

## Fulfillment of the Law – Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2014

***“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*”**

### **Mat.5:17-20**

Beloved in The Lord,

So many people falsely think that the Old Testament is not important, as they think it is just Jewish History and there is little or no significance for us today. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Without the Old Testament, The New Testament does not make any sense. Without the Old Testament we would not have The Ten Commandments which are the foundation of our society and also the basis of the legal system.

When Jesus came, He did not abolish the Old Testament; He fulfilled all of its prophecies and requirements. It is of vital importance that we understand this.

There are only two ways that we can be justified/made righteous before Almighty God. The first way would be to keep the whole Law all of the time. If it were possible for a person to do this, then that person would be righteous, and would have a place in Heaven. The fact of the matter is that no person can do this. No person can live without sinning against Almighty God.

That is why Jesus came. Thank God that He did come, because otherwise we would all be lost eternally. Jesus came to fulfil the law. He came to pay our sin debt in full that we may be made righteous through His blood. You see Jesus is the second and only way that man can possibly be righteous before God.

When we acknowledge our sin and confess it to God, and repent of it, we are forgiven. When we truly ask for forgiveness, God forgives us because Jesus paid the price for our redemption with His own precious blood. Jesus blood cleanses us from all sin and declares us to be justified, made righteous. We stand before God’s judgement forgiven.

Jesus was the only man who kept all of God’s law all of the time without any exceptions. He lived a perfect sinless life. He was without blemish or stain. He was completely pure and holy.

Gods law says that the wages of sin is death, and also that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness for sin. Jesus took our punishment. He was our substitute who paid the price for all sin with His blood.

Why did He do it? The simple answer is love. He loves us so much. God is love. God is a God of grace and mercy, but He is also a just God. God cannot just simply ignore sin. If He ignored sin and left it unpunished then He would break His own laws.

This is why we all need Jesus; we all need The Saviour. It is only by His blood that we can be made righteous, that we can be justified.

The Apostle Paul thinking about the Jews, wrote in his letter to the Romans:

***“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”( Romans 10:1-4).***

The Jews thought that God would accept them without Jesus. They believed that their own righteousness would save them. Paul even writes that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. As I read these words, it led me to think how many professing Christian's would fall into this very same category? They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

So many Christians do not understand Christ's sacrifice. So many truly believe that God will accept them because they are good and do good things. They live a righteous life, at least in their own estimation. Many have a great zeal for the work of the Church and they give and they serve and they sacrifice much. They do not understand that this does nothing to contribute to their salvation.

It is important to serve God with zeal. It is important to give, to serve and to sacrifice, but it is vitally important to understand that these things do not save us. Only Jesus blood can save us. So many falsely believe that God will accept them, and so as Paul writes: ***"They do not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."***

Maybe you are one of these people. On what basis do you hope to get to Heaven? Your answer to this simple question will show you whether you have subjected yourself to the righteousness of God, or whether you are relying upon your own perceived righteousness.

If you say: "I am a good person. I haven't harmed anybody. I try to live honourably. I have not committed any big sins. I think I am ok....."then you are fooling yourself. Your hope for heaven is baseless and futile.

On the other-hand, if you say: "I believe in Jesus Christ. I trust only in His blood shed on the cross, to pay for my sin.." then you are on the right track.

The problem with trusting in your own righteousness is that it leads you to hell. Your righteousness falls far short of the mark. Isaiah wrote:

***" You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, for we sinned, We continued in them a long time; And shall we be saved? 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” (Isaiah 64:5-6).***

You see Isaiah is telling us that before Holy God, all of our righteousness is at best a filthy rag.

That is why we have Jesus. He took our punishment and He died our death, so that believing in Him, we would be made righteous with His righteousness.

Jesus fulfilled the Law, He did not abolish it. All of God's Commandments are still in force, but their function or meaning has changed to the extent that they serve as a teacher to bring us to Christ. For example, if we did not have the Commandment - You shall not steal - we would not know that stealing is sinful behaviour. Likewise: You shall not covet, or you shall not commit adultery. The law shows us what is right and wrong and more importantly shows us that we all desperately need a Saviour, because all of us break God's laws.

When we are in Christ, when we are justified in Him, then our relationship with the law changes. We strive to keep the law not out of fear of reprisal, but out of love and respect for God. Jesus said: ***"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).***

It is that simple. If we love Jesus, then our love for Him causes us to keep His Commandments. The greatest Commandment, incorporates all the commandments.

***"And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-38, 40).***

The greatest Commandment is love. In this Commandment we see the cross. To love God is the vertical beam of the cross, and to love one another is the horizontal beam. The first three of the Ten Commandments speak of our relationship with God - the vertical. The remaining speak about our relationships with others - the horizontal. For example not murdering, not stealing, not committing adultery, honouring parents etc. Without the vertical beam, the horizontal cannot stand up.

When we are in Christ, who is absolute love, then we keep His commandments. Do you see how everything is dependent upon Him? He truly does fulfil the Law.

Before closing this message I would like to just emphasise one more point that Jesus made about the Word of God, namely: ***" For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished"(Matthew 5:18).***

This means that God's Word does not change in the least. So many today are saying that God's Word is antiquated and no longer relevant today. They say it needs to be changed. That is not what Jesus said:

He said: ***"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).***

God's Word is in force forever. There is a warning here for those who would try to change even the smallest of God's Commandments and that is that such a person will be called least in the Kingdom of God.

May we be careful to keep all that God has commanded. May we commit our lives totally to Jesus, knowing that we are justified, made righteous by His blood, and may we strive to keep the Great Commandment always and so we will be on the right path. May God help us.  
Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.