

J.R. Miller:

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the kingdom of Heaven!" Matthew 5:20

In place of abolishing or destroying the law Jesus put new meaning into it. As He expounded it, it went far more deeply into people's lives, than by the religionists of His time had understood to go. They had taught that a rigid external obedience was required; but Jesus told them that if this were all they had, they could not enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Instead of lowering the requirements of the divine law He elevated them and gave them a new meaning. He said the righteousness of His followers must be a great deal better than that of the average professors of religion in His day. They had a sound creed, and were punctilious in the observance of the ten thousand minute rules about ceremony, dress, and devout manners; but their lives were full of hardness, pride, selfishness, and hypocrisies!

Jesus said that unless His disciples had a better righteousness than these orthodox Jews had they would never get into the family of God. The only righteousness that will be accepted by Christ is that which has its origin in the heart, and then produces obedience and holiness in all the life.

We ought to apply this truth very closely. Uniting with the Church, does not make one a Christian. The careful observance of all the ordinances and rules of the Church, does not make one a Christian. There must be faith, love, dutiful obedience, submission. Christ demands in His followers a high standard of morality. We are not saved by Christ's righteousness, in the sense that we need no imparted righteousness of our own. In place of mere external and formal obedience the law is written on the heart of the true believer, and he obeys it from within. We should strive to make our obedience so deep and so loyal that our lives will reflect in every feature the radiancy of Christ!