

# THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ASSIMILATED

Matthew 15:15-20

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**Proposition:** The knowledge of God is the greatest danger to man, unless it is assimilated (practiced) in our lives to the glory of God.

**Key Verse: Matthew 5:20** “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”

## I believed, therefore have I spoken (Psalms 116:10)

How quick we speak that which we do not really believe! There is a great temptation in our lives, as we understand the Bible, to be satisfied with superficial knowledge without a real faith in the doctrine. It is very easy to know something, but it is an entirely different thing to possess it, and to be possessed by it. We must not imagine that we have correctly understood God’s Word, unless through the Holy Spirit, we have had such a taste of it, that we can say that we have experienced it. **It is out of that experience of faith that our words must come.** The experience of faith leads to words, which in turn lead to actions.

Imagine this building were on fire. Your belief would lead you to a very swift action, and all the while you would be shouting “Fire, fire, fire!!” This is what the Psalmist speaks of here. *He believes, therefore he speaks.* It is so easy to speak about God, isn’t it? But the one who knows God does not just speak of the truth; he believes the truth and therefore assimilates it in his life.

## What is the Assimilation of Truth?

When someone assimilates the truth, or practices what is true, we would call that righteousness, or doing what is right. When a person reads the Bible, he sees it says, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel!” When he goes to his friend and declares Christ to him, then that man is a righteous man. He is practicing the truth and doing what is right. Now if I say I agree with you, and that the Bible is true, and I do not go and tell my neighbor of Christ, my doctrine may be correct, but I am unrighteous because I am not living the truth. We can say that about every doctrine in the Bible. Christ says to us, “**If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it**” (John 14:14). *But do we pray?*

God says of the righteous man, that “**his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night**” (Psalms 1:2). *But do we saturate ourselves in God’s word? Are we practicing the truth?*

## The Danger of Hearing and Not Doing

The danger in the study of doctrine and of God is that we will be quick to hear the Word of God, and quick to know it, and acknowledge it, but that we fall short in embracing it and doing it. Let us look at some verses.

• **James 1:22** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

• **1 John 3:18** My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

For instance, **we say** that we believe that God is in control. We agree with it. We believe it, we say. We can tell you of many verses in the Bible where it is found.

**We say** that he would be a fool who did not believe that God is in control. But at the same time, when tragedy comes, we worry.

When interruptions come, we fret and get angry.

When we are accused falsely, there is bitterness against that person.

We say that God is in control, but we do not truly believe it in our lives.

Or we say that God is good. We can teach a class on the goodness of God, but when something bad happens, we doubt God's goodness, and wonder why he would allow it to happen.

We say that God answers prayer, but we hardly find ourselves praying at all.

We say that we should meditate in God's Word, but though we know God's Word, we find ourselves filling ourselves with the media of the world. We know the news each day, and we know all the details of the happenings here, and perhaps around the world, but can we quote the Ten Commandments? Can we say the Beatitudes?

And so we say that we love God's Word, but we do not really love it, we merely know it, and our knowledge of it is superficial. **We show ourselves to be "hearers only."**

**What all this superficial knowledge does is to inoculate us against the truth.** We hear something over and over again without the thrill of being filled with the Spirit, and instead we reject the Spirit's working in our heart, and we rationalize that it is enough to simply hear the Word.

We begin to find that God's Word is dull and powerless and familiar. It does not shock us any more to read it. It is no longer a thrill and delight, but drudgery and a dry duty.

**The Spirit is quenched, and we become knowledgeable robots with superficial lives.**

In light of all this, let me repeat my proposition before we look at our text.

**Proposition: The knowledge of God is the greatest danger to man, unless it is assimilated (practiced) in our lives to the glory of God.**

Now let us come to our text in **Matthew chapter 5**. Here the Lord speaks to his followers and compares a superficial outward showy righteousness to a righteousness that is born out of a deep conviction and belief that God is true and is demonstrated in a life that reflects the glory of God. Let us read our text:

## MATTHEW 5:16-20

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

## Superficial “Righteousness”

In verse 20 Christ demands that true righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees who were the great religious leaders of the time. And so, let us look at their righteousness.

We will find that it is very outward and superficial. First we shall see that . . .

**1. Superficial righteousness is in words only.** It was nothing to the Pharisees if their lives contradicted their words. The words were all that mattered. Or to put it another way, as long as their doctrine was fundamentally correct, nothing else mattered. Look at the words of Christ to them: **Matthew 15:7-9** “Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, **8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**”

For the person who is superficially righteous, God’s words are not loved in the heart. They are simply outwardly accepted to make themselves look good and puff them up with pride and haughtiness. **Words are easy. Spiritual lives are from God. We also see that . . .**

**2. Superficial righteousness keeps the letter of the law, but inwardly there is no love of the truth.** There is a temptation to do that which is right in the sight of men. If all men say we are righteous, then we must be righteous! Outward righteousness alone pleases men, but falls far short of pleasing God. Look at Christ’s words again: **Matthew 23:27** “**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.**”

God doesn’t care about our beautiful lives if the righteousness is humanly manufactured. He is offended by that charade of righteousness. That kind of life mocks God. In another place we find these Words of Christ applied to us as Christians: **2 Corinthians 3:6** “[Christ] **also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.**”

Paul says, we are not like the Pharisees who preach the old letter of the law, but our law is higher, it is spiritual. Christ demonstrated this kind of righteousness in His Sermon on the Mount in **Matthews 5-7**. There we find the spirit of the law in several principles. For instance: **It’s not enough simply not to kill.** You must not even hate your brother. And if you call him names such as “Raca” (which means empty-head), or “fool,” you are in danger of the fires of hell. How many times have we said in our heart “That fellow is absolutely stupid!” We probably wouldn’t say it out loud, but it shows us our superficial righteousness.

**In another place Christ says that it is not enough to keep ourselves clean from adultery,** but we must not even think an unclean thought or look upon a woman to lust after her. I remember hearing so many times in the world, “Look, but don’t touch.” My friend if that is your philosophy, it has come from the devil.

Anyone that would dishonor a woman in his mind, is a fornicator, a man with filthy hands, and a man who doesn’t know the true righteousness of God that begins with the heart.

**Christ says, “It’s not enough to love your neighbor, but you must love your enemies too.”** Now, wait a minute that is impossible, you say.

**Christ says, we must go far beyond a human righteousness; we must possess, or rather, be possessed by God’s righteousness.** It is a righteousness that comes from the work of regeneration in the heart. It is a righteousness that derives its power from heaven. It cannot be manufactured.

Humanly manufactured righteousness may seem profitable to gain the praises of men, but in reality, it cannot profit, but in fact, it KILLS!

Did you see that in **2 Corinthians 3:6**? **“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”** Righteousness that says, “Well, I’m not an adulterer, or a murderer. I love my wife and my family. I’m not living in outward rebellion against God. I don’t have any tattoos or paint my hair strange colors. In fact, I am pretty good to my neighbor. I go to church every Sunday. I don’t swear, and I only raise my voice when someone is in danger. I MUST be ok!”

Did you notice something about this righteousness? It is man-centered. I, I, I, I, I! I do this; I don’t do this! This kind of righteousness kills! **Our righteousness must exceed this. Our righteousness must love enemies,** must love God with heart, soul, and mind, and must seek God with a pure heart twenty-four hours a day, and seven days a week.

But you say, THAT’S IMPOSSIBLE. That is just the point. Superficial righteousness is easy! Anyone can put on that kind of righteousness, and that brings us to our final point.

**3. Superficial righteousness can be put on outwardly.** It IS easy, but true righteousness is a supernatural working of God in the inward part of the man which reflects the glory of God in the outward life.

**Superficial righteousness is humanly achievable, but true righteousness is impossible for man.**

It cannot be put on, but must sprout up from within by the Spirit of God.

It is something that God does in the depth of the heart and is lived out in conviction in the life, even when men are not looking.

It can be found when no one is around but God.

Here is a question that will demonstrate what kind of righteousness you have: What do you do when no one is around? If you knew you could get away with anything from a human standpoint, what would you do? This will vividly show you what kind of righteousness you have.

True righteousness will drive you to choose to seek God and love Him when you could do anything you wanted to do.

Look at our text again. **Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

But, in contrast, **look at verse 16.**

• **Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

True righteousness is fervently addicted to God's glory. When our light shines before men, it is not an act of man, but a reflection of God. It is obvious that it is a reflection of God, not an act of man. People don't give glory to the man; they give glory to God.

## Conclusion

Now this is how we must live our lives. We must be addicted to the glory of God! We are to let our light shine before men! Next week we will see the very character and nature of this light, but until then, don't be fooled by superficial righteousness, **let God possess your soul, and live in such a way that shows you believe this book.** Let us be addicted to glory of God in our lives!

By the time Ted arrived at the football game, the first quarter was almost over. "Why are you so late?" his friend asked. I had to toss a coin to decide between going to church and coming to the game." "How long could that have taken you?" "Well, I had to toss it 14 times."

Imagine yourself walking along The High street of life and each of the shops front something to entice you in: The Materialism shop offers you all the creature comforts you could ever want, but they must be returned, left right where they are when you come to the end of the street.

There are many different kinds of relationship shops that you may hop in and out of, but they may also throw you out at a moments notice and each one may leave its own individual scar.

Then there is the religious shop which will cause you to appear to have found an element of respectability but will tie you up in knots with the contractual complexities.

And then there is a rather straight and narrow shop and it does not appear to have nearly as many customers as the others, but it keeps all it's promises and will attend to your every need even though what is on offer remains simple and has never changed with the latest fashions. It will supply all that is required for to pass on from the High street of Life to the Road of Eternal life.

Each shop is a voice calling to you. Which will you listen to?

An assembly line worker at Chrysler was picked for jury duty, but asked the judge to excuse him. "This is a very busy time at the plant, Your Honor, and I need to be there."

"Oh, I see," the judge said. "You're one of those folks who think you're indispensable, that Chrysler can't get along without you."

"No, sir, not at all," the worker replied. "I know they can do just fine without me, but I don't want them to find that out."

"Excused," the judge said.