

# Christ Fulfills the Law

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**Bible Verse:** Matthew 5:17-18  
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Well, we come back this evening to Matthew 5 once again and a most foundational passage in understanding the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew chapter 5 beginning in verse 17, I invite you to turn there with me, we're going to read through verse 20. Matthew chapter 5 verses 17 through 20.

17 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. 18 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. 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. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

And this passage really does a tremendous service to the people of God in helping us understand the relationship between the Old and the New Testament, and even more specifically the relationship between the Old Testament and the person of Jesus Christ. You know, it's easy to forget that some people that are new to the Bible, that have never really been introduced to the Bible, you know, don't even understand that there is an Old and a New Testament, let alone to contemplate the relationship between the two of them, and in our increasingly pagan nation, that's going to become more and more the case of what we are dealing with as we help people understand the Bible. And Jesus here does a magnificent job, as you would expect him to do, of giving us a sense of who he is in relationship to the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament, of course, was finished some 400 years before the coming of Christ. There was a period known as the silent years of 400 years from the close of the Old Testament prophets' ministry to the coming of Christ and now Christ here in this opening discourse in the gospel of Matthew is explaining how he relates to what the Old Testament had to say, and tonight we're going to consider what he means when he says there at the end of verse 17, "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." What does it mean that Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament?

Well, let me just remind you some of the things, the critical things that Scripture says about the law of God, referring to the prophets and Moses. The law condemns all of mankind, Jew and Gentile alike. Paul establishes that in Romans 1:18 through chapter 3, verse 20, and in Romans 3:19 and 20, it says, "whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be closed, and all the whole world may be held accountable to God because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for through the law comes knowledge of sin." One of the fundamental misunderstandings about the law of God is that people will think that it is given so that we know what we are to obey so that in keeping it we can have eternal life. That's not the purpose of the law. That's not the function of the law. It's a complete misunderstanding of what the law does. We spent a number of months going through the Ten Commandments two or three years ago, and what we saw in the Ten Commandments was a complete condemnation of every man, woman, boy, and girl that has ever lived. The law condemns us inside and outside. It condemns our words. It condemns our thoughts. It condemns our actions. And that's what Paul is referring to there in Romans, that no flesh will be justified in the sight of God. No one through obedience to the law will be declared righteous by God, because all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have missed the mark. We have transgressed his commands. We have not begun to keep everything that he says, and indeed the Scriptures say that we all stumble in many ways and so, it's good for us to come back to these basic foundational principles and not take anything for granted for anyone in here to understand that the law was not given to us so that you could meet its standards by your own obedience and thereby deserve and merit eternal life. That is not the purpose of the law whatsoever. Rather, what the law does is it functions as a mirror, you could say, and it holds up and it reflects back to us the ways that we fall short of the holiness and the justice of God. And so the law condemns us, it does not justify us, and it never could, and that was not the purpose for which it was given.

Now, when the Apostle Paul says that "by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin," beloved, what I want to encourage you to realize and to recognize is that we must not trifle with the Old Testament. We shouldn't trifle with any part of the word of God. It's never a matter of lighthearted teaching or anything like that, but the Old Testament comes and it exposes to us the nature of our sin. It shows us that we fall short of the glory of God. It exposes the glory of God and shows that we fall short of it. And Jonathan Edwards, the great American theologian, said this. He said, "The law serves as an instrument that the great Redeemer uses to convince men of their sin and misery and helplessness and God's awful majesty and justice as a lawgiver, so to make men sensible of the necessity of Christ as a Savior." Well, what he means by that, what he's saying there is, is that God uses the law to help us understand that we fall short of his glory, that we are guilty, that we are miserable sinners, and that we are helpless before him, that we cannot begin to attain to his standard of righteousness and holiness. That's the function of the law. The law does not function so as to congratulate you on how good you are. People who consider the Ten Commandments and think that the rich young ruler said, "All those commandments I've kept since my youth up," are miserably misunderstanding what the nature and the purpose of the law is. It's not to make us feel good about ourselves, it's to convict us of

sin, and along with that, and as part and parcel with that, what Edward says is that it reveals to us the majesty and the justice of God. The law is an expression of the righteousness of God. It expresses his moral perfection. It expresses how separate he is from his creation and from mankind. And if you remember, we talked about this when we taught him on the Ten Commandments, when the law was given at Mount Sinai, just remember the accompanying natural phenomenon that accompanied it. Lightning and earthquakes and thunder and so that the people were scared to approach the mountain and they told Moses, "You go up and talk to him, I don't want to mess with him!" They were so frightened by the physical signs that accompanied the revelation of the law of God that they didn't even want to approach. They knew that they needed a mediator. And in like manner, a right understanding of the law of God shows us that we need a mediator because we do not meet the standard that the law requires.

My dear friends, the truth of the matter is that the law of God, it condemns you, and it condemns me. It tells us that we do not measure up to God, that we have fallen short of the glory of God, and that we need a Savior, we need a Redeemer and that's what makes Christ's word so vital today. You and I have not fulfilled the law of God. We never could, we never will, we were born into a state of condemnation from the moment of our birth. Indeed, David said in Psalm 51, "In sin my mother conceived me." We were condemned when Adam fell. When Adam fell in the garden, all of mankind fell with him and we were all held accountable for that sin of Adam in the garden because we were identified with him and Adam was acting as our representative. And so from the get-go, from the get-go, we have been lost, and now we come and to see the law of God search us and see and expose our sin, it leaves us, metaphorically speaking, it leaves us also trembling at Mount Sinai. It leaves us fearful and convicted and guilty as we think about the majesty and the justice of God and what his law requires and how we fall short.

And beloved, let me just say one other thing here, to understand that the grace of God does not mean that he overlooks sin. God's grace is not some flabby concept by which he just chooses to ignore the sin in mankind and in men and women and in boys and girls. He doesn't ignore it. God's justice must be fulfilled. It must be satisfied. And the law of God, which condemns us and pronounces us guilty before we are to be reconciled to God, before we are able to enter into heaven, that guilt that the law pronounces on us must be satisfied. It must be accounted for. And until something is done with your guilt, you are not in a position to enter into the presence of a holy God. That's what makes Christ's word so vital to us today, because the law that we have not kept, the law that we could never keep, Jesus looks at that law and it's staggering, it's staggering to think that a man in human flesh could stand and say, "I came to fulfill that law. The law that condemns everybody else," Jesus says, "I came to complete it, to fulfill it."

Now, so that's what we want to consider today, and we're going to look at four different ways in our brief time here together this evening, four different ways that Jesus Christ fulfills the law of God and hopefully, if I don't forget, we'll circle back and we'll see how that relates to the fact that we are all guilty and condemned by that same law of God. We come back and we see that this is the answer, what Christ says, he came to fulfill the law, those three words at the end of verse 17, he came to fulfill them, to fulfill the law and the

prophets, Beloved, everything about your eternal destiny, everything about your eternal well-being is bound up in those three English words. If Christ has not fulfilled the law, then we are miserably without hope. If he has fulfilled the law, if something has been done to satisfy and keep the law, then there is hope for us in our sinful condition.

So what does this word "fulfill" mean? Well, it has the idea when you think about the law and the prophets, Jesus came to carry them out. He came to do what they had in mind, to accomplish what the Old Testament purpose was. Jesus Christ executed the plan of the Old Testament, he brought it all to pass, all of those things being different ways of expressing the same concept. He carried it out. I want to repeat it because it's so important. He carried it out. He accomplished what the Old Testament had in mind. He carried out the plan. He executed the plan. He brought it all to pass. Now why is that important? Well, it's in the context here in verse 17. Jesus said, "Do not think that I've come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. Don't think that I came to set the Law aside and render it null and void as if it had never existed." No, that's not the relationship that Christ holds toward the Old Testament. He doesn't set it aside, he satisfies it. He fulfills it. He does everything that it had in mind.

Now, just thinking about the immutability of God, immutability being a theological term that means that God never changes. God never changes. And if you think about the law of God coming from God, then it's obvious that in light of God's immutability, the law could never be changed. It could never be altered. It could never be set aside as though it had never existed. The law could not be abolished because the law is permanent, it is eternal. Jesus said in Matthew 24 verse 35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." That is rooted in the fact that God is the lawgiver and God is unchanging. And so when a perfect law has been given that condemns all of mankind, all of a sudden we're left with a terrible, terrible problem, how can a God who never changes, who has given a law that has been broken by all of humanity, how can God look at his law, stay just, fulfill and keep and honor the principles of his unchanging law, and yet at the same time find a way to forgive those who have violated that law? Justice demands punishment. Justice demands condemnation and that cannot be set aside as though it had never been implemented. That's the dilemma.

Job asks the question, "How can a man be just before God in light of these things?" Well, that's what we're going to address here this evening and what we're going to see is that the law of God, I'm using law in a broad sense to refer to the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, I'm just using it as shorthand to refer to everything in the Old Testament. Beloved, and these things I think are just, this is just wonderful to see and to enter into the spirit of the Bible with these things. You know, and one of the things that I think I should just mention here is that Scripture calls us to use our minds. We're to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind. We are to use our mind in order to understand the fullness of the revelation of God. It is a serious mistake for a church, for a pulpit, to simply cater to the felt needs of a congregation, to always want to give practical advice from the pulpit, because sooner or later that stuff wears out and it's too superficial to really ground us. And so here in this passage we're called to use our minds to understand and to think deeply about the nature of the Old Testament, the

multifaceted aspect of the Old Testament, and then see how Jesus Christ fulfills what that Old Testament had.

Let's think about it in one other perspective before we go any further. Let's not be so self-centered as we approach the Bible and just say, 'How does this help me today? You know, is this practical for me today?' It's just a totally man-centered approach that is not at all healthy and not at all what Scripture calls us to do. Look at it from God's perspective. From God's perspective, he had been revealing his word through his servants, the prophets, over a course of a thousand years. God had determined these things from before the beginning of time. He had determined these things. He sent Moses. He revealed things to Moses. He raised up prophets. He raised up kings. All the while, he's working out an eternal purpose that he established before time began, consistently carrying these things out and revealing them over time for over a course of a thousand years. If it doesn't matter to man, that's not a reflection on God or the importance of his word, it's a reflection on the superficiality and the lostness of man to not consider that to be important. Of course the law is important. God gave it and therefore by definition it is important and he gave it to us so that we would understand it.

Let me just point out a couple of other things to you before we go any further. Look at Romans chapter 15 with me. Romans chapter 15. We are meant to study the fullness of the word of God and to understand it. It is not optional. It is not an elective course in the Christian life. When Christ saves us, he saves us to become disciples of his, to be taught by him through the word that he has given in all of its fullness, so that in Romans chapter 15 verse 4 we read, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." And then if you turn a little further to 2 Timothy chapter 3, 2 Timothy chapter 3, and all of this just kind of reminding you and whetting your appetite for the fact that these are things that we are meant to study and understand. We are meant to know these things. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul says to Timothy, actually start in verse 14, he says, "as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings," this would be the Old Testament, "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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." He goes on in chapter 4, verse 2, and says, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

So we see that the New Testament looks back at the Old Testament and says that's for our instruction. These are things that we are to know. These are things that are profitable for every aspect of spiritual life so that these are matters of great, great importance to us as Christians today. And so I just ask a question that I've asked in different ways over the past few weeks and I ask this to encourage you and to help you and just to help you think about things. Have you read the Old Testament? Are you familiar with the Old Testament? Have you ever taken a few weeks, a few months, a few days to just read

through the Old Testament and become familiar with what it has to say? You see, we're not supposed to simply just pick out a couple of favorite Psalms and just, you know, "I like Psalm 23, I like Psalm 90, I like Psalm 100," and just read a few Psalms. God calls you to be thoroughly familiar with all of his word and that's a lifetime pursuit; that's something that we do over the course of a lifetime. But somewhere along the line, you have to start and you have to read it for yourself and so I just lay that out for you and trust the Lord to work in your heart.

Well, what about Jesus and the fulfillment of the Old Testament then? How did Jesus fulfill the Old Testament? The title of tonight's message, "Christ Fulfills the Law," Christ Fulfills the Law, and we're going to see it in four different aspects that we'll go through rather quickly here this evening. First of all, Jesus fulfilled the messianic predictions. Jesus fulfilled the messianic predictions, and we've looked at this many times. We looked at it just a couple of weeks ago, so we're not even going to turn to any Scripture here. I just want to remind you of things that we have said in the past. Over the course from Moses and down through the prophets, God had, through his servants, been giving snapshots of the coming Messiah, and you get little pieces of the puzzle given to you as you read through the Old Testament and all of these things come together in the person of Christ. So that in Moses, in the writings of David, in the writings of Isaiah, in Micah, in Zechariah, just for example, to say nothing of Jeremiah and the whole way that everything about Jeremiah is a picture of the coming Christ, these prophets, these writers of Scriptures, and many, many others spoke in advance of the person and the work of Christ. Centuries in advance, they were setting forth where the Messiah would be born. They were setting forth how he would be crucified on a cross before crucifixion was even a thing. In advance they were setting forth the nature of the Son of Man and the Son of David and how he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, all of these things and so many more. Isaiah 53, he would suffer for our iniquities. All of those things laid out in the Old Testament that we've looked at many times, they spoke in advance of the person and the work of Jesus Christ. When Christ entered into the world, born of a virgin, lived his life, had his public ministry, crucified on the cross, buried, resurrected, in all of that, Jesus was fulfilling what the prophets had foretold for centuries. So that, for example, when you read Matthew's gospel, you will see over and over again statements like this, that Jesus did this or Jesus said this or that in order to fulfill what had been written in the prophets. This is a very critical theme in the New Testament to continually tell us and remind us that what Christ was doing and what he was saying was a fulfillment of what the prophets had said that he would do.

And again, we just come back to the fact that in one sense I understand and I sympathize with an unsaved man who has no interest in these things. The things of God, it says in 1 Corinthians 2, are foolishness to him. He has no interest in these things. But not for us as believers, beloved. These things are precious to us. We love the Lord Jesus. I mean, we truly love him, right? We honor him, we revere him, we respect him, we want to know him, and in order to know Christ, as you study Christ and you get to know him, you realize that inseparably connected with his person and work, inseparably connected with his life, is a prior foundation that the prophets laid saying all of this was going to come to pass. So that, because look, nobody can tell the future, no mere man can predict what's

going to happen with 100% accuracy and always have it come to pass. No human being can do that, but God's prophets, speaking on his behalf, speaking by his Spirit, spoke all of these things and they came to fruition, they came to fulfillment in Christ, and we see that Jesus fulfilled what the prophets had been foretelling for centuries and centuries beforehand. And what that means is, is that Jesus Christ is from God. Jesus Christ is God, as shown by the fact that he is in perfect fulfillment of everything that God's proven spokesmen had been saying for 1,500 years beforehand.

It's really remarkable. Jesus fulfilled the messianic predictions. Nobody else could do that. I mean, just think about it. Just think about it, the prophets said what line that Jesus would come from. He's going to come from the line of Abraham through David and through other genealogical markers. And you go to Matthew chapter 1 and you read and you see that Jesus is the son of Abraham, the son of David. You go to Luke 3 and it traces it all the way back to Adam, who was the son of God. These are things that are beyond human control. We don't choose who our parents are. We don't get to choose the families that we're born into and yet, as part of the fulfillment and the overriding purpose of God being fulfilled, Jesus was brought into that line, that human line, showing that he was the one who had the right to the throne of David, all in fulfillment of these messianic predictions. You could spend years of your life just tracing these things out alone on the messianic predictions.

So Jesus fulfilled the messianic predictions. In that way, he carried out what the Old Testament had said and what the Old Testament had in mind. Now secondly, Jesus fulfilled the law in his teaching. Jesus fulfilled the law in his teaching and for this, we can just stay right in the book of Matthew. We'll see these things as we go along and I've already alluded to this in recent messages. But Jesus stepped into a religious environment where the Pharisees were the controlling religious authorities. What the Pharisees taught was presumed to be exactly what the Old Testament meant, and therefore the Pharisees were automatically believed and automatically considered to be worthy of obedience. Now, when Jesus comes, he comes and contradicts the Pharisees. He comes and he corrects them and he exposes the perversions in their teaching and he clarifies and he rescues the law from the predominant religious authorities of the day in the same way that Luther and other Reformers rescued the word of God from the perversions of the Catholic Church back at the time of the Reformation.

Now, Jesus, as he teaches on the law, repeatedly, as we're going to see here, a half dozen times just in Matthew 5, he says, "You've heard it said... but I say to you." He's quoting what the Pharisees taught about the law, and then on his own authority he's saying, "Here's what it really means." So that, and just follow this with me briefly, knowing that we're going to look at all of these passages in the future. Matthew chapter 5 verse 21. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." You see, what the Pharisees had done is they had reduced the commandment against murder to simply a matter of the external act itself, and as long as you didn't physically end someone's life,

you had kept the commandment. Jesus says that is a complete false reduction of what the law means. Jesus says, "I tell you what the law against murder means is that if you are angry, you are violating the commandment. If you speak destructive words to someone, you are violating the commandment," because the seedbed of murder is found in the initial heart-anger and heart-hostility toward another, and then the outward act is simply the fulfillment of the prior inner sinful desire. Jesus says that's what the commandment means. He did it on his own authority. The Pharisees never would have said anything like that but Jesus fulfills the law and rescues the law by clarifying what its true intent was. We looked at all of that in the series on the Ten Commandments.

In like manner, chapter 5, verse 27, Jesus says, and here's what I want you to see. Notice how he says it, "You have heard...but I say to you. You have heard...but I say to you." That's the pattern throughout chapter 5 and he's correcting the false teaching of the Pharisees. Verse 27, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." He's not changing the law there, beloved. He's not altering what the law originally meant. He's clarifying what it meant all along. The law had always meant this because the law wasn't simply prohibiting the external sin of adultery, the physical act of adultery, the law prohibited even the sinful desire, the sinful coveting of another man's wife, as seen in the tenth commandment in Exodus chapter 20 verse 17. The Pharisees would reduce it to the physical act alone. Jesus says, and what Jesus is fulfilling in his teaching about the law is this, this is really critical: the law applies to the heart. It regulates human desires. It regulates and forbids lusts and anger and things like that. It's not simply a matter of externals. The law applies to the heart as you would expect and understand when Jesus said that, you know, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. God is the Maker of the inner man as well as the outer man and therefore his law regulates the inner man as well as what a man does. Jesus clarifies that in all of these matters.

at verse 31. He says, ""It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." All we're saying for tonight, all I'm asking you to focus on here tonight is how Jesus says, "You've heard that it was said...but I say to you." And the operative principle here is Jesus saying, "I say to you. Let me present to you the law of God," Jesus says in so many words, "here's what the law of God says, and I am telling you what it means. I am giving you the true, authoritative, final understanding of it from God himself. I am telling you that on my own authority." Who does that? Jesus does.

Verse 33, "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King." You've heard this, I'm telling you what it really means.



Verse 38, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." And on it goes. And then in verse 43, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." And on it goes.

Jesus states the prevailing teaching, and by the way if these things are new to you, let me just again say that we'll be going through what all of these things mean in future months as we work our way through these things. It's not our purpose to show exactly what Jesus means in all of these things, simply that he's teaching on the basis of his own authority and thus fulfilling the law by his own teaching. What Jesus says is it's not enough to avoid the external sin of murder, the law commands you to avoid the internal sin of anger. Six times Jesus explains the true moral force of the law and the unifying principle through all six of those things, as we'll see over time, is that the law goes much deeper than the external compliance that the Pharisees taught. The Pharisees, you know, as long as you wash the outer man, you could be as corrupt on the inside as you wanted. Jesus says that's not the case. If you wash the outside of the cup, wash the inside of the cup. God does not look as man looks because God looks on the heart.

And so the spiritual virtues of holiness and godliness must be operative in the heart in order to fulfill the law of God. A mere external compliance is nothing. So that, so that for example, a young man could find boasting and self-righteousness because he had never physically been with another woman, but if his heart is filled with lust, if he lets his imaginations run riot, his mind is engaged in all kinds of corruption, he is not actually righteous simply by having avoided physical contact, under the law of God, he is guilty and condemned because of the corrupt condition of his heart. That is something the Pharisees never would have said. It's what the law always meant. Jesus comes and clarifies and fulfills the law by teaching and clarifying its spiritual authority and the spiritual application of it. He shows that the law applied to the inner man.

Now, if you look at the end of Matthew chapter 7, this is no light passing matter. View these things from, stand in the sandals of those who heard Jesus and realize this in just kind of the capstone to this second point that Jesus fulfilled the law in his own teaching, in verse 28 we read, "when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." Their scribes would just quote each other and quote past teachers and they would build their authority based on what others had said; there was no independent authority in their teaching whatsoever. Jesus comes and says, "I say to you this is what it means." It's really remarkable to think of someone in human flesh sitting before others teaching the word of God, declaring what it means and saying, "This is what it means because I said so." And there was that time elsewhere in the gospels where he read a passage out of Isaiah, you know, "I've come to preach to the poor and the Spirit of God is upon me," Jesus hands the scroll back and says, "Today the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," pointing to himself.

And see, beloved, one way that you can assess whether you've truly been born again or not is whether you recognize that intrinsic inherent authority in Christ as he teaches or not. Is Christ one prophet among many to you? Is he one teacher, one good example, but there are others? Or is there something in your heart that you recognize that Jesus Christ is unique and he stands alone in his teaching, there is no one like him. The Old Testament prophets, they were servants who pointed to him, but they're like a moon that recedes in the display and the rising of the sun so that the sun blots out any remembrance of the moon as it shines throughout the day because it's so surpassing is the glory of the sun over the moon, well, so surpassing is the glory of Jesus over the prophets in that way.

We could look at it another way. You don't need to turn there, but in Luke chapter 6 verse 46, Jesus is confronting false disciples, and he says, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" You see, he says, "I have authority here. I have authority as the teacher, the teacher, the teacher par excellence, the only teacher. I have authority to teach and command and compel you. Why do you call me Lord and disregard my authority and disobey what I say?" Jesus fulfilled the law in his teaching so that for the true disciple of Christ, we realize that what Jesus says is law. It is authority over our souls. What he says about unseen things, we believe them intrinsically simply because he said them. When he speaks and affirms the authority of the book of Genesis, we believe him. We adopt our mind and we pattern our thinking and we adjust our thinking so that it lines up with what Jesus said. He is not an optional instructor. He's not an adjunct professor of theology to us. He is the authoritative teacher, the final authority, and we honor him as such, and if he says it, we believe it implicitly, intrinsically, without objection, without resistance. We adopt the pattern of what Samuel said when the Lord was calling him as a young child, "Speak, Lord, your servant listens," because Jesus fulfills the law in his teaching.

Well, let's go on before time gets away from us any more than it already has. Point number three, Jesus fulfilled the law with his obedience. Jesus fulfilled the law with his obedience. Galatians 4 says that Jesus was born under the law. He was born of a woman and he was born under the law. He was under the authority of the law as he walked on earth, under the law in the sense that he was under its authority in order to obey it and to obey its commands. Even Christ was subject to the law's authority on earth. Matthew chapter 3 verse 15 that we looked at a few months ago, at his baptism, Jesus says it's fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Christ came to fulfill and to carry out and to obey the law. He kept the commands of the law perfectly. He did what the law said to do. He did not do what the law prohibited. Both in his conduct in his mind, in his thoughts, in his words, everything was in perfect compliance with this impossibly high standard that the law set. And in his earthly life, Jesus Christ obeyed the law without one single flaw, without one single sin, without one stumble.

You know, I mean, think about it. I mean, you and I can't get through a day without stumbling somehow. You know, you give in to some bad thoughts, you know, a sharp, angry word comes out of your mouth. We're so used to that that we almost think that, well, that's just the way it is. Well, it's not the way that it was with Christ. In John chapter 8, he asked his enemies, "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" No one spoke. No one said anything because they knew that there was no transgression of the law in the life of

Jesus that they could point to to convict him of sin. Scripture often confirms the sinlessness of Christ. In Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, it says he was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin. And so Jesus, fulfilled with perfection, the law of God. He obeyed it perfectly in every jot and tittle that it required. Jesus did it all.

Now, again, as we mentioned, as we explained in that message on Matthew 3:15 from a few months ago, beloved, as Christ was obeying the law and as he was fulfilling righteousness, understand that he was not doing that to accomplish or to add something to his own holiness. He was already perfectly holy. He couldn't improve upon his holiness because he was already the perfect, sinless Son of God. What he was doing as he obeyed God in his earthly life was as our representative, as our Savior, he was obeying the law that you and I never could have kept on our own and did not keep on our own. He obeyed the law. He fulfilled the law. If you are a Christian, Christ obeyed the law on your behalf. He did it for you so that, beloved, follow this, one day I hope that we can get deeply into Romans 5 and talk about the teaching about being in Adam and being in Christ, and that'll be a wonderful time if and when we get to it. But when you are in Christ, when God saves you and puts you in Christ, you are brought into union with him and what that means is that everything that Jesus did is counted to your benefit. Christ obeyed the law perfectly. He had a perfect righteousness with respect to the law. When you are in Christ, that benefit of Christ's obedience is counted on your behalf. God imputes the righteousness of Christ to you. He credits it to your advantage. You get the benefit of what Christ did. It's not that Christ died on the cross and you add your obedience to the law in order to achieve the righteousness of God. No. No. No. No. There is nothing about your obedience to the law of God that contributes to a righteous status and standing before God. Our righteous standing before God is based only and solely on the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to the law of God, and what God does in a very gracious gift to you is that he accepts the righteousness of Christ to your benefit, on your account. He accepts the righteousness of Christ on your behalf. What Christ did, you get the benefit of.

Jesus fulfilled the law in his obedience, and that is the basis upon which God can declare us righteous. God does not declare us righteous based on anything that you and I have done. He declares us righteous based on the righteousness of Christ. Do you know what that means? We could easily spend a long time talking about this, but when you are declared righteous in justification, that is a permanent, final adjudication from God that he accepts you and that he will receive you into heaven based on the righteousness of Christ. It means that you cannot improve your righteous standing before God by anything that you do, by any acts of obedience that you do after your salvation. You don't make yourself more righteous in a legal way before God because there's already a perfect righteousness credited to your account in Christ. You can't make that better by what you do. It's already perfect. And in the same way, beloved, because God accepts you based on the obedience of Christ, it means that when you stumble, when you fall into sin, that your status is not reduced. It's not taken away from you. Because the status that we have is secured by the righteousness of Christ, we neither improve it by our obedience or diminish it by our sinfulness. God accepts the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, and accepts you on that basis alone and that means that you are secure in Christ. It means

that your salvation could never be lost. It could never be taken away. It means, and I say it reverently, because our righteousness, God accepts us as righteous for the sake of his Son, because it's based on the righteousness of Christ, you have every right and privilege and prerogative to be in the immediate, holy presence of God as Christ himself does because it's not based on your righteousness at all. You are there on, you could say, a borrowed righteousness, a received righteousness, a gift that God accepts. God accepts his Son. This is his beloved Son in whom he is well-pleased. If you are in Christ, God views you through Christ, in Christ, and accepts you as beloved. In Christ, you are received as well-pleasing to God, not for the sake of anything that you have done but because Jesus Christ fulfilled the law with his obedience.

It's really remarkable to think about and that's why, beloved, that's why we can be joyful. That's why we can be confident. That's why we can look to death without any fear. That's why we're not afraid of a tree falling on us or dying on our way home in a car crash. We're not afraid of that as Christians because we know that eternity has been secured for us by the perfect obedience of Christ. God accepts us based on his righteousness, not ours, and once that's credited to your account, it's permanent, it's unchanging, God does not withdraw it. Nothing can take it away. John 10:28, "No one can pluck them out of my hand." Romans 8, nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In these things that we're talking about here tonight, how Jesus Christ fulfills the law, everything that relates to the security of your soul, your confidence in life, your confidence in death, everything is bound up with this fulfillment that Christ has given to the law of God.

Finally, number four, Jesus fulfilled the law in his death. Jesus fulfilled the law in his death. You could say he fulfilled the law in his life, he fulfilled the law in his death. And let me just read, don't bother to turn there for the sake of time. In Deuteronomy chapter 28, verse 15, God told the children of Israel, said, "if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you." And then in what follows in the following 53 verses, down through verse 68, are all of these curses that God pronounces on disobedience and sin, and that curse is repeated in various forms throughout the entire law. And you go through the moral law in Exodus chapter 20 and different aspects of the law and the prophets and their condemnation of false religion and hypocritical religion and sins of all manner of kind, the law is just pronouncing curses everywhere. And the law of Moses called down curses for disobedience, and as we read earlier in Romans, Paul says all the world is accountable to God. Now, that's part of the law of God, are the curses, the damnation, the judgment, the guilt, the condemnation that is pronounced on those who disobey, and we've all disobeyed. The question is, how did Jesus fulfill that part of the law because he said in Matthew chapter 5, "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets, I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them." How did he fulfill the curse? How did he fulfill the cursing part of the law? Scripture is very clear. It's really wonderful.

Turn to Galatians chapter 3, you can turn there. I think it's almost the last Scripture we're going to look at tonight. Galatians chapter 3, verse 10. Galatians chapter 3, verse 10, "For

all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them..'" Now look at verse 13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'--so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

Divine justice was operating at the cross of Calvary. God imposed the penalty of that curse upon Christ. He imputed the curse to Christ. Christ took the curse of the law on himself, in himself, and absorbed the full wrath of God as the punishment for that curse upon everyone who would believe. He paid its price. He became a curse for us, suffered under the weight of that curse and exhausted and fulfilled everything that the law of God required in pronouncing that curse on disobedience. God treated Christ as though he had committed every one of your sins. He condemned him by imputing your sins to him on the cross, condemned them, poured out his wrath upon Christ, and he stood in your place. And as he hung there in worldly shame, as the blood flowed down from his brow, from his hands and his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down, we sing, the curse was being fulfilled. What the law required for disobedience, Jesus paid. He took that curse.

Beloved, I hope you see that this is no abstract theological discussion here whatsoever. This is the appointed way that God established so that sinners like you and me could be saved from our sin. Christ keeps the law and we get credit for his obedience. We broke the law, God assigned that to Christ's account and Christ paid the price for it so that it is not by works of law that we have done that we obtain righteousness, and we will never bear the weight and the penalty and the judgment that our sins deserve because Christ has already paid for it on the cross. He fulfilled the law. He fulfilled it with the Messianic predictions. That in alone itself is staggering, you know, that the 1,500 years of prophecies would be fulfilled in one life and many of those fulfilled in the final 24 hours of his life as he hung on the cross. He fulfilled it in his teaching. He taught by his own authority in a way that his contemporaries were astonished, breathtaking, You know, the centurion and others have said, "Never has a man spoken this way." These were religious people. They were used to hearing religious instruction. They heard Christ. They said, "We've never heard anything like that." Everything that the law requires in the life of a righteous man, Christ kept it to perfection. Everything that the law requires to be poured out upon a guilty man, Christ took that too.

You see, beloved, the law doesn't congratulate you and me for being such good people. The law tells us we're bad people. We're evil wretches apart from Christ. And it condemns us for our disobedience and that utterly crushes our pride. It leaves us without any boasting. In fact, Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ." But what it does is it simultaneously humbles our pride, it lifts up Christ great and exalted in our eyes. As we consider these things of the law, as we look down, as it were, into our Bibles and we see these things of Christ and how Christ fulfilled the law, it's as if he rises up, I'm speaking very metaphorically here, he rises up

and he ascends from the pages of Scripture into a lofty place where he alone can fulfill, where he alone is seen and we look up and we honor him as the one who fulfilled the law. We recognize him as the eternal Son of God and we bow down and we worship him. Crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven coming again, that is your Christ, the one who fulfilled the law to the uttermost.

Christian, let me just encourage you to renew your trust and rest in Christ in light of these things that we've seen today. Everything necessary to secure you before a holy God has been done, and if you are in Christ, you are safe, you are secure, you are complete, you have eternal life, and the full abundance of that will be kept for you until you arrive in heaven. To those of you that have resisted Christ, it's just unthinkable that you would do that. It's unthinkable that you would persist in that. What a sin against glory to resist Christ, to deny him, to ignore him, especially when in the pages of Scripture he stands before you and says, "Come to me that you might be saved."

Let's pray together.

*Our dear gracious Lord, thank you. Your blood has washed away our sin. Your life has fulfilled everything that God requires. You love us. You gave yourself up for us. You keep us. You will deliver us safely home. We will reign with you. We will see you face to face. We will see the one who kept the law of God. We will see the one who fulfilled multiple centuries of prophecies. We will see the one who taught with authority. We will see the one of perfect obedience. We will see the one who bled and died on our behalf. I can't wait, Lord. Hasten the day where we see that and our faith becomes sight. But if you choose to delay a little longer, then bring in more of your wandering sheep into the fold that none would be left behind, that none would be on the outside looking in, that none would be knocking on the door saying, "Lord, let us in," and hear those awful words, "I never knew you." No, Father, by your grace and by your mercy, everyone under the sound of my voice, everyone within the circle of my affections, and all of the collective affections represented in this room, O God, gather them all in, for we would not want one to miss this, but for all to join in ascribing glory to the great Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

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