

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRED FOR HEAVEN
MATTHEW 5:17-20**

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Introduction

The prevailing attitude that the average religious Jew had during the time of Christ was that good living and good works combined to guarantee one salvation.

There are a lot of people today who believe that **if people are generally good and do good things for others** in this life, that they can earn a place in Heaven when they die.

There may be even some in this room today who believe this same way. Let me ask you a question. **If what you are counting on to save your soul is wrong, wouldn't you want to know it?** In other words, **if what you are trusting to save you can't save you, wouldn't you want to know?** Anyone in his or her right mind would!

In verse 20, Jesus says that **men have to possess a certain level of righteousness before they can hope to be saved.**

What kind of righteousness will get you in to heaven? My purpose in preaching this sermon today is to challenge you to look closely at your relationship with God so that you might know if you are truly on your way to heaven or if you have bought in to the lies of the devil.

My prayer is that the Holy Ghost will speak to hearts today so that each person here today can know where they stand with the Lord!

**I. GOD'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS GREATER THAN THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES!
(Matthew 5:20)**

A. Who Were The Scribes?

In N.T. times scribes were interpreters and teachers of the law. These were men who spent enough time in the O.T. Scriptures that they should have had vast knowledge of the coming Messiah and should have recognized Him, but they didn't!

B. Who Were The Pharisees?

1. These were a Jewish religious sect in Jesus' day which had made the O.T. law into an unreasonable and unscriptural system of legalism and ignored the spiritual meaning God had intended them to receive.

2. Some Of The Customs of the Pharisees were:

- a. Strict obedience to the Law.
- b. Tithing.
- c. Obsessed with outer cleanliness
(Ill. Elaborate washing, social separation, etc.)

3. The Scribes and the Pharisees lived to a higher outward standard than most of us! (Luke 18:10-14)
Matthew 23:23—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

God says that we must exceed this level of righteousness to be allowed access into Heaven!

C. Is it possible to look good and righteous on the outside and be absolutely defiled inwardly? (Matthew 23:23-28)

e.g. When I was a boy growing up we had to help mama with the spring cleaning. I remember helping her clean windows. I was cleaning the outside of the glass and I couldn't get this spot off. The problem was that the spot was on the inside.

D. If good works and religious ritual can produce a religious exterior, but not a righteous interior, then what is Jesus talking about?

1. Just what is God's standard for admission into Heaven anyway?
2. Absolute Perfection!

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The only hope that any one of us has of ever entering Heaven on our own account is to be as righteous and as holy as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

That is God's standard and it applies to all!
(Romans 10:1-5)

II. MAN FALLS SHORT OF GOD'S STANDARD!

**A. Man is declared to be a sinner by God!
(Romans 3:10-18, 23)**

Galatians 3:22—"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

B. The very best man can produce is flawed and corrupt!

Isaiah 64:6—"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

C. At our very best, we fall far short of God's standard – God's standard is His only begotten son, Jesus Christ!

Romans 3:23—"All have sinned"

The word "sinned" there means "to miss the mark!"
We have all violated God's Law and stand guilty before Him.

Isaiah 53:6—"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

James 2:10—"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

III. GOD HAS A SOLUTION FOR MAN'S SHORTCOMING!

A. The Bible Declares That God Knows The Depth And Extent Of Man's Fallen Nature!

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Psalm. 103:14—"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

It is God's grace and mercy that prevent us from being destroyed in His anger.

Lamentations 3:22-23—"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

B. God Knows Man Could Never Earn Salvation Or Ever Be Good Enough For Heaven. Therefore, He Made A Way Whereby Sinners Could Be Made Righteous And Meet God's High Standard!

C. God's Plan Is A Multiple Step Plan That Is Guaranteed To Bring You Into A State Of True Righteousness, Holiness And Perfect Standing Before God! His Plan Involves His Son Jesus Christ!

1. His plan is an old plan!

1 Peter 1:20—"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,"

2. His plan involved a virgin birth!

Why a virgin birth?

Romans 5:12—"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Hebrews 2:14—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

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3. **His plan involved a death!**
On a hillside called Mt. Calvary
Romans 5:8–“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 Peter 1:18-19--Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
4. **His plan involved a resurrection!**
Romans 4:25–“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”
5. **His plan involves the conviction of sin!**
John 16:8–“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”
6. **His plan involves the grace of God!**
Ephesians 2:8-9--“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Romans 5:20–“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”
7. **His plan involves faith apart from works!**
Romans 10:9-10; 13–“9That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

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- Acts 16:30b-31–“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*
8. **His plan involves total justification!**
1 Corinthians 6:9-11
 9. **His plan involves eternal life!**
John 10:28–“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

John 3:16–“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

1 Peter 1:5–“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
 10. **His plan involves an eternal Heavenly home!**
1 Peter 1:4–“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,”
 11. **His plan involves an ironclad guarantee!**
Hebrews 7:25–“5Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Hebrews 13:5–“..for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

I’m not holding on to Him, He is holding on to me!

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- D. Man is not righteous, and could never earn righteousness. However, by simple faith in Jesus Christ, God declares us righteous! (Romans 4:18-25)**
- E. Salvation is simple! It is just taking God at His Word and trusting Christ and His finished work on the cross as payment for your sins. Have you done this?**
You may say, *“That is just too easy.”*

e.g. When cake mix first came out it wouldn't sell, because all you had to do was add water. People thought it was too easy. They changed the directions to add water and an egg and it sold like hot cakes!

People like to do something. Salvation, however, does not need your input! The job is finished, all you have to do is trust the One Who finished it for you!

Conclusion

The Bible makes it plain that one day, all men are going to face Almighty God. When that day comes, you have only 2 choices as to how you will be dressed. **1. You can appear in the rags of your own filthy righteousness and hear Him say, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."** Or, **2. You can appear in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."**

Which will it be for you?

How are you attired today, spiritually speaking?

If you are still in the rags of your sins, you are unfit to stand before God!
You can trade those rags in for the robe of Christ's righteousness today!

Please know that Jesus loves you and will gladly save you right now, if you will only come to Him. Will you do it today?