

ON BEING PERFECT

Jesus taught, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This has been a confusing text to some. How can this be? What does it mean? I thought that none were perfect. Is this possible? Friends, if this were not possible, would Jesus have asked it of us? If we can but understand what He meant by this, we will be able to comply. This word means, "mature; complete; full-grown." Paul would tell us similarly, "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Here then is the beginning of being "perfect." That is, by understanding the Lord's will we can "grow in grace and knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18), and thereby grow unto salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

Whom shall we follow in order to be perfect? Shall we follow the apostles (1 Corinthians 11:1)? Or perhaps elders (Hebrews 13:7,17)? Or shall we follow Jesus (1 Peter 2:21)? Or should we follow God (Ephesians 5:1)? All of these are correct, when we follow what the Scripture teaches. Note what Paul wrote to those in Thessalonica, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). To follow what the Bible teaches is to follow Christ. Thus, we can do what He says to be perfect (complete and mature).

Can we be perfect? Yes, and it is expected! Consider these verses: "And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James 1:4). Again, we are "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). And finally, let us remember, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

Being perfect as God desires *is* possible. It takes Bible study (2 Timothy 3:16,17), obedience (1 John 2:3,4), and prayer (James 1:5,6). "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16). Let us all strive to be as the Father desire us to be..."study to show ourselves approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15), thus we shall never be ashamed.

IS ANYONE RIGHTEOUS?

Sadly, most of my brethren would answer this in the negative. For some reason, brethren have been rather shy about admitting to themselves or others that God really does see them as righteous, so long as they continue to "walk in the light" as John taught (1 John 1:7). This is *not* "self righteousness" as some have concluded. There is nothing wrong with having confidence in what God has said about you, and the fact is, He says you are righteous if you will be obedient to Him.

But someone will quote Romans 3:10 and say "See, that proves it!" That passage says "*as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one*" (Romans 3:10). Paul is quoting from the Old Testament here and is trying to prove his point that, apart from Christ and His Gospel, none can be righteous. The Bible also says "*Jehovah ministereth judgment to the peoples: Judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and to mine integrity that is in me*" (Psalm 7:8). Is anyone pure and perfect? "No!" is usually the answer. Of ourselves or of our own doing, this is true. Consider: "*Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin*" (Proverbs 20:9)? Obviously, no one can make this claim. Yet, the writer of Hebrews says "*we have come to....the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Hebrews 12:23).

Let us understand righteousness. There are two kinds: *self* and *imputed or reckoned righteousness*. Self righteousness is what we find among the Jews as recorded in Romans 9:30-10:4—

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the

righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.”

This kind of “righteousness” is of no value...it does not save. But imputed righteousness is that which God confers upon us because we have by faith been obedient to His word. Paul said *“Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom **God reckoneth righteousness** apart from works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, And whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom, the Lord will not reckon sin”* (Romans 4:6). We are righteous because **God said so!** How? Because *“in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him”* (Acts 10:35); and *“let no man lead you astray: **he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”*** (1 John 3:7).

Similar observations must be made regarding “perfection.” There are two kinds: *sinlessness* and *maturity*. The first is but a fanciful dream...none can live a sinless life. John said, *“If we say that we have no sin, **we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”*** (1 John 1:8,10). But maturity can and ought to be ours! Jesus taught us *“Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matt 5:48). We are to be mature and full-grown, for this is what this word means. Again, John wrote *“And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (1 John 3:3). Finally, the writer of Hebrews said *“Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, **let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God”*** (Hebrews 6:1). How is this purity and perfection made ours? Hear the word of the Lord: *“Seeing ye have **purified your souls in your obedience** to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently”* (1 Peter 1:22).

Yes brethren, God does see you as righteous and pure and perfect...**IF** we will continue to be obedient to His will. Let us then “press on to perfection!”

RAGER ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:

SUNDAY MORNING	BIBLE STUDY	9:30 A.M.
	WORSHIP	10:30 A.M.
SUNDAY EVENING	WORSHIP	6:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY	BIBLE STUDY	7:30 P.M.
Preachers:	Robin W. Haley James Grayson	614-751-1082 614-409-0941

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Weekly Budget: \$1360.00

Wednesday's Wisdom:

“Obeying God makes us blameless before Him!” Josh Haley

Sister Lee is traveling to Toledo. Please pray for her safe return.

Also, **sisters Melanie and Naomi** and their children will be traveling the rest of the way back from Oklahoma tonight. Their plan was to stop in Sullivan, MO where Ben Justice preaches for worship this morning.

Our fire & burglar alarm system is now final, installed, inspected, and monitored. Thanks to brother Dan for all his work in expediting and follow-up to get this system replaced and finalized.

Please stay for the **fellowship meal** after worship this morning. Men, our **business meeting** is right after that meal...about 1pm or so. Please plan to be here to help us attend to the Lord's business.