

Be Perfect

Friends, how many times have you heard it said, “we’ll never be perfect until we meet the Lord?” Although I will be the first one to acknowledge this truth, may I add that this should not be our focus. We shouldn’t focus on our inability, but rather God’s grace and His power to those of us who believe. When Jesus told us, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*”(Matt 5:48), He didn’t qualify His statement with, “but don’t be too hard on yourself, because you know you can never do this.” Rather He held this out as an imperative command to those who would follow Him. To His Jewish disciples, this was nothing new, but simply the teaching of Moses and the prophets repeated. So then, we have this commandment, just like they did, except that now we have the unique power of the Holy Spirit living within us in order to obey His commandments. Indeed it is His Spirit within us that jealously envies our purity to God from the false gods of the world and the selfish desires of the sinful human nature. Is it not our great God given desire to be holy, even as He is Holy. Of course it is, and to this we labor and strive.

Col 1:28-29 - 28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. NIV

“Greater is He who is in us, than He that is in the world,” says John (1 John 4:4), and Paul affirms, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Rom 8:37) Friends, we have a very great and exceeding power to overcome the world and the flesh, and even Satan himself. As Paul tells us, “*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*” (Rom 16:20) But all of these things are done by the power of God living in us. Let me also add that we do not do this to merit salvation, but we do it in response to the wonderful salvation God has granted us in Christ.

What follows is a brief study from the scripture on this topic.

Genesis 17:1 - Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. NAS

Gen 17:1-3

2. What God requires that we should be to him. The covenant is mutual: Walk before me, and be thou perfect, that is, upright and sincere; for herein the covenant of grace is well-ordered that sincerity is our gospel perfection. Observe,

(1.) That to be religious is to walk before God in our integrity; it is to set God always before us, and to think, and speak, and act, in every thing, as those that are always under his eye. It is to have a constant regard to his word as our rule and to his glory as our end in all our actions, and to be continually in his fear. It is to be inward with him, in all the duties of religious worship, for in them particularly we walk before God (1 Sam 2:30), and to be entire for him, in all holy conversation. I know no religion but sincerity.

(2.) That upright walking with God is the condition of our interest in his all-sufficiency. If we neglect him, or dissemble with him, we forfeit the benefit and comfort of our relation to him.

(3.) A continual regard to God's all-sufficiency will have a great influence upon our upright walking with him.

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Leviticus 11:44 - 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

To be holy or perfect is the command of the Living God. It is not some thing to be taken lightly, but rather a **divine imperative**. God is calling us to forsake our sin and become righteous and holy as He is. People frequently say, “you’ll never be perfect”, but God says, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*” This is our obligation to God. As the scripture says,

Rom 8:12-15 - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 NAS

We must, therefore, put off the flesh and pursue holiness. Indeed this is the meaning of Faith. It is a life response whereby we forsake our sin and lay hold of God. Again this is our obligation and a divine commandment. Shall we obey God, or men?

Leviticus 20:26 - 'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.' NAS

This is a bible truth both New and Old Testament. We are to be holy because, as His people we represent Him. We belong to Him and He will have nothing less than holiness from us. This is why Christ died. To make us Holy (Heb 10:14). Although in position, in Christ we are holy. But in practice, God is still refining us as we are “sanctified.” We therefore are to pursue holiness because we belong to and represent a holy God. As the scripture says,

Titus 2:11-14 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. NAS

Christ's great desire is that we are a pure and a holy people, zealous for good deeds. This grace of God appeared and instructs us to live godly and righteously. The Israelites of the OT are an example of those who did not obey the command to be holy(1 Cor 10:6) and the Kingdom was therefore taken from them and given to a people who “are not my people.” (Hos 2:23, Rom 9:25-26) Let us be found as a pure and unspotted bride for our Husband the Lord Jesus Christ.

Job 2:3 - And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause." NAS

Job was a man highly esteemed by God for this very fact, that he was “*blameless and upright, a man who feared God and shunned evil.*” This is pleasing to God indeed the man or woman who walks with God will be a person of righteousness and godly character. The scriptures again and again commend Job as a great saint and man of God. (Jas 5:11, Eze 14:14)

Luke 6:40 - "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. NAS

God has this purpose in our lives, that we should “*be conformed to the image of His Son.*” (Rom 8:29) Indeed this was His purpose for us before the world began, as Paul affirms, “*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love*” (Eph 1:4-5)

2 Corinthians 7:1 - 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. NAS

So we make it our life's endeavor and the pursuit of our hearts, to be found blameless in the sight of God. And this because we love Him, and desire above all things please Him. Friends, after all God has done for us, it should be the gratitude and thankfulness in our hearts that drives us to please our Saviour and Lord. To this we run with all His Power.

Philippians 3:12-15 - 12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; NAS

Here Paul exhorts us to “*have this attitude.*” The attitude that is pressing on to the high calling of God in Christ, that is that we should be “*found in Him without spot or blemish,*” holy and pure, “*for we are like Him in the world.*” Let us therefore focus on our ability through Christ to be holy, rather than on our human inabilities. Our inabilities simply point us to Christ, showing our great need for Him, and in Him we find all that we need.

2 Peter 1:3-4 - His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Colossians 4:12 - Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. NAS

If there was ever anything to pray for our brothers and sisters, it is this. *“That they may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.”* This is a prayer with substance and according to the will of God. This is a prayer God eagerly desires to answer with a resounding YES! This is a prayer that causes us to have holy and godly affections for one another, always desiring each others purity and growth in Christ. In the answer to this prayer there are angels rejoicing and the pleasures of God.

James 1:4 - 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

God will at times use whatever means it takes to accomplish this purpose in us, Indeed *“through many tribulations shall we enter the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 14:22) In fact, suffering has a very unique ability to cause us to purify ourselves. As Peter writes, *“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.”* (1 Peter 4:1)

1 John 3:2-3 - Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. NIV

This is our great hope, to be like Him. We therefore purify ourselves or strive to be like Him. Indeed this desire burns in the bones of every good Christian. May God grant us grace and power, that we might be a people which He is honored to call His own.