

Matthew 5: 18 and 19; “The Believer Keeping God’s Law”, Sermon # 18 in a series entitled – “These Sayings of Mine”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 10th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.

Let me ask you at the outset of this message – Do you desire to glorify God during the time of your stay here upon the earth? For we have seen in past messages that Christ fulfilled the Law. But here in these verses our Lord is talking about how it can be fulfilled in You. To glorify God, you must learn to keep His commandments. And to do that there are 3 things that you should consider. 1st of all – Every Christian should consider what they should do, to become more like Christ, who fulfilled the Law. 2nd – Every Christian should consider what it means to break the least of God’s commandments. And 3rd – Every Christian should consider whether they will be great in the kingdom of heaven. As you hear this message, my dear brothers and sisters, will you not consider how you might better keep God’s holy law?

1st of all – Every Christian should consider what they should do, to become more like Christ, who fulfilled the Law.

In verse 18, Jesus says – “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” The Law of God is like God Himself. It is absolute. It is absolute in that it perfectly represents Him and what He expects all men to do. As long as the heavens and the earth will last, His law will be His standing witness as to what is morally right and wrong. That is what Jesus is saying here. I have spoken to you in several past messages about how Christ did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. He did fulfill it in all of its aspects, Moral, ceremonial, and Judicial, on behalf of sinners. He kept all of the commandments and precepts of the Law in His heart, mind and actions.

Christ has fulfilled the Law, but the Triune God would see His holy Law fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Now, you can see from the way that the Lord Jesus has worded this that God’s law continues to speak to men through the Old and New Testament Scriptures until the end of the world. He speaks to them of what He requires of them, in terms of their obedience to God. Christ assures us here, that until heaven and earth passes away, not one jot nor one tittle will pass away from God’s moral law, as represented in the 10 commandments, until that time.

We know that He is speaking of the Law of the Ten Commandments, because of what follows in verses 21-30 when He goes on to speak about what God is expecting, in regard to His commandments against murder and adultery. He says here in verse 18 that the present heaven and earth will not pass away until every jot (the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet), and every tittle, (the smallest stroke of that letter) is fulfilled; indeed, until all is completely fulfilled. Christ has fulfilled the Law, but God’s moral Law, He is saying, must be fulfilled in everyone who believes in Him, if they are to be proved to be a true follower of His.

When I say this, I am not intending that you think that the Law is being fulfilled “by” us. For only Christ could fulfill the law perfectly, and He has already done so by keeping every one of God’s commandments perfectly. But God’s Law is fulfilled “in” us when we learn to obey it out of love to God. The Law is fulfilled in me when Christ’s grace is at work in my heart leading me to obey it from good motives; love to God and love to people around me. Jesus is saying in verse 18 that God’s holy Law will be fulfilled “in” the righteous thoughts, words, and deeds of every single true Christian, in all generations, until the end of the age.

The end of the age will be the end of the world, when Christ comes back again. At that time He will judge the world in righteousness. He will judge every man according to their works. In Revelation chapter 22, verse 12, our Lord says – “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work.” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” “Blessed are those who do His commandment, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” And

Revelation 20, verse 13 says – “And they were judged, each one according to his works.” So, it is true that men are saved by faith in Christ, apart from the works of the law. But let us take notice of the fact that they will be judged according to their works; that is whether they loved and kept His Law to show forth the reality of their having been saved by Him.

We are living in a day where this truth about God and His law, as something which should be received and thought about, is being suppressed. God’s law is largely being ignored, and it is being deliberately taken away from the public square, and for the most part, it is being removed from the public discourse. It is as though, by doing this, people think that they will not have to think about it. That somehow, God and His Law will go away, and that moral relativism will prevail. But let us joyfully remember that our God is the One who created us for His own glory, and He isn’t going away, and so, neither will His holy law. It is for us to heed it and do it, and keep it, if we are wise. But there is the very problem. How will men come to conviction of sin, to turn away from it?

How will they learn to do righteousness? Well, I hope that you will understand that it will only be when the Holy Spirit convicts them of it. Does He does this in an immediate sense? Yes, He most certainly does. But He also uses Christians to teach other people around them what sin is. “By the law comes the knowledge of sin”, it says in Romans chapter 3, verse 20. So, even though you may not presently see much conviction of sin as you look at people around you, it doesn’t mean that you cannot help further the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, by speaking up about what God’s law says. Speak up, tell people how a person can change to do what is right through Jesus Christ our Lord and the Spirit’s power, when they have His life in their life.

Jesus says in John chapter 16, verses 5-15 – “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” “But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.” “Nevertheless I tell you the truth.” “It is to your advantage that I go away ; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” “And He when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.” “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” “However, when He the Spirit of truth has come He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority; but whatever He hears He will speak; He will tell you things to come.” “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

Now, let’s think about this for a few moments. These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus to His disciples before He went to the cross. He is speaking to the apostles about their future usefulness in ministry to Himself. Some of these words were given to show them how they would receive direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit on how and what they should write down as Scripture. He is saying that even though He will not be with them physically, in Person, He would be with them by the Presence and wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their lives. It was to their advantage that He would go away, He says to them, because when He did go away, He would send the Holy Spirit to them, and not only to them, but also to the whole Church, to abide with each and every believer in every generation, to the end of the age.

It is He who would convict the world of sin and righteousness, and judgment. Of sin, because by nature men do not believe in Jesus, and so He would convict them of sin. But you will notice that He would do this through their ministry. And, even though these words were written directly to them, the principle is still true for us. We should understand that He will convict people around us of their sin, it through our words and actions and ministry to people around us, as well. How does He does this? He will often do this when we tell them of God’s law, and then share the gospel with them. We can tell them that all men by nature are sinners because of Adam’s sin and their own actual sins.

We can learn how to address their particular sins by speaking of what is right and wrong as it is stated in God’s law. We can talk to people around us about God being the most important One in

our lives; that there is nothing more important than God and Christ. We can talk about the importance of prayer and in the process tell people how wrong it is to take God's name in vain; not really seeking Him in a sincere and serious way. We can talk to people about all of the different commandments of God's law, as the subject of right and wrong comes up in our conversation, and then point that person to Christ, as the One who has fulfilled the Law. The only way that you can succeed effectively in telling other people about the sinfulness of sin, is to tell them about the perfect obedience of Christ. Tell them that Christ came into the world with God's law in His heart. He came to do and keep God's commandments in a way that He would satisfy God's justice and His expectation of perfect obedience.

Hebrews chapter 10, verses 7-10 – "Then I said, 'Behold I have come – In the volume of the book it is written of Me – To do Your will, O God.'" "Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire or had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law, then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.'" "He takes away the first that he may establish the second." "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." In thinking about this truth, if the Lord Jesus' purpose was to fulfill the Law by doing the will of God; if it is by His will that we have been sanctified to do God's will, then is it not true that we ourselves will want to keep God's Law, the Ten Commandments, as a rule of life ourselves, in order to become more like Christ?

It must necessarily be. For this is the New Covenant that Christ laid down His life to be the basis of our whole salvation. Hebrews 10: 14-17 – "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." "But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them, 'then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'" So, you see here, that when you believe in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, You are also given a New Heart in which God's law is put into your heart and mind. His law is written there on your heart.

And so, you should realize, that if the purpose of your being saved is so that you might become more like Christ, then that means that you will greatly desire to keep all of God's moral commandments of the Law, even as He did, so that you will become more and more conformed to His blessed likeness and image. This is what glorifies God. You will want to keep the 10 commandment perfectly, because Jesus kept them perfectly. You will love to read Psalm 119, which is all about this very thing. Verses 33-35 – "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end." "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it."

Did Christ love God with all of His heart, soul, mind, and strength? Then you should strive to do so, because He is living in Your heart by His Holy Spirit. Did Christ love His neighbor as Himself? Then you ought to think about how you would want to be treated by others and study to do the same to them. These things are very practical and very good, are they not?

2nd – Every Christian should consider what it means to break the least of these commandments.

Verse 19 says – "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Here, our Lord is giving us a principle by which He judges our sincere obedience. He is saying that he who breaks one of the least of God's moral commandments, the commandments which are found in the law, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. That is, they will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven in God's estimation, both in this life in terms of their labors in the church, and in terms of that person's future reward, then, in the heavenly state.

All Christians will be rewarded according to their works in the future state. The works of the true Christian will be evaluated most carefully by Christ Himself. Christ does not say that the

person who breaks one of these least commandments and teaches men so, will go to hell, although that person who professed to be a Christian, and practiced sin and was a hypocrite, will most certainly end up being sent to hell because of their duplicity. If a person practices any one sin, and they will not repent of it, they will not go to heaven. And certainly they will go to hell if they teach others that they can be a Christian and practice sin. But rather, I believe that we should put the best possible construction on what Christ is saying here, because of differences of understanding, among believers, concerning certain aspects of commandment keeping, in which they differ in their understanding. A brother's faulty understanding concerning keeping the least of God's commandments may lead him to break that commandment and even teach others to do so.

I believe that our Lord is saying here that these brethren shall be least in terms of their reward and commendation when they come to the heavenly state. We must say that any true Christian cannot be commended by Christ for their breaking any of His commandments. They cannot be commended for teaching others by their words or their bad example what was not true in terms of how a commandment should be kept or not kept. We should always remember that salvation is not by the best of our works, and yet we must always teach others to engage in good works and keep all of God's commandments in order that they might honor and glorify Him and walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called.

But in order to understand this statement better, we should ask ourselves this simple question to make it more practical and understandable. What is the least of God's commandments of the 10 Commandments? For this is what our Lord is aiming at here. Even though Christ does not tell us here what the least of the commandments is here, we can say this. The least of the moral commandments, of the 10 commandments, in the eyes of many Christians, is the 4th commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. No other commandment of the 10 is so neglected or set aside by Christians as this one, as not applying to us in this New Testament Dispensation. And no other commandment of the 10 is rationalized away as often as this one is. And, there are Christians who break this commandment themselves and also teach others to do the same thing.

And so, we have to ask ourselves – Are they really on the way to hell? Well, it is possible that they are, if they have no regard for Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, the the Day of worship in New Testament times. They never seek out a church of believers to worship with. They think that Sunday is just like any other day of the week, and they can labor on that day, they think, if they want to. Such people may indeed end up in hell by despising God's commandment. But I think that it will be wise for us to believe exactly what our Lord teaches us here. Those Christians who do not remember to keep the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day, holy, and teach others to do the same, they are considered by God as being least in the kingdom of heaven.

They may think themselves sincerely right, but their obedience will be evaluated by Christ Himself. God placed the 4th commandment of the 10 in the midst of His absolute moral law. And the Sabbath Day, the day of rest and worship, He ordained for the good of His creature man, even before that, at the beginning of the world, and before the Fall of Man into sin. He rested Himself from all of His works on the 7th day, to set the example for His creature man. This expectation for man to work, to rest and to worship Him was established by the Sabbath Day command being a part of the law written on Adam's heart.

In creating him this way, He expected all men to remember the Sabbath Day, from that day forward. He expected all men who would love and obey Him, to glorify Him in this way, of regular rest and worship on one day of the week, from the foundation of the world. It was one of the Creation Ordinances along with the Ordinance of work. God worked and then He rested. And He expects man to work, and then also to rest, on one day every seven. In the redemption of God's elect, God through Christ, then fulfilled everything related to the law of our first creation, and also the Moral Law of the 10 commandments, through Christ our Lord.

Christ kept the Sabbath perfectly, and all of God's commandments perfectly, and afterwards He rested in the tomb on the Jewish Sabbath Day and Night. Then He rose from the dead on the 3rd day, that is, on Sunday, the first day of the week, and thus the Sabbath Day changed from Saturday to Sunday because of the New Creation being brought in through Christ. The real intent of the Sabbath Day commandment, from God's perspective, is not to bind men up with it as the Pharisees did, by adding many other commandments to it. In doing this, when Christ came, they condemned Him for not keeping the Sabbath. They condemned Him, the One who had given them the commandment Himself at Mt. Sinai. They condemned Him for not keeping that commandment in a way that they could approve of. What a shame this was, to them. Christ did not approve of them for their false zeal. And none of us should ever commend zeal which is not according to a true knowledge of the Bible.

And so, Christ deliberately healed men on the Sabbath Day to show them that their additions to His law were false and wrong. What is God's expectation of His New Covenant, New Testament people in regard to the Sabbath Day? It is to observe the day by resting from our 6 day labors, and by coming to worship Him, giving that day to Him, because of what Christ has done for us. The commandment is kept by doing those things, and by doing good works of mercy and necessity. Call the Christian Sabbath a Delight. All Christians should be able to affirm this, but some do not keep this commandment in the way that they should. And, they have what they think are Biblical arguments to prove what I have said here is wrong. What should we do?

I think that if we have tried to persuade them and we can't, let us leave them in to the Lord's evaluation of them, instead of our trying to judge them. They stand or fall to their Master. They may, on the Day of Judgment be able to show the Lord that they really did care for His day, and they worshiped on His day, and they even gave the day to him. Let us leave them to explain it however they think that they can. But let us continue to live and speak the plain and obvious truth, that every man ought to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Without it, many men would work 7 days a week and force other men to do so as well. And without it, many would worship God, not by coming to church, but on their own; on any day they wished, and think that they are serving God. Let us not think this way, or live this way. Let us keep the least of God's commandments.

3rd – Every Christian should consider whether they will be great in the kingdom of heaven.

I want you to understand that even though some Christians may consider the 4th commandment to be the least of God's commandments, that there may be others who think that there are others of God's commandments which are the least in their estimation. Jesus will talk about the 6 and 7th commandments of God's law in the next section that we will look at. That is, You shall not murder, and You shall not commit adultery. We will consider that in the next message. But what I want you to remember now is the importance of doing and teaching the least of God's commandments. Commandment keeping which glorifies God does not think of any of His commandments in terms of greatest or least. It considers all of His commandments as important.

The sincere Christian concerns himself, or herself, with all the little details of what it will mean to keep all of His commandments to the glory of God. They will pray about how they can keep God's commandments. Psalm 119, verse 5 says – "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" "Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments. They will also think of the details of their obedience to God in relation to the thoughts of their hearts. Negatively, that will mean putting sin to death. Romans chapter 8, verse 13 – "But if you by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

That is, you will live forever because you really had dealings with God over the heart sins in your life, not just the outward deeds of the flesh that you did. The thoughts and motions of your heart are the source of all that you do with your body. Proverbs chapter 4, verse 23 says – Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. And then, positively, you will heed the commandment of Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2 – "I beseech you therefore, brethren,

by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service.” “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

And then, let’s remember in closing, that Psalm 119, verses 97-100 are not just for Old Testament believers, but for us New Testament Christians today. “Oh, how I love Your law!” “It is my meditation all the day.” “You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me.” “I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.” “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.”