

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 23 April 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Fulfiller of the Law

Matthew 5:17

In the past couple months, we've been studying the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon, the Lord is describing the spiritual characteristics of those who will inherit the Kingdom that He will establish on earth one day. This sermon is not a list of things that you must *do*, or *achieve*, in order to *earn* entrance into the Kingdom: it is simply a description of how saved people live their lives. People who have been saved by God's grace are ***"poor in spirit."*** They have acknowledged their spiritual poverty, and have come to Jesus to ask for forgiveness of sin, and eternal life. People who have been redeemed mourn over their own sinfulness. They have a meek and humble spirit, because they know that they did nothing to *deserve* to be an inheritor of the Kingdom. They hunger and thirst after righteousness, as their Master does. They are merciful, just as Christ was merciful to them; and they are pure in heart. They are peacemakers; and they rejoice in being persecuted for righteousness' sake. Spiritually, they are like salt, preserving themselves, and others around them, from the corruption of sin; and they are like lamps, piercing into the darkness of a sinful world with the holy light of Jesus. They don't live this holy lifestyle *in order to be saved*: they live this way *because* they are saved. *Christ* is the one who saves us from our sin, and makes us into new creations, and changes us from the inside out.

Jesus made it very clear: His followers have a thirst for true righteousness; and they actually *live* righteously, because He has *made* them righteous. However, Jesus was now about to make an extremely important statement about Himself. **He wanted to clear up any misunderstanding that they might have had about His attitude toward the Law.** You see, the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a lawbreaker. (In reality, Jesus wasn't breaking *God's* laws; but He did often break *the Pharisees'* phony laws.) Even Jesus' followers might have been a little perplexed by some of the things Jesus said, because He spoke with *the authority of God Himself*. All their lives, they had been used to hearing the Pharisees' rigid interpretations of the Law, which were often so severe, that they were ridiculous. (For example, many Pharisees said that it's sinful to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath day, because that hen had worked to lay the egg!) All their laws focused on the *external*, and not on the true condition of the heart. The Pharisees' words were powerless, and hollow. In contrast, Jesus spoke with the authority of the Lawgiver Himself. (That's because He *is* the Lawgiver!) Jesus cut through the externals, and got down to the *heart and spirit* of the Law. He showed what true, heart righteousness is; and, quite frankly, it was frightening to people. With simple, but powerful words, Jesus pierced into the heart, and elevated God's standard of inward holiness to a level that seemed impossible to attain. Even Jesus' followers were probably wondering, "Is Jesus saying that the Law of Moses isn't sufficient? Is He saying that He is going to *do away with* the Law?"

Undoubtedly, this was the question that was on many people's hearts. Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking; and so, at this point in Jesus' sermon, He stopped to set the record straight. He hadn't come to *do away with* the Law; He had come to *fulfil* it!

Read Matthew 5:17.

Lest there were any doubt as to what Jesus intended to do with the Law of Moses, Jesus made it very clear: He had *not* come to ***"destroy"*** (or "overthrow") the Law of Moses; rather, He had come to ***"fulfil"*** it. That word ***"fulfil"*** is translated from the word *plerosai*, which means "to complete." Yet, what did

Jesus mean by this? In what sense did Jesus “*fulfil*” the Law? In this message, and in next week’s message, we will be answering this question, as we examine six ways in which Jesus fulfilled the Law. This morning, we will examine three of those ways. The title of this message is *The Fulfiller of the Law*.

I. Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly.

In **Galatians 4:4**, Paul says that when Christ came into this world, He was “*made of a woman, made under the law*.” God the Father did *not* lower His standard of holiness, even for His own Son. The Son of God was born into our race, and was “*made under the law*”; and as a Man, He was required to obey the Law, just as every other man is required to do. Jesus obeyed all the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws of God. In His 33 years on this earth, He kept all 613 commandments of the Torah perfectly.

Now, this was extremely frustrating to Jesus’ enemies. No matter how hard they tried, they could not point out even one sin that He had committed. Jesus once asked His enemies, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*”; and they couldn’t give Him any answer. Even Pontius Pilate (who was *not* a nice guy), could find no fault in Him at all, and was afraid to condemn Him. The worst-sounding accusation that His enemies could come up with was that He had “worked” on the Sabbath day by healing someone of a disease, or by making clay out of spittle and dirt, or by instructing someone whom He had healed to pick up a 1 ½ - kilo sleeping mat, and to walk home. However, they knew, deep inside, that Jesus had *not* broken God’s law; and His righteous character gnawed at them. His righteousness was like a giant spotlight shining down upon them, and exposing their sin; and they recoiled from the light.

However, not *everyone* recoiled from the light. Those who were willing to humble themselves, and to confess their sin and unworthiness, and to trust in Jesus to save them, received the gift of righteousness. Let’s see what Paul had to say about this wonderful gift.

Read Romans 3:9-25.

If we had stopped reading at the end of **verse 20**, our case would look completely hopeless, wouldn’t it? According to God’s law, we are all perverse. We have all strayed from God; our hearts are filled with cursing, bitterness, and murder; our court date before the righteous Judge is drawing nearer every hour; the flames of hell are licking their chops, awaiting our arrival; and according to the Law, we are all hopelessly guilty. We cannot offer God even the lamest excuse for our wicked thoughts and deeds. Our mouths are stopped; and we have no plea.

Except one, that is! There *is* one plea that God will accept: and it is a plea that He Himself has provided for us. Let’s read **verses 21 and 22** again. (**Read Romans 3:21-22.**)

What is the one plea that God will accept? It is “*the righteousness of God*”! You see, when Paul says, “*But now the righteousness of God is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets*,” he’s talking about a *Person*. Jesus *is* that Person! Jesus *is* the “*righteousness of God*.” He is the One who was “*witnessed by the law and the prophets*.” Moses, and all the other prophets of the Old Testament, point to *Jesus* as the One who would come to be “*our righteousness*.” We, in ourselves, are not righteous; but Jesus came to be our Righteousness for us. He lived the perfectly righteous life that we have *not* lived; and He shed His holy blood to atone for us. *That* is the one acceptable plea that we have to offer to God—the plea that Jesus, God’s perfectly righteous Son, stood in our place, and took our sin debt upon Himself, so that we, in exchange, could receive His gift of righteousness. As the old hymn

says, “Just as I am, without one plea, *but that thy blood was shed for me*, and that thou bidst me come to the, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

My friend, if getting into the Kingdom of Heaven depended upon your keeping of the Law, you wouldn't have a chance. That's why Christ came down from Heaven. He came to fulfil the Law *for* you. He met God's perfect requirement *for* you, so that God the Father can accept you for His sake. **Romans 5:18** says, “*Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*” Justification—being “declared righteous”—is a gift that God will give to anyone who will receive it. Jesus' righteousness is “*unto all and upon all them...that believe.*” Believing on the Son is the one and only requirement to receive the gift. If you haven't received the gift, why don't you do so today?

II. Jesus disentangled the Law from man's false teachings.

In the six centuries before Christ's birth, the scribes and the Pharisees had built up a mountain of oral traditions in addition to Scripture. Their collection of laws, called “The Babylonian Talmud,” began to be written down in the 300's A.D., and has have been compiling for 2,600 years now; and its laws are far more numerous than the 613 laws that God gave to Moses (to say the least)! These volumes are thousands of pages long, and contain centuries' worth of commentary from hundreds of rabbis; and they often contradict each other!

Now, when the sect of the Pharisees first began to form after the Babylonian captivity, they meant well. They had a zeal for God's Law, and an intense desire to preserve and transmit every jot and tittle of the Scriptures without error. (By the way, they did preserve the Scriptures flawlessly! We will be talking about this in the next few weeks.) However, in time, they began to place their own laws and oral traditions on the same level of authority as the Scripture itself. Their laws went far beyond God's requirements, and became like a “noose” around people's necks, making it very difficult to function. Yet, at the same time, many of their laws *negated* God's Law. Their traditions were supposed to *clarify* the Law, by showing how it should be applied in daily situations; but they often went directly *against* the plain teaching of God's Word. They began to make laws which actually *freed* people from the obligations of God's Law, by creating crafty “loopholes.”

Well, guess what? Jesus wasn't having that! Jesus, who is the Righteousness of God, “fulfilled” the Law by restoring its true meaning. Let's look at an example of a time when Jesus set the people straight on the meaning of Scripture.

Read Mark 7:1-13.

Do you see the error that Jesus was correcting? The Pharisees had devised a tradition which actually *freed* people from their obligation toward their parents. God commands us to honour our father and mother; and those who know God, and hear His voice, realise that this “honouring” includes taking care of your parents in their old age. However, the Pharisees had made a way to free people from this obligation. According to them, you don't *have* to give your parents financial or material support in their old age *if* you give those financial and material gifts to the Temple instead. Just declare it *corban* (“a gift”) to God, and *voila*—you don't have any obligation to your parents anymore. Of course, it isn't hard to see why this

tradition might have been invented: it caused the *priests* to be enriched even more! It was a “win-win” situation for greedy priests *and* for greedy worshippers. People who were too stingy to take care of their parents were freed from their obligation; and the priests got a bigger cut from the offerings which *should* have gone to those people’s struggling parents!

Now, how had it come to this? How could the people (especially the rabbis) have missed the plain meaning of Scripture? Because they were spiritually blinded. And why were they spiritually blinded? Because they had missed the whole point of the Law. They had missed the simple truth that their Father Abraham knew—the truth that sinners are justified by *faith*, and not by trying to keep the works of the Law. The Bible says in **Genesis 15:6** that Abraham ***“Believed in the LORD,”*** and God ***“counted it unto him for righteousness.”*** Abraham’s *faith* in the promise of the coming Saviour was what God accepted; but the Pharisees failed to see this. They failed to understand that when God said, “Keep my commandments, and you shall live,” He was trying to get them to realise that they *couldn’t* keep His commandments perfectly—and that they therefore needed His grace and mercy in order to receive eternal life! They had overlooked the Scripture that says, ***“The just shall live by his faith,”*** and the Scripture that says, ***“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”*** And what had their teaching of salvation through works produced? People who had no assurance of salvation!

Read Mark 10:17-27.

Do you see what this young man’s assumption was? His assumption (which he had learned from the rabbis) is that you must *do* good works in order to earn eternal life. Yet, he knew, deep down inside, that his good deeds weren’t good enough. That’s the whole reason he came to Jesus for answers. He wanted to know what *else* he must do to earn salvation.

Now, this young man obviously *thought* that he had kept all the Law. When Jesus asked him if he had refrained from adultery, killing, stealing, and lying, it went over his head. He really *thought* that he had kept these commandments. (It didn’t occur to him that he had committed adultery in his heart, or that he had murdered people in his heart, or that he *had*, in fact, told lies.) However, Jesus knew that there was just one sin in this man’s life that He needed to put His finger on: and that was the sin of covetousness. He said, ***“One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”*** Jesus knew that this young man would *not* be willing to do this; so by making this statement, He was pointing out that he had broken the tenth commandment—***“Thou shalt not covet.”***

The thing that barred the rich young ruler from salvation was not that he *had* riches, but rather that he was not willing to *stop trusting in his riches*, and to trust instead in Christ. By the way, the disciples evidently understood Jesus’ warning about trusting in riches, because they asked Him, in utter astonishment, ***“Who then can be saved?”*** Obviously, they felt the sting of conviction, because they knew that even though they were poor fishermen, they, too, had the inclination to rely upon their possessions, rather than upon the Lord. However, Jesus reassured them that what is impossible with men *is* possible with God. Salvation *is* impossible with men, because we, in our sinfulness, are *not* inclined to repent, or to take up the cross and follow Christ. The Lord, however, convicts men of their sin, and draws men to Himself; and those who will respond to His conviction, and turn to Him, receive the gift of salvation.

Salvation always comes down to the question “In what are you **trusting**?” Many people go through life trusting in their hard work and self-reliance. Many people trust in false religious

systems, which teach works-salvation of various sorts. Many trust in their physical strength, or in their knowledge and skill, or in their friends and family, or in "science." Others trust in their money and possessions. Obviously, this was the trouble with the rich young ruler. Tragically, this young man failed to understand that there is "none good but one"—and that the Man to whom He was speaking *was* truly good, because He *is* God! He failed to understand that he needed to place His trust in the God-Man, Jesus Christ!

Jesus came to set the record straight. He disentangled the Law from the false teachings of men—and especially from the teaching that you must work to earn your salvation. Salvation is *only* through faith in Jesus, and not by good works! Have *you* trusted in Him? I'm not asking if you *know all about* Him: I'm asking if you have *trusted in Him personally* to forgive your sins, and to give you eternal life. If not, I urge you to place your faith in Him today!

III. Jesus fulfilled all the types and prophecies of the Law.

From the book of **Genesis** to the book of **Malachi**, the Old Testament is filled with types of Christ. In the Tabernacle there were scores of pictures of Christ, and of salvation. The **Altar of sacrifice** pictured Christ's sacrifice for our sins. The **Laver** was a picture of cleansing from sin through Christ's sacrifice. The **wall** around tabernacle, with its white linen and silver hooks, was a picture of redemption. The **Sanctuary** was a picture of close fellowship with Christ. The **Table of Shewbread** was a picture of Christ as the Bread of life. The **Menorah** is a picture of Holy Spirit, who gives believers light, so that they might understand Christ's words. The **Altar of Incense** is a picture of Christ's prayers to the Father on our behalf. The **Ark of the Covenant** was a picture of God's throne; and the **mercy seat**, where the blood of bulls and goats was sprinkled, was a picture of atonement from sin through Christ's blood.

The sacrificial animals of the Old Testament were pictures, as well. The **bulls** pictured Christ as the Suffering Servant. The **goats** pictured Christ as our Substitute for sin. The **lambs** pictured Christ as the sinless Sacrifice for our sins. The **turtledoves** pictured Christ as the one who became poor, so that we might be made rich. The seven feasts were packed with pictures of Christ, as well. The **Passover** pictured Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God. The Feast of **Unleavened Bread** pictured Christ as the sinless Bread of Life. The Feast of **Firstfruits** pictured Christ as the Firstfruits of the Resurrection. The Feast of **Pentecost** pictured the coming of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension to Heaven. The **Feast of Trumpets** pictures Christ's return in the Rapture. The **Day of Atonement** is a picture of Christ's atonement, and of the future day when all Israel will be saved. The **Feast of Tabernacles** is a picture of the 1,000-year Kingdom, when Christ will reign over all the nations of the earth.

All these things were types, or pictures, of Christ. Yet, beautiful though they were, *they could not save anyone*. Observing all these feasts and sacrifices never took anyone's sins away.

Read Hebrews 10:1-18.

Trusting in good works and religious rituals to save you is as worthless as trusting in a shadow. God Himself instituted the Old Testament sacrifices; but those sacrifices were only *pictures, or shadows*, of what was to come. To be saved from their sin, the people had to place their trust in the coming Saviour, and not in the rituals which *pictured* the Saviour.

It is the nature of man to trust in rituals for their salvation, instead of in Christ. It was that way in Old Testament times; and it's still that way to this day. Many people who consider

themselves “Christians” will wake up in hell one day because they trusted in the keeping of rituals, which were meant to be *pictures* of Christ’s saving work (things such as the Lord’s Supper and baptism); but they never trusted in *Jesus Himself*. How about *you*? Are you trusting in your keeping of external acts of righteousness...or in Christ?

Jesus fulfilled the Law by fulfilling its types and pictures of Himself as the Messiah. I wish I could talk about *all* these types; but if I did, it would take several years’ worth of sermons! I would, however, like to examine just one of these pictures. Let’s examine the Passover Feast.

Read Exodus 12:1-13, 21-23, 29-31.

As the last of God’s ten plagues on Egypt was approaching, God warned Pharaoh, through His prophet Moses, that judgment was coming upon the whole land of Egypt. However, the Egyptians were not the only ones who were in danger. God told Moses that in order for the *Israelites* not to have *their* firstborn killed, they had to follow His instructions exactly.

And what were His instructions? Well, first of all, God told them that on the 10th day of Nisan (in our month of April), every Israelite family was to set aside a lamb from the flock. It had to be a male lamb; and it had to be less than one year old. It had to be perfect and healthy, with no blemishes on its body, and with no disease. Then, on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, each family was to take that lamb, and slay it; and they were to take the blood of that lamb, and smear it on the top and two side posts of the doors to their houses.

But that’s not all they were to do. That evening, each Israelite family was to make a special meal, called the Passover meal. It was called “Passover” because that night, the Lord promised that He would “pass over” their houses, and would not destroy their firstborn children. When God saw the blood over their doors, He spared them from death.

The Passover was a perpetual reminder of how God delivered Israel’s firstborn children from destruction, and redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt. Yet, the Passover was far more than a memorial of a past event. It was a prophecy in type. Every part of the Passover meal pointed forward in history, and painted a picture of Jesus Christ as **the Lamb of God**, and the Redeemer from sin.

Throughout Christ’s earthly ministry, His sinlessness was evident. That is why John the Baptist called Him **“the Lamb of God.”** Jesus was like a perfect, flawless Passover lamb. *No one* could point out any sin in Jesus, because He had none. Yet, that didn’t keep people from *trying* to find fault. In fact, in the last five days before Christ’s crucifixion, He was under intense scrutiny. The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees all ganged up on Jesus, and did their best to trap Him in His words. Do you know what they were doing? They were inspecting the Lamb! By the way, Jesus came into Jerusalem *five days* before His crucifixion on Passover evening. That just happened to be the 10th day of Nisan—the very day when the Passover lambs were being set aside for inspection! Coincidence? I think not! From the 10th to the 14th of Nisan, the Lamb of God was “inspected”; and He was found to be without fault.

Now, let’s talk about the Passover meal. God commanded each Israelite household to eat the lamb that they had slain: and they were to prepare it in a very specific way. First, they were not to boil it, but to *roast* it over the fire. Secondly, they were not to break any bones of the lamb as they were roasting it. Thirdly, they were to *eat* all the lamb before morning.

What does all this mean? First, it means that Jesus took the judgment for our sin upon Himself. Throughout the Bible, fire is a picture of *God's judgment* upon sin. Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus said, "***Now is the judgment of this world.***" Jesus was foretelling that on the cross, He would take the world's judgment for sin upon Himself.

Now, why was no bone of the lamb to be broken? This was a prophecy, as well. When Jesus was whipped by the Roman soldiers, His flesh was brutally torn apart. His body was "broken," in that it was marred and destroyed. Yet, no bone in His body was broken. That is why God commanded the children of Israel not to break a bone of the Passover lamb. **Psalm 34:19-20** prophesied of Jesus, "***Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.***"

Now, what about the *eating* of the lamb's flesh? What does that mean? It means that you and I must *believe on Jesus in order to receive eternal life* (a relationship with God). Eating the lamb is like believing on Jesus. We need food in order to live physically. Likewise, we need Jesus in order to have eternal life with God. Just as food gives life to the body, so Jesus Christ gives *spiritual* life and nourishment to all who believe on Him.

Lastly, the blood of the lamb had to be put onto the door posts. In order for the Israelite families to be spared from death, a perfect lamb had to sacrifice its life; and by faith, the people had to put the blood on their doorposts, with the belief that that blood was necessary in order for them to be spared from death. In the same way, the Lamb of God shed His blood so that we might be redeemed from our sin; and by faith, we must apply His blood to the "doorpost" of our hearts. We must believe that His blood, and *only* His blood, can save us!

Now, not only did Jesus fulfil the Law in *type*; He also fulfilled the *prophecies* of the Messiah, which were contained in the Law. There are about 330 Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's first coming to earth; and He fulfilled all 330 of those prophecies. In the Garden of Eden, **God Himself** prophesied that Satan would crush the Messiah's heel (take His life). **Jacob** prophesied that Christ would arise from the tribe of Judah. **Nathan** prophesied that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. **Isaiah** prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. **Isaiah** also prophesied that the Messiah would be born as a child, yet would be the Mighty God. **Isaiah** prophesied that the Messiah would heal the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the dumb; and he prophesied that He would go like a lamb to the slaughter, and that our sins would be laid upon Him. **David** prophesied that Christ's hands and feet would be pierced. **Zechariah** prophesied that the Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. **Zechariah** prophesied that Jehovah would smite His own Shepherd, the Messiah; yet, Zechariah also prophesied that *Jehovah Himself* would be pierced by the people of Israel. **Micah** prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. **Daniel** prophesied that the Messiah would be "*cut off*," but not for any sin that He had done; and **David** prophesied that Christ's body would not remain in the grave, but would come back to life. And this is only the tip of the iceberg! There are hundreds more prophecies of the Messiah. Jesus knew every one of these prophecies, because He is the God who gave those prophecies to His prophets; and He fulfilled every one of them!

Read Luke 24:13-32.

Conclusion: Jesus didn't come to destroy the Law; He came to fulfil it. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the Law; and He fulfilled every prophecy of the Messiah's life, death, and resurrection. If Jesus had not done this, we would have had no hope of salvation, because all the promises of salvation

in the Law are completed in *Him*. As we close this morning, I would ask: “Have *you* received God’s gift of salvation?” If not, I urge you to receive it by faith today! If you are saved already, I urge you to remember *why* Jesus saved you. He saved you so that you might be made “***the righteousness of God in Him.***” Jesus suffered all that agony so that you might be declared righteous before God, and so that you might actually *live* righteously. Submit wholly to Him today, and let Him work His righteousness in you!