

Matthew 5:17-20

Verse 17

The law and the prophet reference in this verse speaks of the entirety of OT scripture. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets (including John the Baptist) of His coming as Messiah. He also fulfilled the law perfectly as He kept all points of the law perfectly without sin. He fulfilled the ceremonial aspects (regarding temple and temple worship) of the law as their types (temple worship, sacrifices, high priest, feasts, festivals) were pointing to and fulfilled in Jesus.

- John 5:39-47
- Hebrews 8:1-6
- Hebrews 10:1
- Colossians 2:16-17
- Luke 24: 25-27, 44-47

Purposes of the law

- Reveal the character of God
- Show our sinfulness
- Reveal what is pleasing to God
- Romans 7:12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Antinomianism versus legalism

Antinomianism and legalism are at extreme opposite ends of the view of the law. Antinomianism means “anti law.” This view believes that we can act as we wish and sin as we wish because Christ has set us free from the law. Christ has set us free from the law as by the means that we are to merit righteousness for entrance to the kingdom of God. However, as Christians we are to desire and strive to be in obedience with all His commands as those who love Him will keep His commands

- John 14:15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
- Romans 6:15 Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

Legalism is a belief that one can only be righteous before God by works and obedience to the law of God. This is works salvation and the view that the Pharisees had and lived by. No human is ever justified by the law, but rather all men are in sin and held accountable before God if they rely on the law of righteousness.

- Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are ^[b]under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works ^[i]of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for ^[i]through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Verses 18-19

These verses speak to the enduring nature of the word of God. The Old Testament including the Law and the prophets are not being done away with, but being expanded upon as Christ is fulfilling this. God does not discard the law, but shows His seriousness and attention to even the smallest letter and punctuation in regards to the law and wants the same from us as His law is holy, good, and God breathed. Many times we overlook, pay less attention to, or do not take with as much urgency and seriousness verses and teaching in the Bible that seem so insignificant. We are to love, meditate, and believe all aspects of His word down to the smallest detail.

Those who are disobedient to God's word and then teach others to do the same are called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. Conversely, those who actively live and teach obedience are considered greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

Verse 20

The pharisees held to a belief that their righteousness which was external rituals actions was the merit into the kingdom of Heaven. Their righteousness was like all other humans righteous: filthy garments (**Is 64:6**). No one is justified under the law, but all are condemned (**Romans 3:19-20**). If we break one of the laws, we are guilty of breaking them all (**James 3:10**). We as humans have no righteousness in and of ourselves which merits entrance into Heaven as perfection to the law if required (**Matthew 5:48**). The righteousness that allows us to enter Heaven is someone else's righteousness: Jesus. Jesus lived a sinless life and met the perfect righteous requirement of the law in us that believe. When we are justified by faith alone, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to those believe in Him by faith.

- **Genesis 15:6**
- **Romans 4:5**
- **Romans 8:1-4**
- **2 Corinthians 5:21**
- **Romans 3:21-31**

Once we are justified and grow in sanctification we are to pursue, hunger, and thirst for righteousness. Unlike the pharisees who quest for righteousness was external, those who are born again worship in spirit and truth and desire God and His righteousness from the soul. We are to delight in the law of God (**Psalms 1:1-2**), meditate (**Psalms 119:97**) on His word, and strive for obedience down to the smallest letter and stroke because we love Him. We only love Him because He first loved us.

"So thankful for the active obedience of Christ no hope without it." - J.G Machen