

**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES**  
**SETTING THE STAGE - II**  
**Text: Matthew 5:17-20**

**Key Word:** Stage

**Key Thought:** Living for Jesus Is a **Stage Performance** (Not a **Motion Picture** that can be reenacted to remove the mistakes). Our “Performance” Includes Maturing into God’s Unchangeable Standards.

Last week I stated that it seems like there is a great deal of difference in the Church as to what is acceptable before God and what is not admissible. **We seem to often be reading from a different script. Unfortunately, we judge others by what we believe is right. It has brought a great deal of unnecessary arguments and division into the church.**

What is Lawful today? Are we breaking God’s Law today? **Can we say we are obedient if we don’t truly understand what we are suppose to obey?** Before citing 5 examples of hypocrisy, Jesus sets the stage in order for His disciples to clearly understand their role in the stage set to enact out kingdom living.

**What Parts of the Stage Play Did Jesus Clearly Set in Place?**

**I. THE COMPONENTS OF THE SCRIPT (Matthew 5:17,18)**

**II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (Matthew 5:19)**

**III. THE COST OF THE PRODUCTION (Matthew 5:20)**

**I. THE COMPONENTS OF THE SCRIPT (Matthew 5:17,18)**

Many of us in this place today have been taught that the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets were of no use because the people could never attain to their expectations. Many see it almost as an evil thing that came upon the children of Israel. Yet I see it differently.

God was the Author of the Mosaic Law. It was another of His perfect gifts that came from heaven. It was never intended to serve as a trap to catch the people in their wrongdoings. **It was rather to be a standard that was set extremely high so the people could see their need of God.** It complimented everything before it (the promise of Abraham) as well as everything after it (grace through Jesus Christ).

*“What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.*

*19. What, then, was the purpose of the law? **It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.***

*21. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! **For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.**”*

*Galatians 3:17,19,21*

## I. THE COMPONENTS OF THE SCRIPT (Matthew 5:17,18) (Contd.)

**The wonderful truths found in the Scriptures declare that God didn't have to rewrite the script as the drama of life took place for all to see. It was simply another component of the script that came forth.** We could say that the Bible set the script before us in different parts of the whole drama. **It was like Act 1, Act 2, Act 3 etc.**

I for one am very thankful that God fulfills His plan in bite size chunks. None of us could digest the whole thing at one time. His plan makes plenty of sense when we sit back and evaluate it with all the facts that are set before us. In fact, we are very blessed to be living in the generation that we are. **We have the opportunity of reading almost the entire script.** The closing curtain is soon to take place **in order to set the stage for the eternal drama** that we will be ushered into.

So once again the components of the script have not been replaced. They have simply fulfilled their purpose in leading us onto the next important step in the process of life's drama. **We all live our life in stages or ages.** None of us could handle it all at once.

“The seven ages of man: spills, drills, thrills, bills, ills, pills, wills.”

Richard J. Needham

*“The Wit and Wisdom of Richard Needham”*

“If I had my whole life to live over again, I don't think I'd have the strength.”

Flip Wilson

God **understands** what we can **withstand**. He is **gracious enough to only give us what we are prepared to accept without negating what He has already done.** That's God!

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**”*

*18. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”*

*Matthew 5:17,18*

## II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (Matthew 5:19)

Once we understand the **Components of the Script** we can either decide to follow it or attempt to write our own script.

### A. A Law Breaker -

*“Anyone who breaks (**relaxes - RSV**) one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,”*

*Matthew 5:19a*

There will always be a group of people who are deceived into believing that all things are acceptable before God. These kinds never trouble themselves with outward sin or with inward holiness. They try to walk on the fence and by doing so they trespass against God. **Nothing SEEMS TO BOTHER THEM because they don't want to be bothered. By attempting to discard it, they actually keep it in the forefront of their daily thought patterns. They've never taken the time to look into the benefits of the Law before removing its influence from their lives.** The most important aspect of the LAW is to set a standard of holiness which cannot be fulfilled by anything less than God's righteousness

“The law is the light that reveals how dirty the room is, not the broom that sweeps it clean.”

Dr. Phil Williams  
“DTS”  
1976

**Another type of lawbreaker is one who teaches that we ONLY need to believe.** They find all the commandments of God as a burden for anyone who now walks in the Spirit. **It is a betrayal of God's Love to attempt to lighten His Law in a manner that destroys it in the pretence that we are advancing the kingdom of God.** God set many Laws into place because He knew that mankind has a heart that is deceitfully wicked and easily able to fall into sin.

“According to a 3rd century rabbi, Moses gave 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands. David reduced them to 11 in Psalm 15. Isaiah made them 6 (Isaiah 33:14, 15). Micah 6:8 binds them into 3 commands. Habbakuk reduces them all to one great statement: *‘The just shall live by faith.’*”

Source Unknown

## II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (Matthew 5:19) (Contd.)

### B. A Law Keeper

True faith in God offers the receiver the power needed to overcome sin and live a life of peace before God. **There will be power to live . . . power to serve . . . power to love . . . power to teach by actions not simply by words . . . power to patiently wait upon the Lord.**

*“but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great (highly esteemed) in the kingdom of heaven.”*

*Matthew 5:19b*

One of the facts of the Bible that we often find hard to accept is that there will be varying degrees of blessing and reward in the kingdom of heaven. It makes us think that we can earn points with God simply by doing good. Yet God not only looks at what we do but also why we do it. **Are we looking for recognition and reward or are we serving out of a humble and contrite heart?**

One thing is for sure. **God is neither a respecter of persons nor a debtor of any person.** God loves to reward those who are faithful in both their heart and their service. He grants us the grace and love to continually do what is right. **Dr. Ironside gives a vivid illustration of the difference between Law and Grace.**

**\*\*\*** He told of a school for young First nation men and women, who travelled to a home in Oakland, California, from one of the tribes in northern Arizona. This particular one was a Navajo young man of unusually keen intelligence. One Sunday evening, he went to a young people's meeting. They were talking about the epistle to the Galatians, and the special subject was law and grace. They were not very clear about it, and finally one turned to the young Navajo and said,  
*"I wonder whether our Indian friend has anything to say about this."*

He rose to his feet and said, *"Well, my friends, **I have been listening very carefully, because I am here to learn all I can in order to take it back to my people.** I do not understand all that you are talking about, and I do not think you do yourselves. But concerning this law and grace business, let me see if I can make it clear. I think it is like this.*

*(Contd.)*

## II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (Matthew 5:19) (Contd.)

### B. A Law Keeper (Contd.)

\*\*\* When Mr. Ironside brought me from my home we took the longest railroad journey I ever took. We got out at Barstow, and there I saw the most beautiful railroad station and hotel I have ever seen. I walked all around and saw at one end a sign, '**Do not spit here.**' I looked at that sign and then looked down at the ground and saw many had spitted there, and before I think what I am doing I have spitted myself. Isn't that strange when the sign say, 'Do not spit here'?

"I come to Oakland and go to the home of the lady who invited me to dinner today and I am in the nicest home I have been in. Such beautiful furniture and carpets, I hate to step on them. I sank into a comfortable chair, and the lady said, 'Now, John, you sit there while I go out and see whether the maid has dinner ready.' I look around at the beautiful pictures, at the grand piano, and I walk all around those rooms. I am looking for a sign; and the sign I am looking for is, '**Do not spit here,**' but I look around those two beautiful drawing rooms, and cannot find a sign like this. I think '**What a pity when this is such a beautiful home to have people spitting all over it -- too bad they don't put up a sign!**'

So I look all over that carpet, but cannot find that anybody have spitted there. What a weird thing! Where the sign says, '**Do not spit,**' a lot of people spitted. Where there was no sign at all, in that beautiful home, nobody spitted. Now I understand! **That sign is law, but inside the home it is grace. They love their beautiful home, and they want to keep it clean. They do not need a sign to tell them so. I think that explains the law and grace business.**" \*\*\*

H. A. Ironside  
"Illustrations of Bible Truth"  
Moody Press  
1945, pp. 40-42

### III. THE COST OF THE PRODUCTION (Matthew 5:20)

Just in case anyone may think that this it is easy to walk in the grace of God let me close with **The Cost of Production**. There is no doubt about it that it will cost us to be involved in the drama of life that God chooses us to act in.

A little girl asked,

*'If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?'*

The answer is YES. And the more that God lives through our lives, the higher the cost will become that we need to be willing to pay.

*"Except our righteousness shall exceed" – not be different from but "exceed;" that is, we have to be all they (the Pharisees) are and infinitely more! **We have to be right in our external behaviour, but we have to be as right, and "righter," in our internal behaviour.** We have to be right in our words and actions, but we have to be as right in our thoughts and feelings. We have to be right according to the conventions of the society of godly people, but we have also to be right in conscience toward God."*

Oswald Chambers  
*"101 Days in the Gospels with Oswald Chambers"*  
Compiled by James R. Adair and Harry Verploegh  
Victors Books a Division of Scripture Press  
p. 92

This was not an easy task to perform. The Pharisees received their name from a Hebrew word which signified that they were to **separate or divide themselves from others**. They became **exact in their religious behaviour**. They became **zealous of obedience to the Law**. They even tithed on their herbs and spices. **The Scribes were considered as the wisest while the Pharisees were considered to be the holiest of all men.**

**A. Fasting** - They fasted every Monday (remembering Moses receiving the tablets of stone) and Thursday (commemorating when Moses cast them from his hand). They didn't eat until the evening sacrifice began at 3:00 P.m.

**B. Tithing** - They gave a tenth of their whole earnings every year plus a tenth of any increase. The stricter ones also gave an additional tenth to the poor through alms giving.

### III. THE COST OF THE PRODUCTION (Matthew 5:20) (Contd.)

**C. Study of Scriptures** - They devoted their lives to studying the Word of God and teaching it to others. They set standards that were well above what most people were prepared to live by.

“As they would have known, until a person finds that he has fallen below the standard at which he is aiming, he can see no need for repentance, that stage so necessary for entering the kingdom of heaven. The higher the standard aimed at, the easier it is to fall below it; and the greater the depth to which the person can fall. **People content with a low standard find little or nothing of which to repent, because they rarely fall below thence the tendency to make life easy by setting the standard low.** Jesus called upon people to repent, it was not for having fallen below the accepted standard of righteousness, but that set by himself.”

Thomas Lintill Aborn  
“*The Lectures of St. Matthew*”  
Moorehouse Publishing Company  
1932, p. 92

#### What Parts of the Stage Play Did Jesus Clearly Set in Place?

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##### II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (Matthew 5:19)

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Now that this stage is set, we can continue on with the five examples of hypocrisy that Jesus addresses.

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Date: Jan 26/25

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: The Potter's Hand

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**II. THE CAST OF THE ACTORS (5:19)**

**A. A Law Breaker** - *Psalm 15; Isaiah 33:14,15; Micah 6:8; Habbakuk 2:4*

**B. A Law Keeper**

**III. THE COST OF THE PRODUCTION (5:20)**

**A. Fasting** -

**B. Tithing** -

**C. Study of Scriptures** -