenant and the New covenant to two wives. He says the Old Covenant is the first wife. And when that covenant was fulfilled by Jesus, it was completely fulfilled by Jesus. Hebrews 8:13 says that the old covenant is now obsolete. It's passing away. The old covenant has been fulfilled, that wife has now died. We're married to a new spouse as Romans 7 says. It's an entirely new woman. It's an entirely new law and a new covenant that we're under. That's why it's called the New Covenant.

**Todd Fletcher [00:31:17]** And Jesus affirms, and He gives us the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2, First Corinthians 9:21, both refer to the law of Christ. That as Christ followers, as New Covenant believers, we are now bound to Jesus Christ and His new covenant law. Now, I argued last week, nine of the Ten Commandments of the Ten Commandments are brought forward, and they're reaffirmed by Christ Himself and His apostles. One command is not brought forward, which is the Sabbath, and it's actually mentioned Hebrews chapter 4, verses 1 through 11, that Jesus is our Sabbath rest. Now there's a lot of debate around that. Go listen to my last sermon if you want to hear my arguments. But the point being is now we are under the law of Christ, the law of liberty, the law of freedom, the law of the Spirit. I could go on, but you see, this law is a new covenant. It's a new woman. We're new people. Even the qualitative difference between Old covenant people and New covenant people of God are different. Remember He says John the Baptist is the greatest of the Old covenant, but he's the least in comparison to the people of the New Covenant. Why? Because now we have the permanent indwelling of the Spirit, and we can walk by the law of the Spirit, not by the law of the flesh. Again, massive subject. DA Carson says this, "it appears, then, that the expression must refer to the commandments of the Old Testament scriptures. The entire law and the prophets are not scrapped by Jesus coming, but fulfilled by Jesus. Therefore, the commandments of these scriptures, even the least of them, must be practiced. But the nature of practicing has already been affected by verses 17 through 18, Jesus has fulfilled them."

**Todd Fletcher [00:32:58]** So Carson says this, "the law pointed forward to Jesus, His activity, and His teaching. So it is properly obeyed by conforming to His Word. As it points to Him, so in Him He fulfills it. He establishes what continuity it has and the true direction to which it points and the way it is to be obeyed. Thus, ranking in the kingdom turns on the degree of conformity to Jesus's teachings, as that teaching fulfills Old Testament revelation. His teaching, towards which the Old Testament pointed, must be obeyed." So, when you look at the Old Testament as New Covenant believers, we have to have Jesus glasses. Looking at the Old Testament through the eyes of Jesus Christ and His fulfilling nature, His absolute perfect fulfillment of everything written in the Old Testament, both in His first coming and His second coming. So when you read Genesis 3:15, and the seed of the woman is mentioned, who crushes the head of the serpent with Jesus glasses on, we know exactly who's that in reference to. That's the amazing thing is Carson is saying. So the whole law matters, the scriptures matter from Genesis 1:1 all the way to revelation 22. All of that matters. But now we have lenses that are Jesus Christ. We're looking at the scriptures through what Jesus has done. Now let's look at the parable of the talents, I mentioned rewards, look to Matthew 25. We don't have time to read the entire parable, but Matthew 25, verses 14 through 30 are worth studying in light of today's sermon. I'm just going to point a couple things out. Verse 14, "for it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property."



**Todd Fletcher** [00:34:44] So this is Jesus, He's going away, this is in reference to the Son of Man leaving for a time. He'll come back to his servants. Verse 15, "to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability." So God has given us all different abilities. He's given us all different amounts of talents. But what He's concerned about, we'll see is faithfulness. Faithfulness with all that God has given me or given us. So look at verse 21 now, this is after the servants go out and do their work. They double some of them double their income. They use the abilities God has given them, and they double what God has invested in them. In verse 21 he says this, "his master said to him," this is the first servant who had five, "well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." He repeats this again to the second servant. "Well done, good and faithful servant," verse 23, "you have been faithful over little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." So with regards to rewards, what do you think God is looking for? Faithfulness. It doesn't matter how many talents you have. What matters to God is faithfulness. How faithful are you with what He has given you? Doesn't matter if you had five, if you had two, or if he had one. How faithful are you? So what is the reward? Well, what does he give these men? More responsibility. It's interesting when you think about work. Some of you may be thinking, I don't want a reward if it's more work, if it's more responsibility, that's the last thing I want.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:36:22] But you're thinking of cursed work. Think about blessed, unfallen, God glorifying work. That if you're faithful here in this life, in the next, he will give you more responsibilities. He'll give you more opportunities to glorify Himself. The chief end of man is...to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I do believe that a part of the rewards that Jesus will be giving is responsibility. It's an amazing thing when you think about that, and we're so materialistic, we often think that rewards are, some of us will be driving Honda Civics and others of us will be driving lambos. That's not the proper way to think about heavenly rewards. The proper way to think about heavenly rewards is opportunity to serve, more responsibility. As Adam had great responsibility in the garden, naming all the animals, all these different things. Ways to glorify God, faithfulness is key. So how do we obey the law as New Covenant believers? Turn to Romans chapter 7. I am always amazed, I feel like, you know the old history saying, as all roads lead to Rome, I feel like all Scripture leads to Romans because there's so much theology in Romans that's important for this discussion. So I think I have time, actually flip back to Romans 3:20. I just want to set a ground, some groundwork before we move on. Romans 3, verse 20, "for by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight. "That means saved, "since through the law comes knowledge of sin." So very clear by works of the law no human being will ever be justified. By works of law no human being will ever be saved. None is righteous, no not one. No one understands. No one seeks God, all have turned aside. Together they have become worthless.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:38:18] That's Romans 3, verses 10 through 18, right above it. So it leads you in kind of a hopeless place, right? Well, none of us can be good enough. All of our best works are filthy rags before Him. So, as new believers who are born again by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, where we are now. Look at Romans 7, there's a battle between our flesh and our new nature now. We're born again, our old man was crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who lives as Christ, who lives in me. I have a new heart. The old heart's been removed. The old heart of stone has been removed. Replaced with the heart of flesh. I'm a new creature and I love God's things, I love holiness, I love righteousness, I'm growing in conformity to Christ. But I still have this flesh. Paul says in Romans 7, all the things that I don't want to do, those are the things I do, all the things that I want to do, those are the things that I don't do. So a couple key verses, Romans 7:14 "for we know

that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin." This body has not been glorified. This body is not being sanctified. This body is sold under sin and this body must die, first Corinthians 15. The inner man is being renewed. I have a new nature. I have a new heart, I have a new Spirit. But the body is decaying around me. Can I get an amen? But look at this other verse. Look at 21 through 25. And again, this whole section of Scripture is just so powerful. But look at verses 21 through 25. As Paul is thinking about his body versus his new nature, he says this.

**Todd Fletcher [00:39:53]** "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand." He's always in his body. The body is always present in our lives here before we die and go to be with the Lord. He says, "for I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members," that's my flesh, "another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind," but with one of the most important passages for the New Covenant believer with regards to the law. Romans 8, verses 1 through 11. Number one, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." For those of us who have been born again, there is no condemnation. We are perfect as He is perfect. I'll come back to that in the end. "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." Comparing two laws the law of the Spirit versus the law of sin and death. "For God has done with the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do." Meaning, none of us could fulfill the old covenant in our own righteousness, because all of us were dead in our flesh. By, but God, "by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." He didn't have a sin nature, but He had a weak flesh like ours.

**Todd Fletcher [00:41:22]** He was tired, He ate. He was hungry, all those types of things. "And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." Verse 4, absolutely key to the New Covenant believers understanding of the law, "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." And do you know how to know who the sons of God are, according to Romans 8? it's those who are being led by the Spirit of God. They're walking in obedience in a way that the old Covenant believer couldn't even imagine. They have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They have the new covenant heart that God promised in Ezekiel 36, in reference to the latter days. They are truly, qualitatively different than the Old Covenant believers. And that's one of the things that we talked about last week. So as you're dealing with this law now, we live in a way that gets to the, this is the key word, the heart of the issue. So with all that let's turn back to Matthew 5. Matthew 5, Jesus is trying to get His hearers to the heart of the issue, "but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." For those who walk in obedience to God's Word and walk in dependence of the Holy Spirit, they will receive eternal reward, and they will be great in the kingdom of heaven. Is it sin to desire to be great in the kingdom of heaven? No. It's a motivator that God constantly gives us. One of my greatest prayers is that I would be one of God's favorite tools, that whenever he goes into the tool shed and he grabs his tool, he likes grabbing Todd.

**Todd Fletcher [00:43:01]** He likes using Todd because I want to be so used of God that I'm being conformed to my King's hand. That I know the feeling of His hand, and He knows what it's like to grip me. And so this is the key here, is that we want to be great in the kingdom of heaven, not for our own glory, but to glorify Him with our entire lives. So moving to this last point, what does verse 20 deal with? Verse 20, "for I tell you," this is Jesus speaking. "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and

Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." So verse 19 is in reference to believers, both those who are at least and greatest in the kingdom based on reward and loss. But now he's looking to the nonbeliever. He says, "for I tell you," and He's looking to the people who look up to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes. He says, "for I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now if you're sitting there, this would be shocking. He just pointed to the best of us, the most moral of us, the ones that we all look up to as the people we want to be like. And he said, unless your righteousness exceeds even them, you will never sniff the kingdom of heaven. Now, this would be shocking, wouldn't it? So think about this. Turn to Luke 18, verses 9 through 14. This is such a powerful story. Luke 18, verses 9 through 14. We're looking at. We're looking at Pharisees who are legalists, and we're looking at born again believers who are justified.

**Todd Fletcher [00:44:38]** So Luke 18, verse 9, "he," Jesus, "also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt." Now, we've all experienced this in church before, haven't we? People who look to themselves, they trust in themselves, and they trust in their own righteousness. And they look down their nose at others as though they're just sinners, tax collectors. Jesus has dealt with this. He's seen it. Verse 10, "two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and another a tax collector." Now look at the characteristic, or the painting of this Pharisee. "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus." And you can imagine this is loud, because he wants other people to hear it. "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector." Do you think the tax collector heard this? Probably. He's far off, but I don't think this guy's hiding anything. "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes." So before we move on to the tax collector, this man wants everyone to see how righteous he is. He's comparing himself to everyone else and showing everyone else that none of you are as good as I am. And if that's the way you approach Christ, if that's the way you talk to others about the gospel, no wonder people don't want to hear you. But when you come like a tax collector, things are totally different. Now look at the tax collector standing far off. He doesn't even think he can sit in the seat closest to the pulpit. He's standing far off, he's in the back. I don't belong here. I know who I am. He wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven.

**Todd Fletcher [00:46:25]** He's so broken over his sins, and he knows that he deserves nothing but God's wrath. He's far off in the corner. He won't even lift up his eyes to God. He beats his breast, realizing that he has nothing to offer but the very sin that requires our death, that required Jesus's death on the cross. And he says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" That's what it takes to be saved. To come to God and recognize you have nothing to offer Him. And that all you can cry out for is His mercy. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Verse 14, Jesus says this, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified." That means saved. "Rather than the other." The other man wasn't saved. The man who thought he had it all together, that he was perfect. That man wasn't saved. He was a whitewashed tomb, inside was dead man's bones. Jesus says this, "for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." So when you think about a believer, there's a couple things, one, they have an alien righteousness. Turn back to Matthew 5. They no longer depend on their own righteousness. They no longer think that they can be good enough. And they recognized that even if they were like the Pharisees and the scribes, they would never reach God's perfect standard. Let me throw one other thing at you Matthew 5, verse 48, "you therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." That is God's standard. You have to be perfect to be saved.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:48:04] So as you're looking at this, you realize I'm not perfect. I could never be perfect. And that's where you have to get to the point where you pray the same thing the tax collector said, God be merciful to me, a sinner. And when you do that, you receive an alien righteousness. A righteousness that does not belong to you. A perfect righteousness that only Jesus can offer you. A righteousness that far surpasses and exceeds that of the Pharisees and the scribes. You will be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect when you receive Jesus's perfect righteousness by grace through faith. It's an amazing thing, isn't it? Second Corinthians, let's turn there. This is where we'll end. Second Corinthians chapter 5. There's a couple things as we're wrestling with what has happened to us. After being justified and now we're being sanctified, we now have a perfect alien righteousness that meets all of God's standards. Our sin was accredited to Him on the cross. He paid our sins. His righteousness became ours. Second Corinthians 5 verse 17 says this, "therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a" what? "A new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Just to supplement. Ezekiel 36:26 says, he'll take out the cold stone dead heart, and he'll replace it with the heart of flesh. And then you read verse 21, Second Corinthians 5, verse 21, "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. So as we're thinking through these things, when it comes to the law, we no longer have to meet the righteous requirements of the law because Jesus perfectly met the righteous requirements of the law.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:50:00] But now that we've been saved by Jesus's perfect righteousness, we can now live according to the law of the Spirit and truly fulfill the law as God desired from the heart. See, the heart's the big difference, isn't it? When we recognize that the heart is the issue, then we recognize what Jesus goes on to say in the rest of the sermon on the Mount, where he outlines the law of Christ. You have heard it said, do not murder, thou shalt not murder. What does he say to you? But I say, if you're angry in your heart towards your brother, what? You are a murderer because it's a heart issue. For God is after our hearts. Well, you may say I'm not an adulterer, but if you've lusted after another woman in your heart, you're an adulterer. You see, Jesus is going after the heart. Do you love God with all of your heart? So you need a new heart in order to be able to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law, which is the law of the Spirit. So Matthew 5:48, "you therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect." Is the standard, and the only way to reach that standard is by receiving, by grace through faith in Christ alone, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. To meet the righteous requirements of the law, so that you can now serve in the newness of the Holy Spirit and walk according to the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? It's everything that's taught in the New Testament. It's everything that Jesus requires of His New Covenant people. He is our Sabbath rest. He is our perfection. We no longer have to strive for our good works and those types of things.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:51:33] And to earn God's favor. We have God's favor in Christ Jesus, and it was always and only available by grace through faith in the Word of God. For Abraham, Romans 4, all the way up to us today. So a couple questions for you. Are you depending on your own works this morning to save you? If you are, then you don't even understand the very basics of the gospel. That your works can never save you, only his works can save you. Question number two what does your life say about your belief? Do you care about God's Word? Do you care about every single word in your Bible from Genesis to Revelation? Do you see it as all inspired and necessary for holiness and godliness? And another question. Do you disobey or obey God's law? What's your motivation? Do you desire to live rightly before the Lord? If you don't care about what God thinks, if you don't care or love God's Word, you've got some issues you need to work

through. You need to spend some time in prayer. You need to repent of these things before the Lord. Do you do these things? And do you speak these things and you believe these things? Because when the Scripture becomes your very foundation, your whole world is different, isn't it? You have a new lens. You have a new worldview. You value things differently than anyone else. So as we conclude here, God wants our hearts. He wants us to serve from our hearts. He cares about our motivations, and we only receive true righteousness in Christ alone. So I'm going to end with Grant Osburn, who says this in reference to this whole passage, 17 through 20, "May well ask, what problem is Jesus addressing in this passage? If the Pharisees were experts in keeping the law yet failed, what is Jesus requiring of me? The answer is to sum it up in the sermon on the Mount itself is this it is not enough to claim to be a follower of Christ, one must live like it. Works do not save us, but they are necessary results of being saved. Without works fruits, there is no evidence that one is a believer at all. See Matthew 7, verses 21 through 23. Yet it works both ways. The Pharisees had external works, but not a heart of faith. That was their problem. Many so-called Christians claim faith, but have no works. See James 2:14 through 26, faith without works is dead. The true disciple has a heart for Christ and the deeds that flow out of that heart attitude. This greater righteousness will be explicated in what follows in the rest of this chapter." Meaning the rest of the sermon on the Mount. So if you're asking, well, what is the law of Christ? I have great news for you. It's the rest of the sermon on the Mount. He tells us exactly what he expects from his followers, a righteousness that far exceeds that of the Pharisees and Sadducees. So Jesus doesn't lower the bar, He raises the bar in a way that was unimaginable.

**Todd Fletcher** [00:54:33] Let's pray. So, Father God, we come to this passage that Christ brings to us. Like the tax collector recognizing that we need to plead for mercy. That we need Your grace. And that for those of us who have received that grace that's only available in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can now live according to the law of the Spirit. The law, the mind set on the flesh is death, but the law set on the spirit is life, it's liberty. Lord, I pray that we would walk in the freedom of the Spirit, that we would walk in the new life that's only available in Jesus Christ, and that we would fulfill the law according to our heart motivations, and our desire to love You and love others, as You have commanded. We pray this in your Son. Amen.