

The Pastor's Study:

Entry Number 2 on the subject of biblical perfection and overcoming.

Biblical Perfection

A helpful and necessary understanding in the matter of “*let us go on unto perfection.*”

King James Version throughout with emphasis added. Repetition is purposeful.

Introduction

The subject of perfection offends some and tends to be ignored, marginalized, or even rejected. The intent of this article will be to gain agreement that the overcoming process is biblical, reasonable, possible, and to be embraced. Overcoming and perfection is a God ordained Spiritual operation and a correct understanding of the subject produces neither exaltation or discouragement.

It is imperative that we carry forward the fact that this whole matter is accomplished as we abide in the “estate” of “in Christ.” This understanding, as mentioned in the introductory article, is foundational. The estate of being in Christ equates to being in his Body which is his Church.

The Word; “Perfect”

Jesus said “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*” St. Matthew 5:48. The word “perfect” expresses the concept of being “complete,” even “finished.” The same Greek word is used in James 1:4, “*But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*” Also, Ephesians 4:13, “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*”

Perfection is mistakenly viewed as doing everything right, having total maturity and never missing the mark. This perception of perfection would lead a person toward will worship and a very human works mentality. “Perfection” is often approached from the standpoint of our doings, our definitions and our perceptions. The tragedy of this emphasis is that we might settle for a pride-driven corral, or trap, where the natural mind rides around in circles. Then the confession comes forth: It is impossible! Consequently, much of Christendom marginalizes or outright rejects the Biblical message of perfection as unattainable. That is reasonably true, but Jesus stated a principle; “*...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*” St. Matthew 19:26.

Perfection pertains to the dispositional part, where His Spirit connects and works in our spirit. It is a spiritual work and the determinations, or doing of the thing, is God working “in us,” and us “in Him.” Rest assured; His Glory, not ours, His righteousness, not ours. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Romans 8:14.

Perfection; The Subject

This Biblical imperative is typically treated from the standpoint of an individual striving for the sinless life, purity of mind and body, and maturity. Humbly stated: We must understand that on a platform of truth, our striving cannot entertain contest or emulation, especially relating to our fellow believers. Referring expressly to that point: Philippians 1:27 states, “...*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;*” The meaning of “*strive*” in the native idiom (Greek), as used in this scripture, is to endeavor and struggle, even agonize together. Correctly defined, we believe that to strive for perfection is good and correct.

Having this charity evident among us, we progress with carefulness; not stopping our progress in God with “reconciliation,” but going forward we spiritually embrace “his life” example; our pathway of charity. “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*” Romans 5:10. To be reconciled and converted is an estate or place. It is the place in God where the ongoing work of at-one-ment and perfection continues. Conversion and reconciliation is essentially our entrance into Christ; the very estate or habitation where we grow “in Christ.” It is another expression for experiencing a growth of the inner-man. That would be; “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” Colossians 2:27.

A sinless life lies in a total and complete embrace of the Lord’s exemplary life. That is an operation of Holy Ghost power in the inner man; taking on his nature. “*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*” II Peter 1:4.

The course of overcoming deals with all sin; weights, conduct, manners, deportment, demeanor, and conversation. In the overview; overcoming is realizing spiritual dominion and the defeat of our otherwise pride driven life.

The works of the flesh. “...*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envy, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...*” Galatians 5:19-21. All are traits of the carnal mind, will, and emotions of fallen man; traits of a fleshly, pride driven nature.

Perfection; Thy Will be Done

Perfecting (perfection) our embrace of Jesus leaves no place for a pride-driven, willful route to greatness. Perish the thought that a total embrace of Jesus would accommodate even the desire for a status of infallibility. A great danger lies with our persistence in qualifying and expressing the matter of perfection as though it resides in our court. We risk discounting the “*power*” mentioned in Acts 1:8. “...*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*”

Our submitted will is good and the application of our will is required. However, the Grace-given Spiritual Power is where the perfecting is wrought in the life of a Holy Ghost person. *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”* Colossians 2:10. This is the “best.” The “good,” our submitted will, would be counterproductive to the “best” if it becomes a stopping point. The best is dispensed from heaven. Quoting again; Jesus said *“ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...”* Acts 1:8. We must reckon our willful striving as being subordinate to the spiritual operation of the Holy Ghost. That operation is accomplished in the spiritual arena of our quickened conscience, communion, and intuition. More on that later.

Romans Chapter 7 gives an account of the limited result of a willful obedience to the Law; yielding no change of disposition (our heart or spirit) and failing to accomplish God’s perfect will. Reading into chapter 8, we understand that being *“in Christ Jesus,”* verse 1, embraces the operation of the Spirit. Holy Ghost power gains us freedom and dominion over *“the law of sin and death.”* Romans 8:2. The prospect of “go on unto perfection,” Hebrews 6:1, is not of the Law, it is of Grace; that is, being “in Christ Jesus.”

The accomplishing of God’s perfect will in the lives of his Saints, and the Church collectively, is not as-per-our-will but as-per-His-Will. Outside the “In Christ,” Holy Ghost estate, even a submitted will, *“the law of the mind,”* Romans 7:23, is no match for the *“law of sin and death.”* The actual doing of God’s will is a spiritual matter; so that, it must be facilitated and made possible thru the operation of the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of God reunited with the spirit in man. This allows for the Holy Ghost to effectually work in the life of a Saint of God. To be born again of the Spirit, to become a Child of God, in Christ, a New Creature; that is the Grace of God. It is the “estate” of His imputing the righteousness of Christ in us and not imputing our sins. It is God’s will that His Grace result in the perfecting of the Saints. To deny the message of overcoming and perfection is to deny God’s will and the divine operation of Grace.

Knowing these things, we are sure that our striving must not be a matter of willful determinations; rather according as our will is submitted to God’s Holy Spirit Power. That power ministers to us as being born-again and living our lives under the blood of Christ and “in Christ.” The comparable “estate” would be “in the world but not of the world.” An awareness, confession, and submission of our-will to God’s-will helps us better grasp and embrace the scriptural path of overcoming and perfection. Being in spiritual order moves us toward a “complete” embrace of Christ’ example. To be completely “in Christ” is tantamount to being completed/perfected. The new man has replaced the old man.

T. F. Igler, August 25, 2020