

Matthew 5:48

This is one of the most if not the most terrifying verse in the Bible.

What is the standard for the kingdom of God? Perfection

This is a standard that God does not change and a standard that no one can achieve in and of themselves.

The impossibility of achieving this standard as fallen creatures speaks to the hopelessness we have in ourselves and must point us to Christ.

The fallen nature of man. No one can achieve perfect righteousness of themselves.

- **Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned
- **Psalms 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
- **Isaiah 64:6** For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
- **Romans 7:18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.
- **Ephesians 2:1-4** And you ^[a]were dead ^[b]in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the ^[c]course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, ^[d]indulging the desires of the flesh and of the ^[e]mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- **Romans 3:10-20** as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; ¹⁴ "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ And the path of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are ^[h]under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works ^[i]of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for ^[j]through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

No one can achieve the perfect righteousness in the flesh that is required to enter the kingdom of Heaven except for One: Jesus Christ. By Faith in Christ, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, credited to our account, and we are declared righteous which refers to justification. Justification is where a person is declared righteous by God via faith alone.

- **Romans 8:1-4** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life ^[a]in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, ^[b]weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of ^[c]sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - This is the great exchange!

Justification by Sola Fide

- **Romans 4:1-9** What then shall we say that Abraham, ^[a]our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified ^[b]by works, he has something to boast about, but not ^[c]before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. ⁸ “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.” ⁹ Is this blessing then on ^[d]the circumcised, or on ^[e]the uncircumcised also? For we say, “Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.”
- **Galatians 2:16** nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of ^[a]the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of ^[b]the Law; since by the works of ^[c]the Law no ^[d]flesh will be justified.
- **Galatians 3:10-14** For as many as are of the works of ^[a]the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” ¹¹ Now that no one is justified ^[b]by ^[c]the Law before God is evident; for, “^[d]The righteous man shall live by faith.” ¹² ^[e]However, the Law is not ^[f]of faith; on the contrary, “He who practices them shall live ^[a]by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a ^[b]tree”— ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might ^[i]come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
- **Ephesians 2:5-10** even when we were dead ^[a]in our transgressions, made us alive together ^[b]with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and ^[c]that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- **Romans 3:21-30** But now apart ^[k]from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those ^[l]who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all ^[m]have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a ^[a]propitiation ^[b]in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, ^[a]because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who ^[c]has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ ^[d]For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works ^[e]of the Law. ²⁹ Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the ^[f]circumcised ^[g]by faith and the ^[h]uncircumcised through faith is one. Do we then nullify ^[a]the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.
- **Romans 10:9-10** ^[a]that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, ^[b]resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, ^[c]resulting in salvation.
- **Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[a]we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- **Philippians 3:7-11** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss ^[c]in view of the surpassing value of ^[d]knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ^[e]for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and ^[f]the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ ^[g]in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Covered in His righteousness

- **Foreshadowing in Adam/Eve.**
 - **Genesis 3:21** The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.
- **Joshua the high priest**
 - **Zechariah 3:1-4** Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and ^[a]Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him(see **Romans 8:29-33**). ² The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” ³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. ⁴ He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and ^[b]will clothe you with festal robes.”
 - **Simul Justus et peccator**- Simultaneously just and sinner
 - **Justitia alienum**- an alien righteousness, a righteousness that belongs to someone else.
 - **Extra nos** -outside ourselves

There are only two options of garments when all stand before the eternal Holy Righteous Judge who will judge in righteousness (Acts 17:31**).**

- Your own filthy garment of righteousness (**Is 64:6**) which cannot stand before the Holy God
- The perfect righteousness of Jesus which meets the perfect righteous requirement.

Righteousness dwells in New Jerusalem

- **2 Peter 3:10-14** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and ^[b]its works will be ^[c]burned up.¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
- **Mathew 13:36-43** Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the ^[a]tares of the field.” ³⁷ And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the ^[b]end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the ^[c]end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom ^[d]all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, ^[e]let him hear.

J. Gresham Machen

On his death bed in Bismark North Dakota on December 29, 1936, J. Gresham Machen sent a telegram to his colleague at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, John Murray. His last telegram had these words: "So thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without."

Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. This is the standard of God and this is immutable. This is impossible for us to achieve as fallen creatures, which is the bad news. It is only when one understands the bad news can one truly understand and be in awe of the good news found in Christ alone. The righteousness that merits our entrance into Heaven is not our own, but rather the imputed righteousness and perfection of Jesus upon us. This is the good news of the gospel. We can't, Christ did! The death of Christ (passive obedience) is vital to the gospel and our salvation. As equally as importance is the perfect life He lived fulfilling all righteousness (active obedience) on behalf of all the Father had given Him. Without the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith alone we have no hope. Let us never be idolatrous and arrogant to think we can achieve the righteousness that is required on our own. Justification in which we are declared righteous by faith alone (sola fide) strikes at the heart of the gospel. Justification by faith alone is non-negotiable and to preach anything else is to preach another gospel (Galatians 1:6-10). This is a hill worth dying on because on a hill 2,000 years ago the one who lived a perfect life and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law became sin and died so I could become the righteousness of God in Him!

"The doors to paradise opened up and I walked through"

- **Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed [i]from faith to faith; as it is written, "[k]But the righteous *man* shall live by faith."
 - **Habakuk 2:4** "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his [a]faith.
- Martin Luther who a student of law understood the righteous demand of God's law and his inability to keep the demands. He was tormented and driven to the point of near insanity by the thought of each sin under the gaze of the omnipresent and omniscient God who was a perfect and righteous judge. He wrestled with trying to achieve this righteousness in his actions until one day his life changed forever.
- **Justificare versus dikaiosune**
 - The word used at that time for justification was the Latin word *justificare*. *Justificare* means to make or to be righteous.
 - When Luther began to look at the Greek use of the word in **Romans 1:17** and the word that was used there was *dikasiosune*. *Dikasiosune* did not mean to make one righteous, but rather to count as righteous. It was at this moment that Luther's life changed forever. Luther understood that the righteousness in view is not of himself, but rather the righteousness of God that He given to people that have no righteousness.
 - Luther declared "'Woa, you mean the righteousness by which I will be saved, is not mine? "When I discovered that, I was born again of the Holy Ghost. And the doors of paradise swung open, and I walked through."

