

# PERFECTION

BY

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# PERFECTION

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*“Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.” 1 Kings 8:61.*

God in his inspired word, advocates and speaks highly in favor of perfection; many people in their pernicious and blinded ways, speak evil of this important teaching, find fault with it and try to discard it. To discard perfection is to discard a large portion of God's word. Let us notice a few questions in connection with the text at hand.

1. What is the meaning of the word “perfect” which is mentioned in the text? It is

not the perfection of God; that is absolute and an application of such to human beings is absurd. By absolute perfection we mean that which knows all things, and has power to do all things. Such perfection belongs alone to God. It is not the perfection of angels; they have perfect environment; their growth and promotion in holiness is absolutely unhindered. It is not the perfection of Adam; Adam had perfect perception. Since the fall of man the mind has been so befogged by sin that man has never been able to reach that perfection of perception which Adam possessed though he may be soundly converted and thoroughly sanctified. Consequently various methods of systematic study are found in the common school, high schools, Bible Institutes, colleges, univer-

sities and theological seminaries. By the use of these various methods of systematic study the perception is developed to whatever possible degree the individual reaches.

What then does the word "perfect" mean as used in our text? In our imperfect environment, with our imperfect perception and in our finite circumstances there is an experience in the grace of God into which Jesus will lead every yielded soul, and that experience is termed *Christian Perfection*. This, however, does not mean the perfection of the intellect, it does not mean the perfection of the body nor does it mean the perfection of the act. The text was uttered by Solomon immediately following his dedicatory prayer at the temple. He stood before that great congregation with a heart

that longed to see all the people of Israel so live that they might show to all the nations about them that the God whom they were serving was the true and living God. Since the Commandments were given to them: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might," "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and since God is love, what better way could they choose to thus prove him to be God than to be filled with that which is the very nature of God? The word "perfect" in this passage of Scripture implies whole-heartedness and single-mindedness toward God.

If those Israelites to whom Solomon spoke were followers of God, and yet were exhorted to be wholehearted for God, it



stands to reason that a part of their heart was not serving God. This proves that they had both a spiritual heart and a carnal heart. The exhortation having implied whole-heartedness, we may readily see that, with carnality taken out of their hearts, spirituality would reign supreme. If they were exhorted to be single-minded toward God, they evidently must have been double-minded. This proves that they were in possession of both the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. The plea was, "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God". In order that this exhortation might be obeyed, there must of necessity be a cleansing process put into action, that the carnal heart and the carnal mind be eradicated. Then and only then would it be possible for them to love the

Lord with all their heart, and their neighbors as themselves. Solomon saw that if his people were filled with divine love they could then walk in his statutes, keep his commandments and thus prove God to be the only true God. Jesus had the same burden for his disciples when he prayed that wonderful prayer of intercession recorded in John 17. Jesus saw that in their carnal state they would be unable to magnify God and carry on his work in the world. So he prayed that they might be sanctified in order that their love might be perfected. When they were converted, they received divine love but it was so hindered by the presence of carnality that Jesus wanted them to be cleansed from that inbred sin that divine love might have full sway in the heart. When this is done, the

sanctified soul can then love his enemies, bless them that persecute him, pray for them which despitefully use him.

But someone may say, "Shall we love the wicked ways of our enemies and neighbors?" Shall we love their sin? Shall we love their evil habits?" No! Absolutely not. Far from such is the meaning of the term "perfect love." When he, who is love, hates sin and all its pollution, shall not we, who have been its victims, have a similar hatred for the same? It is not a question of human likings, or human desires. No, not even a question of human love. In the human sense of the word, a mother can have the deepest kind of love for her children, and at the same time have as deep hatred for a neighbor. Therefore the term has a much deeper mean-

ing. The term carries with it the idea of having the heart cleansed perfectly from all sin, in order that the divine love, which was given to the individual at conversion, may have full right of way and thus be perfected. Solomon's command was, "Let your heart therefore be perfect before the Lord our God." Having viewed the term from several angles it is altogether fitting that we conclude that the meaning of the term in the text is that of *perfect love*. Love toward God and man. Love! The greatest thing in the world. The thing that never faileth. Thank God for perfect love!

II. How may we obtain this perfect love? There are four outstanding conditions to be met before one can clearly and conscientiously come into possession of this blessed ex-

perience. First, he must acknowledge the presence of inbred sin. Listen to Isaiah: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Notice, Isaiah seemed never to have a real vision of God until Uzziah died. Doubtless his high standing before the king kept him from launching out into the deep for God. If every King Uzziah in the world today were really dead, Christianity would have in her possession some of the most wonderful spiritual giants the world has ever known. Many men of high intellect and great influ-

ence will not be out and out for Jesus because there is somewhere in their pathway an Uzziah of whom they are afraid. When Isaiah's great hindrance was gone, then he caught a real vision of God in all his holiness. Isaiah realized that down in his heart there was something that was causing his lips to be unclean, and he acknowledged the fact before God. Paul said, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Although Paul lived in another dispensation altogether, he realized that inbred sin had not changed one particle, and he too acknowledged the fact before God.

Second, we must assent to its removal. It is one thing to acknowledge inbred sin within our beings, but it is altogether another proposition to be willing to have the thing

removed. In these days of apostasy there seems to be a popular and easy method of evading the real issue by testifying to the fact that "we are weak unworthy servants." "I'm serving the Lord in my own weak way." "I'm a poor weak worm of the dust." These may be all true but back of it all lies the fact that they are not willing to pay the price and have the thing that makes all these testimonies true, taken out or eradicated. A noted evangelist tells of an incident which happened under his ministry while he was in a pastorate. One of his members had a regular habit of testifying to the fact that he was a poor weak worm of the dust and that he was serving the Lord in his own weak way, and that he was such an unworthy servant. One evening he came to the prayer meeting

and gave in his usual testimony. The following week he was splitting wood out in the back yard on his wood pile and a neighbor came to him and began talking. It seemed that trouble had been brewing for some time. One word brought on another until the old man dropped his axe, rolled up his sleeves, doubled up his fists and bristled up to his neighbor and dared him across the wagon tongue, saying that he could lick his weight in wild cats. The next week he went to prayer meeting with his same old "weak worm" testimony. I don't wonder at it at all. There was only one mistake which the old man had made, said the evangelist, both of his testimonies were in the wrong place. If he had been a weak worm of the dust on the wood-pile and a wild cat



at the prayer-meeting his testimony would have been of much more value. Too many let the victory leak out of their lives on the wood pile of temptation and then come to the house of God with a "weak worm" testimony. May God help us to awaken from our drowsy, weak, blind ways. There is but one remedy for sin in the heart and that is to assent to its removal.

Third, we must ask the Holy Ghost to come in. David cried out in tones of agony: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." David saw his need of the Holy Ghost and asked God to let him come into his heart. Jesus said in his prayer for his disciples, "I pray for them". Who? Converted disciples, of course. The idea of some of our so-called preachers

of the gospel telling us that the disciples were never converted until the day of Pentecost! To say such a thing is to say that Jesus had a group of selected sinners following him. The very thought of such a thing is ridiculous. They were converted but in viewing the responsibility which would rest upon his disciples, of carrying the gospel to a lost world, Jesus saw that in their carnal state without the Holy Ghost they would never endure the hardships, afflictions, persecutions, adversities and mockings which from a Christ-rejecting world would most certainly come. Seeing this condition Jesus prayed earnestly, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." If those men of God who actually lived and walked with Jesus in person, needed the Holy Ghost in

their lives, how much more in this day and age of advanced wiles we need the selfsame Spirit!

Fourth and finally, we must accept the Holy Ghost. Isaiah said, "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs, from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Two things are worth noting which happened to Isaiah after he accepted the Holy Ghost. First, the cure was applied to the exact spot of confessed uncleanness, his lips. Second, the thing that had clogged

his hearing apparatus was removed and he *heard* the voice of the Lord. More people would be called into special work for the Lord if their hearing apparatus were not clogged with carnality. David cried out victoriously, "O God, my heart is fixed." If more people had fixed hearts, less people would be blown about by every wind of doctrine. Paul says so peacefully, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Listen to the one hundred twenty on the day of Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And

suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." There is a time to pray and a time to wait. This group had "prayed through" and were "sitting". They had gotten rid of everything that would prevent the Spirit's entrance into their hearts. In God's own time he sent the desired answer, and they all with receptive hearts gladly accepted the Holy Ghost.

III. What does this perfect love do for the individual? It takes out the fruits of the flesh, some of which are hatred, malice,

jealousy, envy, strife, wrath, uncleanness, adultery, back-biting, etc. It places within the soul the fruits of the Spirit, some of which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, temperance, etc. It takes out grumblings and puts in praising. It takes out grudge and puts in forgiveness. It gives the individual the word, spirit and ministry of reconciliation. A person who claims to be converted, and yet walks around with a drooped head, until the nose and lips hang down like three icicles on a woodshed in January, and who merely grunts when spoken to is in great need of the Holy Ghost.

The story is told of a man who made his first trip on an ocean vessel. The vessel left the harbor and launched out into the deep.

The captain said to this man, "Well, how do you feel to-day?" "Fine, fine!" was the answer. The next day the captain came to him and asked him how he was feeling again. The man trying to hide the sea-sickness which had begun to fasten itself upon him, said not so briskly this time, "Fine." The next day the captain came to him again. By this time the ham and eggs and potatoes had begun to play "ring around rosy" very freely in the man's stomach. The captain asked again how he felt. Trying his best to cover his awful seasickness, but his drooping eyelids giving him away, he answered, "Fine." The fourth day his stomach was almost a heaving sea. The captain came again to the man whose face was puckered, eyelids half-closed and whose form was somewhat stoop-

ed. "How are you feeling today, brother?" With every fibre of his being strained to try to cover up his terrible feeling inside, he answered once more, "Fine." He could hold it no longer; he staggered to the side of the boat and gave way to his feelings. This is far from being a sweet experience through which to pass. A great many professors of religion are like this man. A good Holy Ghost filled person filled to overflowing walks up to a luke-warm professor and says, "Well, bless the Lord, how are you feeling?" Trying to "put on" some fruits of the Spirit, he answers, "Fine." At the same time he is so full of envy, jealousy, backsliding, etc, that if he would do what he feels like doing he would make his way to a mourner's bench and empty out those sickening things and



then confess that he had been "putting on" instead of really possessing the fruits of the Spirit.

IV. How may we keep perfect love? My dear reader, if you are looking for an experience of holiness, which will enable you, through the sanctification of the Spirit, to be delivered from all sin and wickedness to the extent that you can stop doing personal work for Jesus, that you can quit praying, that you can cease testifying, and to the extent that you can sit down in the rocking-chair of self-complacency, and still be kept the rest of your life, you might just as well pack up your little grip and go back to the garlic and onions of "old Egypt" and stay there, because you will find no such an experience in the catalogue of God's precious

promises for you. The very fact that we are told to put on the whole armour of God infers that there is a battle to face. But, Glory be to Jesus forever! along with every battle, as long as we stay under the leadership of our Captain who has never lost a battle, there is sure and complete victory promised. Hallelujah!

In speaking of holiness God tells us in Hebrews 12 to “follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” That word “follow” not only means to follow but it also carries with it the idea of *obtaining* that which we are following. Immediately following the text we read: “Looking diligently, lest any root of bitterness, springing up trouble *you*, and thereby *many* be defiled.” There is but one

way to keep this experience of perfect love, and that is to continually look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our *FAITH*, pray without ceasing and follow peace with all men and *holiness* without which no man shall see the Lord. As soon as we cease to look to Jesus, cease to pray, cease to follow peace with all men, cease to follow holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, cease to put up the shield of faith, and cease to keep on the whole armour of God, just that soon, roots of bitterness creep in one by one and the blessed Holy Ghost, the dove of peace, grieved at their presence takes his departure. So, dear reader, if you have failed of the grace of God in one or more of these things, we beg of you in the name of Jesus, do not continue in the same course, but turn

immediately, confess your fault, hasten to the place where you failed and tread on victoriously with "him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding great joy." Blessed be his name forever!

V. What is the difference between a perfect motive and a perfect act? There are two kinds of perfection advocated in God's holy Word. We receive one at the time of our sanctification and the other is that to which we ever aspire. The first is the perfection of love or the perfection of the motive and the other is the perfection of the act, the perfection of the saints, or the perfection of the man unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Saints profit by mistakes as do business men. An infant took suddenly

ill one night. The mother in her nervous anxiety to help the little sufferer rushed to the medicine cabinet, took out a bottle and hurriedly gave the babe a dose of what she supposed was medicine, but which proved to be rank poison. In a few short hours the infant lay cold in death. The mother was broken-hearted but the act was done and could not be undone. Her motive was as pure as heaven but the act was as imperfect as could be. The latter is that perfection to which we ever aspire. In these days of apostasy it behooves every child of God to examine very closely the tracts which are given out for distribution or they may prove to be as fatal to some babe in Christ as was the mother's supposed medicine.

One time when a child at home, I took my

father's scythe and attempted to show my little sister how successfully I could cut weeds. I drew back the scythe and made my first stroke. The scythe, being heavier than I had calculated, swung farther than I had intended it should, and before I knew what had happened, the blade had struck my sister's shin, cutting the flesh to the bone. I was terribly frightened but the deed was done and could not be undone. My motive was to show her how successfully I could mow weeds but the act was very imperfect. Some people are as unskilled in the use of Father's sword of the Spirit as I was with father's scythe.

The story is told of a young man who felt the call to preach and who attended school for a year. At the close of the year, the

young man returned home. He was making his way from the depot to his home, when an elderly gentleman asked the young man to ride with him. The young man accepted the invitation, threw his suitcase in the wagon-box and climbed into the seat with the driver. The young man felt impressed to speak to the elderly gentleman about his soul. Both being strangers to each other, he felt somewhat hesitant to do so. As the story goes they were passing through a heavily wooded district, and after some time of debating and struggling in his mind, he burst forth abruptly: "Are you ready to die?" The old man thought of his pocket-book and its contents the first thing, and thought perhaps the young man might be a robber for all he knew. As quickly as pos-

sible the old man tumbled from his seat and struck out through the woods, leaving the young, bewildered preacher-to-be in an embarrassing situation. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," and thus become skilled in the use of Father's sword of the Spirit.

Dear reader, if you do not know Jesus as your Saviour or Sanctifier, come and be saved and receive divine love from him, then come for a second benefit and have carnality taken out and thus perfect that divine love, then ever aspire to the perfection of every act, and when Jesus comes again he will give you a perfect mind and a perfect body fashioned after his own glorious body. **Blessed** be the name of Jesus forever!



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