

The Perfecting of the Saints

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maturity in Christ, achieved through the ministry of the church and abiding in Him, resulting in the work of the ministry and the glorification of the Father.

Duration: 47:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:49, Hebrews 1:1 - 2:4, Hebrews 2:10

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of maturation in the Christian faith. He emphasizes that there is no set pattern for implementing this process, but it is a continuous unfolding. The speaker uses the example of the apostle Paul, who despite facing persecution and imprisonment, expresses his desire to know Christ more intimately. The sermon highlights the importance of meeting God's conditions and being filled with the Holy Spirit, which leads to a ministry of fruit, intercession, witness, ambassadorship, authority, and the gifts of the Spirit. The ultimate goal is to reach a place of worship in its fullest sense.

Transcript

So if you'll turn, please, to the first chapters of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 1 and 2. Now, I would suggest that in your own thinking, if not on the paper, you associate these scriptures with the, I don't know what to call it, I was going to say plan, schedule, all of these are inadequate, outline, that's a good word, let's use that, with the outline that we've presented. Now, I'm reading verses 1 and the first part of 2, and then we'll skip over to the second chapter. From verses 2 through 14 of this first chapter of Hebrews, you have a most interesting thing.

It's the exaltation of the Lord Jesus above angels. Now, I mention that so that the strength of the first two verses of the second chapter be in your mind. God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

We'll stop there. I know it's a comma, not an appropriate place to stop, but we will nonetheless. And go to the second chapter, therefore, because God has now in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.

And do bear in mind this expression, the more earnest heed. This could be far stronger than it is here in the King James, and not exaggerate the intention of the original, but hear it, that ye might give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word

spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? And thus we have called this so great salvation, for he is writing to those that are identified as the children of God.

We are using this word salvation in its broadest aspect. If you wish to particularize, you might put on this place in the outline A, salvation, B, sanctification, and you would not do an injustice to the scripture, but I believe that by viewing this as all is part of his great provision in love, we better understand what he's saying to us. Now when you go back to Ephesians chapter 4, and this scripture also I want associated with what you're considering, notice this first verse of the fourth chapter, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you, notice the strength, the intensity, the grip that the words have, I the prisoner of the Lord, captured by Christ, a born slave of Christ, utterly committed to him, absolutely abandoned to him.

I the prisoner of the Lord, beg of you, implore you, entreat you, that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring, striving to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There's one body and one spirit even as you're called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all, but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, wherefore he saith when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, the maturing, the developing, the bringing to full growth. These ministries were given by the head of the Church to the Church for the express purpose of bringing the members of his Church to full maturity, to full growth, to full development. Let us look at that for just a moment.

He, the head of the Church, gave gifts to men, but that is not what he's saying here in this eleventh verse. He led captivity captive and he gave gifts. Of this we'll speak later.

But now he is giving men as gifts to the Church. The apostles, the prophets, evangelists, those who are good newsizers, carrying the gospel where it is never hitherto gone, pioneer missionaries, if you please, pastors, this is another word is elder and overseer, and thus all of the elders, if we recognize spiritual eldership, are included in this word. You see, elder is the term he uses designating them.

Overseeing is the responsibility he gives them for the health of the body. And shepherding or pastoring is the responsibility that they have in behalf of the individual. As overseers, their concern is for the group, as undershepherds for the individual.

And then teachers. Now, not all elders are teachers. There were those elders that he said were apt to teach and called to teach, given the responsibility of teaching.

And he said, be not many teachers, for theirs is the greater condemnation. But he's given teachers. And so in our church polity here locally, we would think of the elders as comprising all that are on this board of elders that ought to be fulfilling the ministry of which our Lord speaks.

And then if there should be a particular sense in which I would be in relationship to the congregation and governing, it would be as teacher. Now, be that as it may, the important thing is that however you identify these, they were given expressly by the head of the church to his church for the purpose of bringing to maturity. Now, that's the meaning of the word perfecting.

Bringing to maturity, bringing to development, bringing to that place of adulthood. Now, I believe it will be profitable for us to slip from this point here over to 1 John 2. We've been seeing this in our morning studies in the Sunday school hour. I think it will be profitable to see it now as referring to the matter of maturation.

I'm reading from the twelfth verse of 1 John 2. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you. This identifies the individual as a child of God through faith in Christ. You're born into his family, but you're born a babe.

You're born of the Spirit, but you're born a babe in Christ. And the primary blessing of this first initial stage is forgiveness and the joy that it brings. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his namesake.

Now there would be those that would suppose this to be the whole of the Christian life. It is no more the whole of the Christian life than infancy is the whole of human life. We recognize that however lifelike they may develop the dolls that frighten you as they stand in the corner of the store, looking so like a woe-begone child that's lost its mother's hand, these that they have produced on man assembly lines are going to stay there long after the child that laughed with glee and delight reopened the box and took the little plastic maid out and set it in front of her.

The little girl is going to grow and the plastic doll is going to stay the same and just fade and crack as the years go on and finally become an antique in someone's collection a hundred years from now. But the little girl will have grown and lived and fulfilled the function and reason for being. And so we find that we must be born but we mustn't stop at the place of birth.

This is what he's telling us. You're little children but the stage of childhood is forgiveness. Then he proceeds to skip over, I write unto you fathers because ye have known him who is from the beginning.

Bear that in mind. There are two levels of knowing. This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and eternal life begins by knowing him.

But there is two levels of knowing him, knowing him in the forgiveness of sins, knowing him in pardon, or knowing him in the sense in which the fathers know him. I write unto you young men, now he's moving back again in the scale, because ye have overcome the wicked one. So we find that little children are forgiven.

Young men are able to stand overcoming the wicked one. They've learned the meaning of victory. And it would be that some suppose that victory is the whole of the Christian life and the end of development.

Only by contrast, he only considers himself educated who hasn't met someone that's better educated. But the moment that he does then he has to bow his head and say at least in these fields I know nothing. And so it is that he only feels himself mature in Christ because his sins are forgiven because he meets someone whose sins have not yet been forgiven.

And there might be the one who has gone on to overcome the wicked one who feels that he's reached the stage of spiritual maturation and development, but it's simply because he's contrasting himself with the one whose sins are forgiven and not with the father's. I write unto you little children in this thirteenth verse because ye have known the father. Oh indeed, for here we have reference to the witness of the spirit.

God has in these last days sent forth his son, the fullness of time, sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And since we are sons, he has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts whereby we cry, Abba, father. And so we've known him.

This makes our entrance into the Christian life valid and real, the witness of the spirit and the forgiveness of sins attested by the voice of God enabling us to cry, Abba, father. But notice in the fourteenth verse, I write unto you fathers because ye have known him that is from the beginning. And now he is bringing us to this place of maturation.

I think we will understand what he says by knowing him for that is from the beginning by turning to Philippians, the third chapter. Would you do that, please? Now remember the writer of this, the one who is speaking. It is none other than Paul who met the Lord on the road to Damascus and could say, I have known the father when it pleased God to reveal his son in me.

What a glorious advent he had into the Christian life. How magnificent were those beginning days when he had gone completely over to the Lord Jesus, utterly abandoning himself to God's son, then into Damascus with Ananias coming, praying for him, and he was filled with the spirit. That was at the very beginning of the first days.

By Paul's experience, all of these first twelve aspects of our outline could be fulfilled in the first week of one's Christian life. There's no time factor here. In his case, he was down to number twelve before the week was out.

Now we find that he's an aged man. He's been approximately thirty-five years walking with the Lord. He's been in prison.

He's been shipwrecked. He's been beaten with rods. He's been beaten with lashes, with whips.

He's been stoned and left for dead. Now, here he's an old man, and he's writing from Rome to the church at Philippi, and in this tenth verse, he makes a statement that would seem to just confound us, that I may know him. Do you see it? And can you not see Paul with shackles? What a wonderful thing.

Oh, that it could happen to you. Would God that this could have come again. Can you see what's happened? Here's a soldier with a chain around Paul's wrist that reaches to his own wrist on each side.

What a marvelous way to get a congregation when the government locks them to you and they have to listen. They've got to listen for eight hours at a stretch. Oh, I think I'd be willing to do it if they just put a couple people here that have to stay.

Now, you see, they say, well, thank you. It's all very nice. And they're gone like that.

But he had a congregation. Well, they're listening, and his amanuensis, probably young Mark or Luke, recording for him, and he's dictating. They can understand it.

Can you not see the aged man, head bowed, long hair, the lines that love and care have carved into his face? Just a few months from seeing the Lord, and he says, but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless. And I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him. And Luke raises his hand to Mark and says, what do you mean? Well, you've known the Lord.

He revealed himself to you. You've walked with him. What do you mean that you may know him? And in tears, dimming his fading eyes, he looks up and says, why, don't you understand, Mark? It's going to take an eternity in a perfect environment, unhindered by sin, to fully know and understand the Lord who loved us and washed us in his blood.

Thirty-five years? I need thirty-five millenniums. I need eternity, because he's so infinitely beyond all that our minds can comprehend. And so he says that I may know him.

Oh, he knew him in forgiveness. He knew him in sovereignty. He knew him in power and anointing.

He knew him in ministry. But now he's a father. No wonder John, the age of John, nearly 90, 95 years of age, says to the fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning, you've begun to want to enter into something of the eternity of God.

Now do you understand why here at point 14 I've said worship? Paul is saying that I may know him in worship, in adoration, in unveiling, in unfolding, that I may know him. And thus the adult, the one that's gone past forgiveness and victory, is the one that's come to the place of worship. Oh, there's levels of worship all the way.

Of course we understand that. Now this, back again to Ephesians, the fourth chapter, this has given us something of what we understand by adulthood. Past forgiveness, past conflict and victory, and on into the presence of God in that mystical fellowship that's immediate and glorious and continuously enlarging.

Thus he says he's given evangelists and pastors and teachers for the bringing of the saints to adulthood, so that you can grow up into Christ and do all things which is the head. Bringing you to maturity, for it is out of this maturity of relationship that the work of the ministry comes. How often I have been guilty, and perhaps you or others with you, of saying to babes in Christ, now you're saved, you're forgiven, get busy for the Lord.

One of his writings, Dr. Simpson approaches this very sweetly. In his ministry on the power of the Spirit, work of the Holy Ghost through the Bible, as he's dealing with Luke 24, he said, you know, the Lord wasn't afraid that his disciples wouldn't get busy for him. He was afraid they would.

And so he said, now you go in Jerusalem and tarry there until after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you. You go and wait. He wasn't afraid they wouldn't.

He was afraid they would. And so we discover that that service, which is going to be for eternity, is going to flow out of maturity. It's going to flow out of worship.

You say, well, what do you mean? Should we sit back and not do anything until we're mature? Oh, no, not at all. Don't misunderstand. I would like to take some of the people I know across the country and harness

them up with a task so big that they would discover how utterly inadequate they are.

You know, if you sit on the sidelines as a spectator, you can be satisfied with very little. It doesn't take a great deal of spirituality to make you say, well, I'm mature. You know, any man that's there can do that.

But it's when you get into the race and you get into the task that you discover how feeble and how puny, inadequate you are. It wasn't there in Luke 13, you know, the man had an empty cupboard for years. He was on the roadside, responsible to feed the people that came along.

But it wasn't until someone came along and asked for bread at the depot where he should expect to get it that the man realized the nature of his responsibility to have bread in his home and not having it. And it isn't until you come to grips with responsibility, oh, I'd love to get you out visiting in this community, preaching on the street, laboring in any and every means possible, you say, do you feel we're ready for it? No, really, I don't for most of us, but I think it'd be a marvelous way to get you to discover you aren't ready. And when you begin to realize how utterly inadequate you were, you begin to say, oh God, I must.

I must have from you that which only thou canst give. This, I believe, is what the Spirit of God would have us see and understand, that he wants this to be the means whereby our preparation is made. It was then at midnight when he discovered that he did not have the bread to feed those that were wayfarers and journeymen that he was willing to get up and go and knock.

The man from within said, look, I've known you didn't have bread and you haven't been concerned about it. Let me sleep. Why are you so troubled now? And the man said, I've had strangers come at midnight, and I want the bread not for my sake but for theirs.

He was aware of his responsibility. And on the basis of this, the goodman of the house got up and gave him all that he asked. Many people there are that would like to know the fullness of the Spirit of God and all that which we've set forth as being normal to the Christian life.

But the reason they want to know it is that they might feel themselves normal. They want to have everything that's going and be everything that God's indicated they could. But it's basically selfish.

It's for themselves. And the Lord, I'm sure, doesn't meet on this level. It is when we discover what he has us to be, channels only, blessed Jesus, for thy wondrous grace and power flowing through us, thou canst use us for thy glory every hour.

And so in this matter of maturation, it is when you come to know him who is from the beginning in that intimate fellowship and sweetness of union that we find described here as being one with Christ, Christ the reciprocal indwelling, where he said, you abide in me and I will abide in you. It's on this level that the ministry is performed. I think if we go to John 15, we'll see that.

Another aspect of Christian maturity. Would you turn back to the 15th of John in order that the Holy Ghost could indict this matter even more clearly? Our Lord is using the analogy of the vine. They are in him.

They have some fruit. They've been put in by the operation of God. There's a beginning proof of genuineness.

There's fruit. But it doesn't stop there. He purges them that they may bring forth more fruit.

And there you have the two stages. Forgiven, you little children, your sins are forgiven. That's fruit.

You have overcome the wicked one, purged, more fruit. But he's still not satisfied. This isn't the full that he deserves from such great prices he has paid.

And so he said, abide in me and I in you that you might bring forth much fruit. Much fruit. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will.

It shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit. So shall you be my disciple.

So if you're born of God, there will be the beginning fruit. And as the word goes on and you grow up in him, there will be purging and victory. But he has something more.

He has this matter of reciprocal indwelling where you abide in him and he abides in you. For just as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me. And whereas you can perform service needful and helpful and useful to those to whom it's rendered, be it understood that such service rendered with less than his full abiding is for the purpose of discovering to you the need for his full abiding.

And the purpose of teachers, pastors, evangelists, teachers, is to enable you, to guide you, to instruct you, to lead you into that place of union. That you might enter into this relationship called fathers, so that there could be the abiding presence of the Lord and all he intended that to mean, that you might bring forth much fruit. Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit.

But this much fruit can only come by your abiding in him and his abiding in you. Has this transpired? Has this taken place? Well then, this is the purpose of ministry. Back to Ephesians 4 and see it again.

He gave evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. But the work of the ministry is not as much your ministry for him as his ministry through you. Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.

And again, he said, I am crucified with Christ, putting no confidence in the flesh, depending not a bit upon that which was naturally advantageous to me. But I have come to the place that whereas I live, it is not I that live, it is Christ who lives in me. Now, we're approaching this matter of the work of the ministry.

Whose ministry is it? Is it your ministry for him, or is it his ministry through you? Miss Brainerd of Hephzibah House at the conference up at Monterey-Keswick read just a little thing after breakfast one morning. I don't know where she got it. I'll have to ask her sometime.

She said, God never wanted us to stand in the world and witness to Christ. His desire that we stand in Christ and witness to the world. And the ministry that is going to be to his glory and to his praise, that will glorify the Father, is the ministry that comes by the risen Christ pouring himself through you.

So he's given evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. Now, the next thing we must understand is that the building up of the body of Christ is in God's purpose to be done by the saints. For it's the work of the ministry to the building up of the body of Christ, the edifying of the body of Christ.

See this now. For 150, oh, 400 years of the Protestant Reformation, 450 now since Luther nailed the theses to the door of Wittenberg's cathedral, we have been under the influence of Rome more than of the

Church. The Lutheran revival, for all our deep debt to it and gratitude for it, was a protest against Rome.

And they protested against abuses and heresy of one kind and another. But it wasn't a true reformation. It wasn't started out to be a reformation.

It was just started out to be a protest, which it was. And the same was true of most of the other movements. Protesting against something that was wrong.

So ever since the time of Luther, we've had a Roman pattern. Dr. Charbonnier of Taylor University was discussing this with a group of students, said, remember this, Rome is the mother of us all. And unless the Holy Spirit is in control, the tendency is always back to Rome.

Always is back to Rome. Because it's something that can be seen and something from which we've come. Now, it behooves us to recognize this and to realize this.

And therefore, the Spirit of God has given to us this pattern of his working. And he has told us that the building up of the body of the Christ is not to come from primarily the evangelists and pastors and teachers. But it's to come from the saints who've been brought into maturity, into the place of ministry.

Now, when a person begins a ministry for the Lord, he has one of two things that he chooses. He either chooses to let it all be brought in focus around him. This gives quick results if one is able to organize and promote and do the thing well enough.

But it's like building a pyramid, one of the pyramids of Cheops standing on its apex. It's built upon the shoulders of one man. For instance, if you read the history of New York, you'll discover that at one time over in Brooklyn, there was a man by the name of Henry Ward Beecher.

Tremendous church, tremendous congregations. But you see, there was only one Henry Ward Beecher. And when he was gone from the scene, the work was built on his shoulders and gradually just subsided and relaxed.

And after a few years, they were simply worshiping the memory of Henry Ward Beecher. Then we find that there have been others, this city, Dr. Jowett and oh, so many others that have, Talmadge, T. DeWitt, Talmadge, every message that T. DeWitt, Talmadge preached when he was pastor in Brooklyn was published in a syndicate of newspapers. Well, that tremendous work was built by Talmadge.

He was in demand all over the country. But what happened? When he disappeared from the scene, the work just sort of subsided. It went down.

And so there's a choice that has to be made. Is it going to be built on its apex and the pyramid go out further and further, or which is Roman, essentially, a priest-centered, or are we going to go back to the biblical pattern, which is the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry under the building up of the body of Christ? Now, when you make that choice, you have to do it maturely, deliberately, because it's extremely costly and requires great patience and great determination because all the pressure of the day and the age is just to the reverse. And so here, at least, we're committed to this.

We haven't known too much. We have very little pattern to follow in the implementation of it. But I believe that that which you hold in your hand tonight could not have happened a year ago, couldn't have been presented a year ago, and we present it to you tonight because it represents one phase in the unfolding of

this.

Now you understand why I've presented it to you. Here we have it. I can't discuss it in detail.

We spent weeks doing that. Some of you that are here for the first time, well, we'd be happy to answer questions that may come out of it, but look at it for a moment. Born of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit offers Christ to the repentant sinner, first by awakening him, by bringing him to conviction, by bringing the sinner to repentance, by quickening saving faith, by justification and regeneration, and then witnessing to the work done in the heart.

And we don't stop there. We go on to discover that shortly after we know we're born of God, we enter into the conflict of temptation and for the possibility of sin. And when this transpires, there must be and will ever be, as long as we live, brokenness, confession, cleansing.

But that one that's been born of God hates sin and so cries out, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? And here's the echo, Thanks be to God. There is victory, and so we learn that victory comes through our union with Christ, our abiding in him, crucified with him and buried with him and quickened with him, raised with him, seated with him in the heavenlies. Now we're beginning to be young men overcoming the wicked one.

We've learned victory through our union, our identification with Christ. But it isn't long until one discovers that victory isn't enough. It's one thing not to have weeds in the plot of ground.

It's another thing to have roses there in fragrance. And so the heart that says, Oh, all I ask of God is victory over trait and temperament and tendency and tongue, now says, I must have something more than that. I want something more.

I want him. I don't want to just be delivered from doing the things I shouldn't do. And so then he discovers that the Lord says, present your body a living sacrifice.

Present your body. Give him your body. Then faith to receive the fullness of Christ.

You were born of the spirit, but you weren't born full of the spirit. Everything that was in Christ's purpose for you was yours when you were born into his family. But just as a father establishes a trust for the son that's born to him, he doesn't take the million dollars in the trust and put it in dollar bills and push it around the baby in the cradle.

He would smother him with it. And so if God gave you all that he intended you to have when you came to him in faith and repentance, you couldn't have appropriated it. And so God very graciously, as a wise father, allows you to have a will and a testament to know what's been bequeathed to you and given to you.

But he imparts it to you in response to your faith. And so it was God's purpose. You'll be filled with the spirit and provisionally it was yours.

But it waits for the time when you've come to the place of death to self and the presenting of your body that you have quickened in your heart. Faith to receive the fullness of the spirit of God, the fullness of Christ. For remember, just as the Holy Spirit offers the Lord Jesus to the sinner, so the Lord Jesus Christ offers the fullness of the spirit to the believer.

And then one is filled with the spirit. This is an experience of reality. This is a crisis.

A process preceded it. A process followed it. But there it comes to you at some point in your pilgrimage when if this is, if you've met his condition and awareness that you are filled with the spirit and then out of this fullness is the ministry of the spirit-filled life.

And we've seen that ministry is fivefold. The ministry of the fruit of the spirit, the ministry of intercession, the ministry of witness of ambassadorship, the ministry of authority, and the ministry of the gifts of the spirit. There is a ministry that he has for you.

And all of this brings you to the place of worship in that fullest sense. Now, this is what we hold out before you. This is what we understand maturation to be.

This is what we understand the perfecting of the saints to be. But you're somewhere here in this. Would you notice the first question that we've asked you to respond to? Where would you locate your spiritual development in respect to this we've presented? Where are you? You know, if I ask you where you are in relation to school, you certainly can tell me.

Well, why can't you tell me? Why can't you ask the spirit of God to show you if you do not now know where you are in relation to this? You're somewhere. And so we're asking you to make this a matter of great prayer, great concern. Where are you? You ought to go through it.

Think your way through it. We've been spending these months on it now. Find yourself somewhere here.

Is this real? Is it not? And then you ought to fill that in and explain something of what this means to you, why you've said that, so that you understand that you're putting it in your own words. Then, number two, what do you feel is the area of greatest concern to you now and the next step in your spiritual growth? You might say, well, I know that I have been born of God, but actually the area of greatest concern to me is--and it would be somewhere else. You could flip back.

Maybe there's something that has to be--you might have to say, well, in all fairness and honesty, I don't quite understand what repentance means and the extension of it into the Christian life. Well, then you ought to say, I need to see this, but I believe that this is just part of my need. So in all candor and honesty and fairness to yourself and God's dealing with you, never underestimating what he's done, you should locate what you consider to be the greatest concern.

If the space we've left isn't adequate, use the back of the page and attach additional sheets as you might need them. And then number three, are you desirous of being part of such a group as has been described in other times? And are you willing to meet regularly except when providentially hindered? Are you so concerned about growing up in Christ that you're saying, I'm going to adjust my schedule with prayer and concern and thought, and I'm going to--even though it means a sacrifice in some area--nevertheless, I am determined that my Christian life shall not be lived haphazardly and carelessly, and at least I am prepared to give a period of time, eight weeks or twelve weeks or something, to see if this is worth the investment of time that it seems to have, for you've certainly been emphasizing it to us. Now, are you desirous of being part of such a group of others that are in similar relationship to you in this matter? And would you be willing to meet regularly except when you were providentially hindered, making it a matter of serious commitment, not callous or careless or indifferent, but actually committing yourself to be there unless you were providentially hindered? Then the next item is, when would be the best time for you to meet? You ought to pray this matter through, not lightly attach it.

You might have to say after you've much thought, I see no time in my schedule that I can meet except five o'clock in the morning. Well, you say that's pretty early. I know, but John Wesley had a meeting at five o'clock in the morning every day for forty-five years, so we might try it for eight weeks.

I don't think it would be fatal anyhow. If this would be the only time when you could receive help, all right. Let's ask the Lord to guide.

The point is, you should know the best time, and it should be a matter of prayer and thought. Number five, are you prepared to recognize that what is said in sharing in this group meeting is confidential? John Wesley had class meetings, and if you read, and any of you that are interested, I'll be glad to give you, Ms. Smith in the office will, a copy of the plain account of the people called Methodists, in which he wrote to the bishop, Bishop Peronet, concerning the development of the class meeting. And after twenty, thirty, nearly forty years of such ministry, there was only one time that someone was careless and repeated things which had been said in a class meeting.

Your meeting is a group. There ought to be openness and frankness to make known your need. There's one other question that I didn't include, but I think you ought to make note of it, and if you would include it in one of these as your answer.

Do you feel that it would be better to meet with all a group of just men and another group of women, or should it be just as the spiritual development came? This, I believe, should be included. I'm sorry that I omitted it, and I think that you should indicate it and react to it. Then the fifth one, the second part of the fifth one, would you feel that careless disregard of this matter of confidence would be grounds for being asked to leave the group? I think that it's fair for the others that were there to know, to have you in all candor and frankness respond to that.

Then if you would sign it with your explanations and what you have, you would come to me and then in council with the elders, we could guide and direct and make some suggestions to you. Of course, you're free moral agents. We can't bind you, but we would like to think that by council together we could provide a group where you could find great spiritual profit.

Such groups will under no condition or only the most remote possibility have more than ten or twelve people, so that it might be possible for all to share. Now, I have suggested that you take this, pray over it, and fill it in, and that's why I've called to your attention that there are additional copies. I'd like to have you retain for yourself an exact copy of the one that you present to us, one that would be there so that we would have it to consider, to pray over, and then we can be in touch with you, and out of this can grow a time of fellowship.

Now, it's my conviction that as faithful as I will endeavor to be in proclaiming the apostles' doctrine, and as faithful as I trust you will be in hearing it and meditating upon what you hear, there are questions that arise, there's sharing that's needed, and I would press upon you, dear child of God, the importance of participating in such as we're presenting to you tonight. Now, will you take it, think about it, meditate upon it, pray about it, return it to us in order that we may in days to come see established here companies of people who with one mind and one heart meet in one place, one accord, to seek the Lord till he come and reign righteousness upon them. Where are you? Are you a child? Know your sins forgiven? Wonderful.

But if you aren't, don't leave with the benediction. Are you a young man knowing victory, or are you a father that has known him in intimate fellowship who is from the beginning? This is the goal for all of us,

and toward this we press. Not as though we've attained or either already perfect, but forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward the mark, the prize, the high calling in Christ Jesus, that I may know him.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/29/SID29833.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paris-reidhead/the-perfecting-of-the-saints/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net