

The Beauty of Holiness Is the Beauty of Perfection

by George Ridout

Christian perfection is a state of heart that corresponds to God's covenant, characterized by a sincere love of piety and exclusion of every habit of sin.

Scripture: Genesis 17:1, Psalm 37:37, Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 1:28, Hebrews 6:1, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 5:10, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Holiness"

Description

George Ridout preaches on the pursuit of Christian perfection, emphasizing the importance of desiring and aiming for holiness in all aspects of life. He highlights that true religion involves a constant yearning for a higher and better life in the light of God, as seen in passages like Genesis 17:1, Matthew 5:48, and 1 John 4:17. The sermon delves into the concept of Christian Perfection, focusing on the maturity of graces in the Christian character and the sincere love of piety that excludes every habit of sin. It stresses that perfection is about being correspondent to God's provisions and terms, fulfilling the purpose for which each individual was created.

Transcript

"The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection -- perfection in all things and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it, and who does not constantly aim at it No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin and who is satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. And any man who has no desire to be perfect and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be perfect, may settle it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion. " -Barnes.

"Out of Zion the Perfection of Beauty God hath shined. " Psalm 50:2.

"The church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick God shines not only in Zion, but out of her. She is made perfect in beauty by his indwelling and that beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines forth from her. " Spurgeon,

The perfection which Holiness relates itself to is not that of absolute perfection which appertains only to God.

Many erroneous ideas of Perfection prevail on the subject of holiness. Let it be again repeated that on this question we are not predicating angelic perfection, nor Adamic perfection, or absolute perfection, but we are dealing entirely with the subject of Christian Perfection, such as the

Bible speaks of in such passages as, Genesis 17:1; Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 6:1; Genesis 6:9; Job 1:8; Psalms 37:37; 1 John 4:17; 2 Cor. 13:9-11; Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Peter 5:10; Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:11-13.

"Religion places the human soul in the presence of its highest ideal of perfection which, for the time being, it can reach or grasp. It lifts it above the level of ordinary goodness and produces at least a yearning after a higher and a better life -- a life in the light of God. "

Christian Perfection as John Fletcher interprets it is this:

"By Christian Perfection we mean nothing but the cluster and maturity of the graces which compose the Christian character in the church militant. In other words, Christian Perfection is a spiritual constellation made up of those gracious stars: Perfect Repentance, Perfect Faith, Perfect Humility, Perfect Meekness, Perfect Self-Denial, Perfect Resignation, Perfect Hope, Perfect Charity and above all Perfect Love. "

"It is Perfection, " said Limborch, "in being correspondent to the provisions and terms of the divine covenant. It is not sinless or an absolutely perfect obedience, but such as consists in a sincere love of piety, absolutely excluding every habit of sin. "

Dr. Adam Clarke discussing Christian Perfection says: "That observation of a learned civilian is at once both correct and illustrative; namely, 'We count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereto they were instituted. ' Accordingly a man may be said to be perfect who answers the end for which God made him; and as God requires every man to love Him with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and his neighbor as himself, then he is a perfect man that does so -- he answers the end for which God made him. And this is more evident from the nature of that love which fills his heart; for as love is the principle of obedience, so he that loves his God with all his powers will obey Him; and he who loves his neighbor as himself will not only do no injury to him, but on the contrary, labor to promote his best interests. Why the doctrine which enjoins such a state of perfection as this should be dreaded, ridiculed or despised is a strange thing. "

Let it be understood that this Perfection is the perfection of the Heart. It is that of which Wesley sings.

"A heart in every thought renewed, And full of Love divine, Perfect and right and pure and good A copy, Lord of thine. "Give me a new, a perfect heart, From doubt and fear and sorrow free, The mind which was in Christ impart, And let my spirit cleave to thee. "

The Perfect Christian

But to answer the question directly. What is it to be a perfect Christian? Two things are necessary, viz. , a clean heart, and a heart filled with love to God and man. This we have already briefly noticed. But is it possible for the heart to be made clean, or to be freed from all sin? We answer affirmatively. That the soul may be saved from the least and last remains of moral pollution and defilement, we have not a shadow of a doubt. Indeed no truth is more clearly revealed in the Bible. Who can read the Bible, anxiously desiring to know the truth, and not acknowledge it?

The idea of perfection should always carry with the idea of wholeness and health. Let us ring it out to a needy church that Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith can save to the uttermost and give us a completed and finished case of redemption.

Furthermore let us always bear in mind that Christian Perfection such as the saints of the Lord may attain unto is Practical. Francis DeSales, in his "Introduction to a Devout Life, " says:

"It is an error, a heresy, to suppose that devotion cannot be cherished in the camps of soldiers, the shops of tradesmen, the courts of princes, or the households of married persons. It is true, that neither purely contemplative nor monastic, nor religious devotion, would be suitable in such places; but, besides these three kinds of devotion, there are many others which may be exercised so as to attain perfection in all lawful secular callings. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Job, Sarah, Rebecca, prove the truth of this in the Old Testament. In the New, Cornelius, Sebastian, Maurice, were perfectly devout in the army; Joseph, Lydia, Crispin, in their shops; Constantine, Helen, Lewis, Blessed Amedoeus and St. Edward, on their thrones; Monica, Aquila, and Priscilla, in their households. It has even happened that many have relinquished perfection in solitude, which seems so favorable to it, who cherished it in the world, which appears so much opposed to it.

One has said: "Now devotion is that true spiritual sugar which sweetens the bitterness of mortifications, and corrects the unwholesomeness of worldly consolations; it sweetens the discontent of the poor, and corrects the avidity of the rich -- soothes the desolation of the afflicted, and represses the arrogance of the prosperous - cheers the sadness of those who live in solitude, and checks the dissipation of those who frequent society. It serves as fire in winter, and as dew in summer. It knows how to enjoy abundance and how to suffer want; and how to render both honor and contempt equally advantageous. It enables us to receive pleasure or pain with almost the same evenness of soul, and replenishes us with extraordinary sweetness.

"True devotion never injures, but perfects, whatever it influences; when it is made a hindrance to the pursuit of some lawful calling, it becomes false devotion. The bee, says Aristotle, extracts honey from flowers without doing them the least harm, leaving them as fresh and perfect as it found them; but true devotion does still more, for it not only does no injury to any lawful vocation or employment, but adds to them grace and beauty. "

In Holiness there can be no selfishness. In Holiness there can be no murmurings. In Holiness there can be no covetousness.

In Holiness there can be no self-will. In Holiness there can be no seeking for the highest places. In Holiness there can be no envy. In Holiness there can be no resentment. In Holiness there can be no religious pride.

-- Ackerman.

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