

Kingdom of God in the Gospels II

(Feast of Tabernacles—Day 3)

Fred R. Coulter—October 5, 2009

We're going to cover one of the most essential things *concerning how one attains to the Kingdom of God in their own personal conduct!*

Too much of Protestantism says you don't have to have works, all you have to have is faith. As a matter of fact, Lutheranism is based upon faith alone. However, if you read in Heb. 11—which is called *the faith chapter*—everyone of the patriarchs, by faith, did something. They had works! They had good works!

There's a difference between self-works that you would do on your own, which may be religious or whatever. But, there are 'good works' that God wants us to do. We will see today what those works are and how important that they are.

Matthew 5:16: "In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works..."

These are not works that you would do as an individual separate from God; because Eph. 2:10 says that *we are 'His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before has ordained that we should walk in them.'*

- God expects works
- He expects faith
- He expects love
- He gives us His hope
- we are to hope in God.
- we are to trust in God

The problem with religions in the world, and they're all lies. Every religion in the world is a lie from Satan the devil; you need to understand that! For the life of me, I cannot out figure why ministers in the Church of God run off to the Protestants to understand how to understand *grace* and how to understand *love*. 'Oh, you have the trinity, tell us about it.' Look what happened to the Church when they did that! Look what happened to the brethren when that was done! *We left the good works of God!*

"...and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven" (v 16)—*because someone is going to see your good works, then which equate to Godliness in your life!* That's important.

What is the standard for this good work? *Jesus defines it right here;* and we can understand this: When the Kingdom of God is here, they're all

going to keep the laws and commandments of God the way that Jesus has defined here in Matt. 5. So, I think this is really profoundly important for us to understand, *and this is the heart and core!*

Now, if you want to hit a bull's-eye on what is absolutely wrong with Protestantism and Catholicism and other religions of this world—Matt. 5:17 on tells you exactly why. Most people what God to do something for them, as they remain in the condition of life that they are living. That's why it starts out: *repent!* You can have no blessing from God unless you repent first. Now, in your sins you may be rewarded by Satan for a time.

We had a perfect example of that this summer, and his name is Michael Jackson; an entertainer who had the world in the palm of his hands Who made hundreds of millions, perhaps billions of dollars, and yet, died at 50. He was rewarded tremendously, but what was his life? *He went with the way of the world,* and the rest of his life is a testimony on how people are devoured by their own sins and wrong-doing and cutoff in the midst of their lives.

Here's the key, right here, v 17: "Do not think..."—*don't let it enter into your mind!* This thought is something you never want to accept; because what Jesus was going to teach from here on—and what He is teaching us today—is that *the commandments of God, in the spirit and the application of the laws, are the requirements to enter the Kingdom of God.* That's why He said:

Verse 17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled" (vs 17-18).

- Is heaven and earth still here? *Of course!*
- Have any of the Laws been done away? *No! They have not been abolished!*

But someone is going to say that when you fulfill them you end them! Not necessarily, because what Jesus is going show here is that for everything that in the letter is fulfilled, there is a *spiritual requirement* that goes above and beyond the letter of the Law. Let's notice what He says here concerning this. Now, 'fulfill' means *to bring to the full.* It doesn't mean to abolish. It means *fill to the full* to give a greater standard; a greater application; and

where the source of how obedience and love to God has to begin. What we need to do to please God. So this is going to be quite astounding when you read it; when you really understand it.

Verse 19—Christ speaking—God manifested in the flesh. This is **God** speaking. This is God's new Law—**spiritual Law**—based upon the foundation of the Ten Commandments and the Laws in the Old Testament.

Verse 19: “Therefore whoever shall break one of these least commandments...”

What commandment do you think is least? *I'll tell you two commandments that religions think are least:*

1. Sabbath—because they keep Sunday
2. no idols—because they fill their churches and cathedrals with idols

That means all the rest of the commandments fall into a *least* category because they don't esteem them at all:

- unless someone attempts to murder them
- unless someone steals from them
- unless someone commits rape against them

Then they say, ‘Oh, he broke the law!’

Don't you think it's borderline insanity for people who claim to be religious to stand in the pulpit and say ‘God has done away with His Laws and commandments.’ As a matter of fact, one man said that all 613 commandments in the Old Testament in the Law, have no forensic value for Christians today. That is **wild lawlessness!** An **absolute lie!** preached in the name of God!

- Which Law do you think is least?
- What do we have within the Church of God?
 - ✓ we have people who don't keep the Sabbath in the way that they should
 - ✓ we have people who don't keep the Holy Days
 - ✓ we have people who don't tithe

Those are just to name a few!

- Do you still hold resentment?
- Do you have hate and bitterness in your heart?

Which commandment?

Even in the Old Testament it says you ‘shall not hate your brother in your heart.’ I'm talking about how the religions of the world do. What I want you to do is examine your own life and see how you measure up to what Jesus said, because these are the

qualification to enter into the Kingdom of God. He tells you so right here.

Verse 19: “Therefore, whoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so...”

All ministers, pastors, elders and teachers, listen up! If you do not teach the Word of God **truthfully, rightfully**—as interpreted by the Bible—you are causing people to sin and God is going to judge you severely. Understand that!

“...shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven... [if they ever get there] ...but **whoever**... [to all you anti-Law people] ...**shall practice and teach them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven**” (v 19).

Then He gives you a standard that He wants you to know and understand and realize:

Verse 20: “**For I say to you, unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way that you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven**” *It's not going to happen! It's not going to be done!*

Then He amplifies and tells you what He means. And the rest of this chapter is going to tell you *how* your righteousness can exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees. The scribes and the Pharisees were ‘letter of the Law’ only. And plus, most of their righteousness was based upon their own traditions. Their own traditions then were their own works—not the works of God. They were the evil works, which looked good in the eyes of men. But they were not the good works that come from God. Most people can't discern between the two unless they understand the teachings of Jesus Christ. That's a pretty profound statement. **There's no way you're going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!**

Verse 21—Jesus defines it now: “You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, ‘You shall not commit murder...’—*one of the Ten Commandments!*

What He's going to do is show where murder begins. I think it's very interesting that He talks about this, because murder goes all the way back to Cain and Abel. Where did it start with Cain? *It started right here in his mind and heart;* and hatred and bitterness toward Abel; **and hatred and bitterness toward God!**—because Abel was righteous and gave his offering according to the commandments of God. Cain came and brought his offering—what he thought was good in his heart—but contrary to the commandments of God. He got mad, angry, bitter, hostile and hateful! He killed Abel, his brother. So, I think it's interesting that He

starts out here with murder. It was said to those *in ancient times*,

“...‘You shall not commit murder but whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment.’ But I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be subject to judgment” (vs 21-22).

There’s a cause of righteous indignation or anger because of some wrong; but don’t hold onto it and don’t keep it because we find the spiritual solution to that in Eph. 4: ‘Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.’

“...Now *you have heard it said*, ‘Whoever shall say to his brother, “Raca,” shall be subject to the judgment of the council.’ But *I say to you*, whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna” (v 22).

What this is telling us: ‘to fulfill the Law’ means *to complete it with its full spiritual intention and impact*. In order to do that, it’s got to be from within; not like the Pharisees who cleanse the outside; but as Jesus said, ‘within you’re full of the dead men’s bones and rotteness.’ After all, wasn’t it the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and priests that killed Christ? *Yes, it was!* They had hatred in their heart. This is something! This is quite a thing!

The next one also covers a problem that is really a big problem between people even within the Church of God. As we go through this I want you to understand that let’s apply it to ourselves. Let’s not think: *oh, well, Matt. 5, we’ve been through that a thousand times!* Maybe, but do you really get it?

Verse 23: “For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you.”

That’s when they had the temple, and they would come to the temple and bring a gift. We have a temple, and that’s the temple in heaven above. And we have an altar, and that altar is the altar of incense (Rev. 7) where the prayers of the saints ascend to God. You can apply this to yourself: if you go pray and you have a problem and you have hatred in your heart toward someone in the Church, toward someone in your family, you better go get it resolved. Because let’s see what Jesus said:

Verse 24: “Leave your gift there before the altar, and go *your way*; **first** be reconciled with your brother, **and then** come and offer your gift”—*because your heart is not right!* **The whole purpose of entering into the Kingdom of God—**

- through what the New Testament is

- through the Spirit of God
- through repentance
- through forgiveness
- through keeping the Laws of God *spiritually*

—*is the most important thing!* We’ve got to have our hearts and minds cleansed! That’s what He’s talking about here. So, ‘go be reconciled!’

Now then, you can go and read all the other Scriptures that talk about brotherly love and helping one another and serving one another and doing what is right. All those tie together!

Now He gives some advice if you’re caught by the officials of the land, and you’re guilty and you know you’re guilty.

Verse 25: “Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison.”

If you’re not guilty, you don’t have to agree. There are ways of doing that. This is a civil matter here. But if you’ve done something wrong, agree with your adversary, pay the fine and go your way, get it over, because you may come before a hostile judge and he’ll put you away.

I know that almost everyone in prison says, ‘Well, I’m innocent.’ I’ve visited a lot of people in prison and almost everyone tells me the same story. The only thing I can conclude is: there are a lot of liars in there and there are some who are honest. There are some who have been convicted and shouldn’t be in there, because there are lying prosecutors, there are lying witnesses, there are incompetent judges, incompetent attorneys—all of those things are true. But if we are living the way God wants us to live, how many times are we going to have problems with the authorities? *Very little!* He says here, if you get in there and that happens:

Verse 26: “Truly I say to you, there is no way that you shall come out of there until you have paid the *very* last coin.... [pay it first] ...You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*... [here comes the next commandment]: ...‘You shall not commit adultery’” (vs 26-27). Murder and adultery:

- How does it start?
- Where does it begin?

The whole book of Proverbs is filled with many places about the problems of seductive women. Everyone bewails and moans and groans about the pornography. Well, you need to know that

30-million women are hooked on pornography, 30% of all pastors in Protestant churches are hooked on pornography, and 70% of the men who attend are hooked on pornography. When you go through the checkout stand at your local supermarket, you see the pornography right in front of you.

He shows what a man must do first. *A man must protect his mind, protect his heart!* Job said, *'I made a covenant with my eyes.'* Men, God made you to be drawn to a beautiful body of a woman. Women know that! That's why so many women debase themselves by posing for porn. Whether it's still photo or whether it is in movies. It's out there today like never before. How many of the clergy are involved—not only in porn but also in adultery, fornication and homosexuality—even within the Church of God!

Here's what Jesus says—this is what you need to do, v 28: “But I say to you, everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

That's where it begins. *God wants the conversion of the heart!* But you cannot have the conversion of the heart and the soul until you start keeping the laws and commandments of God according to the Spirit. In doing so, you need the Spirit of God.

Psa. 19 tells us about the laws and commandments of God and what they do. Let's remember the Scripture about the New Covenant which says, through the Spirit of God: ‘I—through the Spirit of God—will write into their hearts and into their minds My laws and My commandments and I will not remember their lawlessness anymore. Not only do you do what is right, but we also follow that Jesus said we are to *daily* ask God for forgiveness of our sins and trespasses.

For all of you who this is shocking material for you to hear the first time, and how you have heard ministers in the pulpit stand up there and tell you the Laws of God have been done away, all you have to do is just see what a lie that is by looking at the world; what has happened to America and the world, because that has been preached and taught. Huh? Is it better? or is it worse?

Psalm 19:7: “The Law of the LORD is perfect...”

So, what they have done, they have cast out that which is *perfect* in order to bring in a satanic version. The truth of the matter, if you really understand it, Protestantism is in the grips of anti-Christ doctrine.

Verse 7: “The Law of the LORD is perfect...” *If it's perfect:*

- Why throw it away?
- You wouldn't do that with a brand new watch that ran perfectly—would you? *Of course not!*
- Are not the Laws of God far more important?
- Don't they have meaning and bearing on our lives?
- Are we going to enter into the Kingdom of God without keeping the Laws of God? *Of course not!*

“...restoring the soul... [your very inward being] ...the testimony of the LORD is sure... [all the testimonies of God; and some of the testimonies of God are contained in the Proverbs] ...making wise the simple” (v 7). *That's the whole reason for the book of Proverbs:*

- to give knowledge
- to give wisdom
- to give understanding

The book of Proverbs shows that these are universal Laws of God and express very clearly in the book Proverbs that apply to anyone anywhere in the world at anytime, in any generation.

Verse 8: “The precepts of the LORD are right... [every thought and every way of God is right, good, Holy and true] ...rejoicing the heart...”—*because there's no sadness, no hang-up, no penalty for sin against you!*

“...the commandments of the LORD are pure, enlightening the eyes” (v 8). *That means enlightening your mind so that you know and understand the Truth.*

Verse 9: “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever...”

All of these things combined together shows what it is to be a Christian; it's a whole package, not part of this, not part of that, not part of the other thing, not part of something else, no mixing in of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism, or any other religion, or and amorism or spiritism that we have today.

On the radio interview I had this summer, one man called up and he wanted a quick sure fix—almost like driving thru McDonald's and you order your cheeseburger and now ‘I've got the answer to God.’ Never happen! Can you imagine what it would be if you drove thru McDonald's and said, ‘Oh give me the verse for today, would you please,

so I can be saved.’ **Listen! Salvation is a difficult situation** as all of you probably know.

Verse 9: “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether... [What are they worth?] ...more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (vs 9-10).

Does this not concur with what Jesus is teaching? *Yes, indeed!* So, there are the teachings of God the same in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

Verse 11: “Moreover by [keeping] them Your servant is warned...” *If you have all of these things in your mind, you’re going to be conducting your life in the way that God wants you to do!*

Coupled with the Spirit of God, He is molding and creating in you the very character that comes from Him—Godliness—which leads to the mind of Christ. *That’s the ultimate goal!* The truth is this: **Once you start you’re not to look back, take your hand off the plow!** Your Christian life is never finalized until you’re faithful ‘unto death.’ Never forget that!

Verse 11: “Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Not monetarily, but it can bring you peace of mind; it can bring you health; it can bring you, most of all the greatest blessing that you can possibly have in this life: that is **spiritual contact, and a spiritual relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ in heaven above!** That is the greatest reward that you can get.

Lots of times when we read things like this in the Bible, our minds tend to go to physical things. Physical things are fine. God says He will take care of us. Don’t worry about those things. Cleanse the inside with the Spirit of God! Great reward! And what is a great reward?

Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are those who keep His commandments, that they may have the right to eat of the Tree of Life...”

Is that not a great reward? Is that not a great blessing? **You’ve got to think on these things! You’ve got to know!** That’s why you have to study the Bible and you have to know the Bible so that

- you can think with the Word of God
- you can live by the Word of God
- you can direct your life by the Word of God

Yet, we have the whole Bible and how many people, ‘Oh well, I just don’t have time for Bible study.’ But they expect God to be on fulltime for them. Doesn’t work that way!

Let’s show what it does; Psalm 19:12: “Who can understand his errors?...”

In other words: How are you ever going to know what is right and wrong without the laws and commandments of God? Then it becomes all subjective, it becomes all ‘lawless’ inasmuch as that you become an authority unto yourself, a god unto yourself, to decided what is right and wrong and you are living in the ranks of Adam and Eve. They rejected God’s definition of right and wrong, and good and evil, and **they wanted to decide for themselves!** That’s exactly where this world is today! That’s why we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, so that we know. We want God to be with us. We want God to dwell in us. That’s one of the most important factors of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“...Oh, cleanse me from *my* secret faults” (v 12). And in the New Testament (Eph. 5) we have the ‘washing by the water by the Word’—*to cleanse us!* That is God’s Spirit with God’s Word, works in us:

- to cleanse
- to change
- to help
- to lead us in the way we need to go

—and all your secret faults **you know!** You haven’t told other people some of the evil thoughts and secret things that come into your mind, **but God knows!** That’s how you get rid of them!

“...Oh cleanse me from my secret faults; and keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins...” (vs 12-13)—**because if you are obeying in the spirit of the laws and commandments of God,** you’re not going to commit presumptuous sins. Here’s New Testament doctrine (Rom. 6):

“...do not let them rule over me... [Sin shall not rule over you. That’s what it says.] ...then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.... [this helps sum up and add to what Jesus said]: ...Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer” (vs 13-14).

- Is that New Testament teaching in the book of Psalms? *Yes, indeed!*
- Does that not agree with what Jesus is teaching here? *Yes!*

Matt. 5:29—Here’s one that is hard to understand. You would be better off, if there’s no other recourse, if you did this. But the true recourse

is to *repent and keep the commandments of God* so that you don't do this:

Matthew 5:29: "So then, if your right eye shall cause you to offend, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is better for you that one of your members should perish than *that* your whole body be cast into Gehenna. And if your right hand shall cause you to offend, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is better for you that one of your members should perish than *that* your whole body be cast into Gehenna" (vs 29-30).

Now, what's harder to change than cutting off a hand, plucking out an eye? *The mind, the heart!* God wants that converted. But He's still saying, there it is!

Notice how these are practical, everyday things that occur. In this world today, the next series of verses in what Jesus said is absolutely untenable with people today. Notice, it was the same in His day. It was the same in the days before, because of the carnality and hardness of heart in men and women.

Verse 31: "It was also said *in ancient times*, 'Whoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.' But I say to you, whoever shall divorce his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever shall marry her who has been divorced is committing adultery" (vs 31-32).

In order to be able to understand it in today's promiscuous and sinful world. {note sermon series: *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*}.

That's the truth! Look what has happened! What is wrong with marrying one man or one woman and staying married for your whole life? The heart and core is you have to change, you have to grow within the marriage estate, and you have to become one flesh; regardless of the circumstances that come along. Now today, so many marriages are not marriages, because there's so much adultery and fornication, homosexuality and illicit sex going on that that's another whole question.

Verse 33: "Again, you have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, 'You shall not forswear yourself, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'"

Here's the standard. Instead of just performing your oaths to the Lord, here's what Jesus said concerning swearing:

Verse 34: "But I say to you, do not swear at all, neither by heaven... [people say that: 'Oh for heaven's sake.'] ...for it is God's Throne."

'I think it's very righteous, I am going to bow by the Throne of God.' What makes you think God is going to be indebted to you because you say that? *He's not!*

Verse 35: "Nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is *the* city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you do not have the power to make one hair white or black. But **let your word be good**... [He's talking about everything that you say—'let it be good'] ...*your* 'Yes' be *yes* and your 'No' be *no*..." (vs 35-37).

Have you ever said something in your heart, you promise God in your heart, but you didn't do it? and you say, 'Oh well, God will understand'? *Yes, He will!* You can repent of that, but what He wants you to do is this—and this is part of the conversion experience that we all go through—to truly make your 'yes' be *yes*. and that means every commitment, everything you say. If you say *yes*, *I will do it* conditionally, based upon *if I can do thus and such*, then you have qualified it. But if you say 'yes' let it be *yes*.

Jesus gave the example of the son who was asked by his father, 'Will you go work in the field today?' The son says 'Yes, I'll go work in the field today'—but he didn't do it. Then the other son he asked, 'Will you go work in my field?' *No, I'm not going to work in your field today*. But then he repented and went and did it. Christ asked the Pharisees: 'Who did the will of the Father?' *The one who did what He said*—though the first time he rejected it. But he repented and did it. Likewise, with you! Here's what happens: You give opportunity for Satan the devil:

"...for anything that is added to these is from the evil one" (v 37)—*because Satan is right there to say*, 'Well, you really don't need to do this, do you? Why don't you look for a way around it.'

The last example I will use will be Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, where they told the apostle, 'We're going to sell our property for thus-and-such and will give it all to the advancement of the New Testament Church—we'll bring it to the apostles.' They got way more than they expected so they said, 'We're going to keep back part of it and we will tell the apostles that we sold it for thus-and-such.' So, there's an example of let your 'yes' be *yes* and your 'no' be *no*.

(go to the next track)

Let's continue on in the Gospels where it shows about the Kingdom of God; and we have seen that in order to enter into the Kingdom of God that

you must develop the character of God through keeping the laws and commandments *spiritually*—and then other parts of the New Testament show that it is a relationship between you and God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:38: “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 evil; rather, *if* anyone shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (vs 38-39).

- Did not Jesus do this when He was arrested?
- Did He not do this also when He was led away to be crucified and scourged and beaten? *Yes! He did!*

Verse 40: “And *if* anyone shall sue you before the law and take your garment, give him *your* coat also.... [make a fair settlement, that’s what it’s talking about] ...And *if* anyone shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two.... [in other words, whatever you do, go above and beyond] ...Give to the one who asks of you...” (vs 40-42).

This means *you give if someone is need and they need help*. Someone got a call, ‘would you like to give your organs, when you die, to the organ bank?’ *Well, you don’t give that kind of thing!* It’s not talking about that at all. But it means *with someone in need!*

“...and do not turn away from the one who wishes to borrow from you” (v 42). *That ties right in with James 2*—that if your brother or your sister had need you help them out; the stranger has need, you help them out.

You have to use wisdom. You’re not to just give and let them take and take, and they’re really not willing to do what they need to do. Because Jesus said, ‘You always have the poor with you.’ Some today, what do they do? *They make a living out of begging for money!* So, you have to use wisdom and discernment in it, as well.

Here is a very complete change from the Old Testament, v 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, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (vs 43-44). **Why?** *Because this way you’re putting them into God’s hands!*

If there’s something that you need to do that’s right and good, that you need to do to alleviate the situation, by all means. But you don’t take it into your hands with revenge. You pray for your enemy,

especially this way—this is my prayer: *God, keep them from me!* If they do cause you problems and difficulties:

- pray for them that they’ll change their minds
- pray for them that they will see what is right
- pray for them that they will understand what they’re doing that is not right

If God would lead them to do it, of course, on their part they need to come to that! Even God is able to work and change the mind of carnal-minded people *to give you grace and favor in their eyes!*. So, that all applies here.

Notice, here’s why we do this; and this also tells us that”

- even though God has called us
- even though He’s given us the knowledge of what He wants us to do
- even though He’s granted us His Spirit

We’re not to be exalted above other people! We are not to think we are better than anyone else! If God has called you, that’s probably a good indication that you’re the ‘weak of the world.’ He hasn’t called the mighty; He hasn’t called the strong; He’s called the weak. He says the reason that you do this is because:

Verse 45: “So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven...” *That’s what God wants you to understand!*

Now, just put in your margin: 1-John 3:1-3—that we are called ‘the children of God.’ Same thing here! Not that we belong to a nation, and as the scribes and Pharisees said, ‘We have Abraham for our father, we’re Israelites, and because we are God has got to be with us. We are Jews and we are the favored people.’ Well, it kind of seems if you examine the true facts of what’s in the world today, you may reconsider that maybe you’re not! How can you be if you reject Jesus? You may have rewards from the god of this world Satan the devil, **but you surely don’t have the blessings of God!** Because **if you don’t know Christ, you don’t know God!**

Here’s why—we’re not to be lifted up: “...for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and on *the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and on *the* unjust” (v 45). *Everybody receives that blessing from God!* As a matter of fact, that’s necessary just to live.

Verse 46: “For if you love those who love you...”

You just have your little, close circle of friends, or your little club, or your little church, or whatever it may be; if you only love them and you

hate everybody else, you despise everybody else.

“...**what reward do you have?** Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*” (v 46).

There’s plenty of that in the world. Or ‘if you belong to our club we accept you and here’s our secret handshake so we know that you belong to us.’ Or you have a badge, a banner, a ring, and yes, everybody accepts you—but what is your reward?

Verse 47: “And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary?... [that’s going to happen anyway] ...Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*”

Now, here’s the sum of it—and this is perhaps the most important verse in Matt. 5, outside of vs 17 & 18:

Verse 48: “Therefore, **you shall be perfect...**”

You shall be in the process of becoming perfect by overcoming these things with the power and Spirit of God:

- so that you can have the mind of Christ
- so that you can develop the righteousness of God from within, from the heart

That’s what God wants!

“...**you shall be perfect even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect**” (v 48). ***That’s the goal!***

That’s what we are to have our minds on. That’s how we are to look at what we are to do with all the teachings that we have from the New Testament; the teachings of Jesus Christ out of the Gospels and also the whole teachings of God because they all come from God.

There it is, that’s the goal. That’s why what God is doing within us is such a tremendous work! Because he’s taking the weak; He’s taking the despised; He has taken the hated; He is taking those who have problems and difficulties and now—through the process of conversion, and through this kind of change of way of living from within; because the way you live is from within, regardless of what you practice. He is doing this to convert you to what? What is the goal? “**Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect.**”

- How can I do that when I’m in such a mess?
- How can I do that when I am confronted with so many problems?

Let’s see how we are to do this. That’s why in another place Jesus said, ‘sufficient for every day is the evil of it.’ But here is what Paul tells us how we are to become perfect—as we overcome sin; as we, through God’s Spirit, put His Laws in our inward parts and in our mind and our heart; and use that as a motivation for how we think and how we do and how we act and behave. We’re going to have problems. We’re going to have difficulties. We’re going to have things that we need to overcome.

Now, as far as the Pharisee, Paul was about as perfect as you could be. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, and the strictest sect of it. They were punctilious. He was so working for the high priest that what did he do? Well, *he got warrants of arrest, and warrants to persecute, and enchain and throw into prison Christians!* He was out there, as you recall, zealously doing the work of the high priest when God said to Himself, ‘That’s enough! I want Paul! I’m going to convert him!’ BAM! He was knocked to the ground, humbled greatly, instantly! As he looked back on his life and everything that he did:

Philippians 3:6: “With respect to zeal, persecuting the Church... [the highest calling of Judaism at that time was getting rid of those ‘renegade Christians’] ...with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless.” *No fault!*

No one could come against me. I had all my phylacteries filled with the merit badges of my good deeds. And I had quite a reputation.

This was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus was talking about. Is that love toward neighbor? *No!* That was hatred toward neighbor, but it was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees!

Notice how Paul looked at these things. Let me just rehearse something to you that Jesus said if you’re going to follow Him. He says, ‘*Anyone who comes to Me and wants eternal life and does not hate his father and mother—that means loved Him more than father and mother—brother and sister, husband and wife, children and lands, and yes, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*’ That means *you cannot be saved!*

Here’s how Paul did that; notice how he expressed it, v 7: “Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ.”

We must give up the world! We must give up the things in the world. Because even as John wrote, ‘*love not the world; for the things in the world—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and*

the pretentious pride of life—are all of the world and they are not of God!’ All that was gain!

- What do you have to give up?
- What have you had to sacrifice?
- What is it that you have had to leave behind to serve Christ?

Remember this: In the Kingdom of God, in attaining that, *you are going to have abundance of the best of everything spiritually and physically forever!* We need to take the same attitude that Paul had here. When we understand what God has called us to—and as we just read, *to become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*—that way then we understand what we need to do.

He says he counted them but ‘loss’; v 8: “But then truly, I count all things...”

- all things in the world
- everything about what people thought about him; all the prestige
- all of the power
- all of the authority that was given to him as a Pharisee

“...to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the **loss of all things, and count them as dung; that I may gain Christ**” (vs 8).

Now we can come from the Gospels and into the Epistles of Paul and see how Paul applies those. This is how you become spiritually perfect: by growing and changing and overcoming and really loving God the Father and Jesus Christ with all your heart, mind, soul and being. Then you can come to these kinds of spiritual thoughts that form our spiritual attitudes. *Counts them as dung; counts it all loss!*

“...that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him...” (vs 8-9).

And Jesus said in another place, ‘What if a man gains the whole world, but loses his life?’ What does he have? *Nothing!*

“...and may be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness**, which is derived from law... [just as Jesus said, ‘now your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees’] ...but that *righteousness* which is by the faith of Christ...” (v 9).

- God’s Spirit
- God’s faith
- God’s way
- God’s Law written into your heart and into your mind

“...—the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith... [that’s what God wants!] ...**That I may know Him**... [at the resurrection; you may know Him as He is] ...and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (vs 9-10).

That’s why we have baptism, which is a symbolic death, but you have to be faithful to the end. Always remember that *it’s not how you start; it’s how you finish!* Paul always kept that in mind.

Verse 11: “If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Everything that we find in the teachings of the New Testament is:

- become perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect
- attain to the resurrection
- attain to the righteousness of Christ

Those are the spiritual goals, but they are all rooted in the Gospels as the Gospels lay the foundation and tells us about the Kingdom of God.

Verse 12: “Not as though I have already received... [the resurrection hasn’t come, yet] ...or have already been perfected...”—*because perfection takes place over a lifetime*; and that perfection requires a lot of work on your part and on God’s part with His Spirit:

- to mold you
- to shape you
- to help you

...but I am striving...” (v 12). *There it is:*

- we must strive
- we must go forward
- we must work
- we must put out all the effort that we can;

As God gives us the effort and gives us the strength to do it!

“...so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this* one thing I do—...” (vs 12-13). *This is how we are perfected spiritually, day-by-day through our whole life!*

“...forgetting the things that are behind...” (v 13).

That’s why with the daily prayer, that Jesus tells us to forgive our sinners that sin against us, and we ask God to forgive us our sins, on a daily basis. I think when you do that, you will begin to understand

the depths of deception and evil that really lurk deep in the heart and the mind of each one of us. We're no different that all other human beings except God has called us and given us His Spirit. He's giving us the opportunity right now!

"...forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead" (v 13).

That's what we need to look to! That's why Christ says, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.' That's quite a thing, the teaching there:

- be perfect
- seek the Kingdom of God, first
- trust God in faith
- look to Him in everything

Verse 14: "I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.... [always going forward; always doing these things; always doing what God wants done] ...So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind...." (vs 14-15).

That's how we fulfill the Scripture: ***Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect!*** Here Paul also shows the process by which we go through and do that. Here's something else, another promise:

"...And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, **God**... [Who has given you His Spirit] ...**will reveal even this to you**" (v 15). *So that:*

- you can change
- you can grow
- you can overcome
- you can repent

That's what God wants! All of these things we find that ***Jesus laid the foundation in the Gospels about how to attain to the Kingdom of God!***

Matt. 6—we're not going to go through every verse here in chapter six, but we'll go through those that we need to so we can understand what we need to do. He talks about praying. Don't stand out at the corner and do it to be seen of men. Here's how we are to pray; and we are to pray every day.

Let's understand this in praying: he talks about *vain repetitions* here, but a *vain repetition* is one that is over and over again. There are needed repetitions that are prayers that still need to be answered that have not yet been answered. You continue praying for and continue asking day-by-day-by day until the answer comes. So He says here:

Matthew 6:6: "But you, when you pray, enter into a private room; and after shutting the door,

pray to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly."

God has promised to hear your prayers. As a matter of fact, the prayers that come from the saints are the delight of the Father. Why is it that people have a hard time praying? Have a hard time studying? ***Because they just really don't understand how important that it is!***

I talk to some people and I see them maybe once a year, maybe twice a year, and they keep telling me: 'Well, you know, I've got the same old problem. I still am having a hard time praying. I'm still having a hard time studying.' ***God is not going to come down and do it for you. You have to 'strive to enter in through the straight/narrow gate'!***

He says, 'Don't use vain repetitions' This is an outline as we know, and these are the elements which are to be in every one of your prayers. What I'd like you to do is this: Make a special Bible study, take this prayer—which is called the Lord's Prayer; but it's not the Lord's Prayer; the Lord's Prayer is in John 17—this is the model prayer. You take this model prayer and you outline all the aspects of it and then you go back and study the Psalms.

I think you're going to see—they may not all necessarily all follow in this same order—but I think what you're going to see is they all follow this outline because these are prayers from David to God; this is what we need to realize. Some Psalms will have some of the elements, and other Psalms will other of the elements; but when you take the full picture of all the psalms contained in the book of Psalms, they all fit into what Jesus said here.

Verse 9: "Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: 'Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'" God is Holy:

You, God, are righteous, true, perfect!
You're a God of love and You love us, You care for us, and are there for us! You hear us and help us

Notice the next thing you are to do; v 10: "Your Kingdom come..." ***That's the goal!*** Also, *that means God's rule daily in your life;* coming from God—where the Kingdom of God is now—down to you.

Paul wrote to those in Colossians that we have been transferred from the power of Satan the devil unto the Kingdom of His dear Son. So it has a personal application to you. As well as praying continually for the Kingdom of God to come. ***That is the goal!***

"...Your will be done... [in your life; in the

world] ...on earth as *it is* in heaven” (v 10).

It's all being done according to the will of God, without a doubt! It's happening every day.

Verse 11: “Give us this day our daily bread.” That doesn't mean that we're not to watch and be wise and see that there are times when we need to have more than just the food we need daily.

Verse 12: “And forgive us our debts...” *As He says in Luke 11: 'Forgive us our sins we forgive those who sin against us.'* That's part of it.

Everything that's necessary for your Christian growth is laid right out in this prayer. As a matter of fact, you could take this prayer and you could also outline Matt. 5, 6 & 7. This is pretty powerful what Jesus is telling us here.

“...as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation...” (vs 12-13). ***Don't lead us into trial and temptation;*** that's why you need to have your sins forgiven.

Isn't it interesting that we ask for forgiveness so that we won't be led into temptation, because we haven't repented. So, if you repent, you're not going to be led into trial. But if you don't repent, you can be guaranteed you're going to have a trial, without a doubt!

“...but rescue us from the evil one...” (v 13). You can put in your margin: Eph. 6; 1-Pet. 5; James 4—***resist Satan the devil in the faith and 'he will flee from you.'*** So 'rescue us'—we need to be rescued! Not just 'deliver us'—it is ***rescue*** us.

While we were doing the video, there was a plane wreck off the coast of East Africa, and there was one 14-year-old girl who survived. The thing that was so amazing was, she didn't know how to swim. But she clung for 30-hours to a piece of the crashed plane. She was ***rescued!***

Now, look at your life in relationship to coming out of the world and out of Satan the devil that you need to be ***rescued!*** That's what it says there in Col. 1—that 'God the Father Himself has ***rescued us' from Satan the devil!***

Then notice how the prayer finishes; just like we read in Phil. 3:

“...For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (v 13). *So we start out with the Kingdom and we end up with the Kingdom!*

All of these things are basic foundations for us to know what we need to look to. How we need to set our lives. How we need to live our lives. And Christ laid it out for us. The rest of the Bible agrees with it.

There's something also to remember; and we need to understand this again and again, and understand it:

Verse 14: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (vs 14-15).

Why? ***Because you're to become perfect like the Father Who is in heaven.***

Some are surely going to say: 'Well, what if they don't come and repent to me?' ***You always be in an attitude ready to forgive.*** Ask God to forgive them maybe God will reach down and touch their heart. But why does God expect you to do this? ***Because you want God to forgive you your sins!*** Never heard anyone say: 'I don't want God to forgive me my sins. But that person over there, I'm never going to forgive.' I'm talking about people in the Church! Because what happens?

If you harbor this in your mind, it eats away and takes away the spiritual character that you have already built. It destroys it because you are following the way of Satan the devil!

So, you better forgive! God will forgive you. Remember what He said here concerning if you have somewhat against your brother. If you have unfinished business, take care of it. God will bless you for it!

Now, He talks about fasting. Don't do like men so that you're fasting to men. He says, 'wash your face, anoint your hair and fast to God in secret.' Don't have treasures on earth, but have spiritual treasures in heaven. Your reward is coming.

Verse 22: “The light of the body is the eye....”

That is absolutely a true statement that Jesus gave. You look at those who are purveyors of evil and their eyes are dark and evil and hateful. Someone who has love; someone who has kindness; someone who has hope—their eyes are alive and alert! Likewise with health and with sickness. So the eye reflects everything in your whole body:

- your attitude
- your health
- your thoughts

You don't even have to project your thoughts out because it's all reflected in your eyes because that's directly connected to your mind.

“...Therefore, if your eye be sound, your whole body shall be *full of light*” (v 22). *It's also*

true that if you have good thoughts; and if you are getting rid of the evil thoughts out of your mind and the hatred and the anger and the bitterness, you're going to be more healthy! It's a truism.

Now, Jesus makes the comparison *spiritually*, v 23: "But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be *full of* darkness. Therefore, if the light that *is* in you be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!"

The greatest two that's going to happen to will be the beast and the false prophet. Filled with evil. Out of their mouths come lies one after the other! *Full of darkness!*

Now then, He ends this section here by telling us something that is very true. You cannot be 'double-minded' as James said. Anyone who is 'double-minded is unstable.' So, maybe in overcoming some of the problems that you have had, maybe you need to ask the question: If these are such long-standing problems, have I really desired to completely overcome them, or have I wanted to kind of keep some of them close to my heart. Get rid of the obvious ones that people see, but in my heart and mind, not get rid of all of them.

Here's the principle; here's what Jesus said, v 24: "**No one**... [absolutely not anyone] ...is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to *the* one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**"

Now 'mammon' means *the things that are in the world*: wealth, riches, pride, prestige, all of that. It also means *the worshiping of people*. That also means *putting anything before God*. You cannot do it. ***We are to be single-minded to God the Father and Jesus Christ!*** You can't serve two masters.

Verse 25: "Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious about your life *as to* what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor about your body *as to* what you shall wear. Is not life more than food, and the body *more* than clothing?"

How you are going to live. That doesn't mean that we don't get out and work and don't do the things that Jesus said, because the Proverbs says, ***'If you don't work, you won't eat'***—so:

- you've got to work
- you've got to provide for your family
- you have to provide for yourself
- you have to provide for others
- you have to do as God desires

But what He wants you to understand is that God is going to help you in every one of these things. And every time you go out and you see a beautiful

flower, as He talks about the lilies of the field—that 'even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed' like those. But if God takes care of those little flowers, which are 'here today and gone tomorrow, cast into the oven' or the heat of the sun—will He not take care of you; will He not provide for you? *Yes, He will!* That's what He says here:

Verse 30: "...O *you* of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious... [don't be worried, don't be frustrated] ...saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we be clothed?'" (vs 30-31).

God will take care of it, one way or the other. You have to go work. You have to go look. You have to go find and all of that. But you do so with the blessing of God. You do so asking God to help you and prosper you in it.

Verse 32: "For the nations seek after all these things..."

Yes, they want everything! But they don't want God! It's another good example that you can't live in sin and you can't live in religion and expect the blessings of God.

"...And your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But *as for* you... [here's the final instruction, summing up this section] ...***as for you***... [here's what you're to do]: ...**seek first**... [that means *seek and keep on seeking*] ...**the Kingdom of God and His righteousness**..." (vs 32-33)—*not the righteousness of a religion or the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, but the righteousness of God!*

"...and all these things shall be added to you.... [in the proportion that God sees that you need] ...Therefore, **do not be anxious about tomorrow**; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day *is* the evil of that *day*" (vs 33-34).

There are things that take place every day that we need to work on and overcome. Problems that arise that we don't expect. So ***don't worry about tomorrow and don't stew about yesterday***. Take every day *day-by-day*:

- serve God
- love God
- keep His commandments
- grow in the things that Jesus said here
- seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness

—then everything will be added to you, especially at the resurrection!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 5:16-28
- 2) Psalm 19:7-11
- 3) Revelation 22:14
- 4) Psalm 19:12-14
- 5) Matthew 5:29-48
- 6) Philippians 3:6-15
- 7) Matthew 6: 6, 9-15, 22-25, 31-34

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 11
- Ephesians 2:10
- Ephesians 4
- Revelation 7; 22:14
- Ephesians 5
- Romans 6
- Acts 5
- James 2
- 1 John 3:1-3
- John 17
- Luke 11
- Matthew 5, 6 & 7
- Ephesians 6
- 1-Peter 5
- James 4
- Colossians 1

Also referenced: Sermon Series:

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

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