

# Be Perfect as Our Father in Heaven Is Perfect

by Phil Beach Jr.

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*The sermon emphasizes the call to spiritual maturity, reflecting God's perfection and living in community as we grow in faith.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:48, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:15, Ephesians 5:1, 1 Timothy 4:12, Hebrews 5:12, Hebrews 12:5, 1 Peter 4:1, 1 John 2:15

**Topics:** "Spiritual Maturity", "Christian Perfection"

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## Description

Phil Beach Jr. preaches about the journey to spiritual adulthood, emphasizing the call to be perfect and merciful like our heavenly Father, to imitate God, and to follow Christ as Paul did. He highlights the importance of leaders modeling faith, love, and purity, and the need for believers to grow up spiritually by craving the Word of God. The sermon stresses the necessity of submitting to God's discipline and child training to reach maturity in Christ, warning against resisting the Holy Spirit and hindering the growing up process.

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## Transcript

God's Word has said that we are to be perfect as our father in heaven is perfect and merciful even as our father in heaven is merciful. What could this possibly mean? Furthermore we are commanded to be "imitators of God". Paul exhorts us to follow him as he follows Christ. He also tells those who are leading among the flock to be examples modeling faith, love, patience, sound doctrine and purity. Leaders are to be a prototype that could be used as the source from which exact replication can be drawn!

We are commanded to "go on to perfection" and to crave the pure milk of the Word so that we may grow up. Let's look at what it means to grow up spiritually. There is no doubt that God longs for and expects full manhood in Christ to be attained by the church. He provides everything needed in His Son and in His Word, together with His multiplied grace and peace for His goal to be realized. Failure to attain to this can only be our fault, never God's. May God help us to walk in His light so that we may keep seeing clearly the goal set before us, God's Son in His fullness being manifest in our lives, and by seeing Him may we remain very broken at His feet and turn from all darkness that His light will reveal!

There is a proper time to be a spiritual child. But the time is not indefinite! If we remain as spiritual children beyond the time intended, then we are sinning against God's Spirit and refusing to submit to His dealings that are intended to bring us to spiritual adulthood. In this condition we are in danger of losing the full reward and inheritance that God has purposed to give to those who overcome! Let us be honest before

God and allow Him to search our hearts very deeply to see if we are yet resisting His Spirit and hindering the growing up process.

Are we sowing into the lives of our church family and our natural family that which will produce spiritual maturity or that which will perpetuate spiritual immaturity? It is His name and wonderful works we love to speak of or our own name and works? What kind of an example are we setting? Can we say as Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ?" Is it possible that we could tell our children, spouses, and those brothers and sisters in Christ that know us well that they could use our lives as an example of faith, love, righteousness, godliness, patience, meekness and long suffering?

Are we rejoicing in tribulation--counting it all joy in the midst of trying circumstances? We are called to be examples in these things to all men! We must not settle for anything less than a deep longing to be as He is in this world, beginning in our own home and among our church family. SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT SINLESS PERFECTION Spiritual adulthood is not sinless perfection or the inability to sin! Paul and John make the distinction between being in a state of completion, having arrived at the intended goal, which is immortality, the state we will know when He comes for us in the air and spiritual maturity in Christ.

They denied being in the former state, but affirmed being in the the latter and longed for all the church to strive for this goal. God's Word clearly defines adulthood as ceasing from acting like a child, thinking like a child and reasoning like a child. Peter states that those who are prepared to suffer as Christ suffered by living only to the will of God cease from practicing sin. This means that sin is unemployed in the believer. In Christ, we put away sin and no longer live to the will of man or to our own will but to the will of God alone.

Additionally, spiritual adulthood is characterized by ceasing to live according to the desires of the flesh which include not only the overtly evil passions but the religious ones as well! Remember Cain. He was very religious and offered to God the best of his own works, but they and he were rejected. Spiritual adults seek only to satisfy the desires of God and seek to live with only His interests in view, rejoicing in all things and looking only to decrease that He may increase.

Adults no longer view life by what they are getting out of it or how they are being affected by it. Rather, in all things they ask the Father that He may be glorified irrespective of how it may affect them personally. Like Paul, we can come to the place where we learn to be content in whatever state we are in, knowing that in every state, we live to serve His purpose alone. Paul was warned several times by the Holy Spirit that chains awaited him in Jerusalem. Yet, because Paul had put away thinking and acting as a child, he reasoned that it did not matter what was going to happen to him personally since his life was not about getting for himself but about living for another, namely, his Lord, Christ Jesus!

He lived only to do and finish the will of God, like His Master! This is the meat that Jesus lived on and taught Paul to live on as well. To live on the meat of the Word is to exist for no other reason than to know and complete the will of God. Living on meat means we do not consider ourselves when seeking to know or do the will of God. It is necessary for the Lord to remove from our thinking the phrase, "What is in it for me?" We do not decide how to serve God or how deeply we will obey Him and sacrifice our lives to Him based on what we may get in return.

Many yet view life, the kind of career to choose, home to buy, etc., by how much they are getting out of the deal. When we live like this, we live as mere spiritual infants and are not yet living in accord with the purpose of our calling in Christ Jesus. Many live their whole lives like this and never enter into God's

purpose in this life in relation to being called into the fellowship of the Son of God. Israel was saved out of Egypt by the applying of the blood on the doorposts of their homes.

Once saved out of Egypt, God then sought to deliver Egypt out of their hearts and deliver them from spiritual infancy to adulthood. But they refused to submit to God and the tests He brought to them and remained fleshly and carnal in their thinking and reasonings. Because of this they deeply grieved the heart of God and displeased Him. They disqualified themselves from entering into the land of promise and died wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, never growing into spiritual adulthood.

The actual journey through the wilderness to the river Jordan was only 11 days, but because these people refused to humble themselves during the times of deep testing, which were intended by God to strip them of their self-centered way of viewing life to a God centered way, they remained the same and never demonstrated the adult responsibility which was the requirement to enter the promised land. Israel's 40 years of wandering was not God's purpose for them. His purpose was to bring them out of Egypt so they could be tested and purified in the wilderness to prepare them to be brought into the land of promise!

Because of their failure to submit to God's discipline and child training they forfeited their right of inheritance and fell far short of His purpose. It was imperative that the testing of the wilderness would prove their progressive maturity. Tragically, it served to prove the opposite! A WARNING FOR US TO SUBMIT TO GOD'S CHILD TRAINING This is a very serious warning for us today. We too are called with a divine purpose. Our salvation provided by the precious blood of Jesus is applied to our lives by faith.

When this happens, we are delivered out of the land of sin and from the power of Satan and the world. We receive forgiveness of sins and the promise of an eternal inheritance among those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. However, once saved from the world and Satan's kingdom, we are called to fellowship with the Son of God and to share in His moral likeness. Although in the world we are not to be of the world. As we submit to God's child training and humbly allow God to detach us from the flesh and its power, we are changed, more and more into His image.

This is God's purpose in saving us, to make us just like His Son! However this requires that we grow up and put off the old man and all his corrupt ways and put on the new man which is the image of God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus. We are required to submit to God's Word and His Spirit in all our trials and tests so that in all these things we can grow up and put off childish behavior. By doing this we can share in the testimony of Paul who said, "It is no longer I that lives but Christ that lives in me", and "For me to live is Christ".

These statements simply mean that Paul was willing to submit to all the tests and child training God brought to Him which resulted in spiritual growth to adulthood in Christ. Paul obtained approval from God by being tested and found like His Master through being transformed into His moral image by the Spirit of God. Paul's original response to the Lord, "What would you have me to do, Lord?" remained the cry of his heart during his entire life. Because of this desire for God's will alone to be wrought in his life he obtained the promise, "For me to live is Christ", and possessed the assurance that in the age to come, he would bear the overcomer's crown.

Paul actually considered his mission as a servant of God and of the church to labor among God's people for their spiritual perfection, and considered the power of God working in him to be for this purpose. At one time, Paul was in deep spiritual travail, like a women in birth pains, for the believers in Galatia. He was concerned for them because he saw evidence that they were not growing up spiritually but were turning

back to trusting in their own works. In response to this dangerous condition, Paul said that he was in travail for them until Christ be fully formed in them.

By this, Paul was expressing God's deepest desire, not only for them but all believers. Paul also was concerned for the believers in the city of Corinth. Though they were very well taught by some of the most gifted teachers of the New Testament times, were filled with the Spirit of God and well acquainted with the gifts of the Spirit and enriched in all knowledge and wisdom of the gospel, they were dreadfully deficient in their spiritual growth. They were only able to be fed with milk and not with meat.

Paul said this was because they were yet carnal, as babes in Christ. Being yet carnal means that though we have the Spirit of God in our lives, like the believers in Corinth, we are not following His leadings and impulses, which are in accord with the Word of God. Instead we are following the impulses, desires and inclinations of the flesh and have our minds on those desires, seeking to obey. Because these believers in Corinth failed to grow up spiritually they were filled with works that were displeasing to God.

For example, they were involved in trusting in the wisdom that comes from man and not God. This wisdom was ruling in their personal lives as well as in the life of the church resulting in spiritual decline and eventual weakness, sickness and even death in some instances. Additionally, they were filled with divisions and strife and were allowing their personal preferences for certain teachers to create tears in their fellowship, causing disunity of Spirit and feigned love. Also they were tolerating sexual misconduct and failed to purge this sin out from their midst.

Their lives had become so fleshly they were unable to solve business problems occurring among themselves and were taking one another to civil court, seeking to sue one another! How sad to see the chaos that can come into the church when we fail to grow up. THE NEED FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CROSS TO BE DEEPLY WORKED INTO OUR LIVES Things are not much different today, dear one. Many homes are filled with these kinds of works as well as many churches. God's response to this poor spiritual condition is a clarion call to repent and turn from living after the flesh.

He bids us to come to Him in deep humility so that we can receive a fresh vision of the blessed Son of God and the full meaning of Christ crucified, and in seeing Him afresh, be changed and transformed by His power to put off carnal, childish ways. We must embrace, not only the historical meaning of the cross, as the place our Lord paid the price for our sin debt, but equally the place where we were crucified with our Lord and died with Him to our old, sinful, childish habits.

The principle of the cross must be applied daily in our lives by the power of the Spirit, freeing us from everything working in us that is not in accord with the likeness of Christ. At Calvary we not only died with Him but were also included with Him when God raised Him from the dead so that we can live, not according to the old ways but in the newness of His life, by the power of His precious Spirit and the living Word of God. This results in an ever increasing capacity to mirror the moral image of Christ.

God's eternal purpose from eternity past was to have a family exactly like His only begotten Son to bear His moral likeness. God planned this even before man fell into sin. So, when God sent His only Son to pay the sin debt, He had in view a larger purpose than to just provide us with forgiveness. Though this is marvelous and never to be minimized, this is not the end but the means to God's end. God's end is to eventually have all things under the authority of His Son and to have a family in His exact image, exactly what was in His heart from eternity past.

The tragic fall of man into sin did not cancel God's purpose, but provided an opportunity for God to demonstrate His limitless love and grace by sending His Son to become an offering for our sin. By doing this, Christ secured the needed payment to cancel our sin debt as well as provided, in Himself, the perfect kind of Son that the Father was ever looking for. Now, He is in the heavens as the glorified Man, and God has made Him the Head of the new creation, which is both the Head and Body in organic union, sharing the same divine nature and uncreated eternal life that was in the Son for all eternity.

We become partakers of the divine nature through the new birth. Christ, as the glorified Man at the right hand of God is now the first of many sons that He will bring to glory to share in His moral likeness and to sit with Him on His throne to share in the government of His Father's eternal kingdom. The inheritance promised for those that overcome will consist of sharing with the Son of Man, our blessed Lord Jesus, all that the Father has given to Him, as the Man after God's own heart.

We are called to overcome even as He has overcome and are called heirs of God and joint heirs together with Christ. If we suffer with Him, then we shall be glorified together with Him. He is the firstborn Son and to Him has God given all things as His inheritance. But the amazing truth is that God, in His kindness and love desires to share the inheritance He has given to His Son with all those who, by means of suffering become approved by sharing in His selfless life. Our primary purpose as living in this world as the church is to be prepared for this glorious prospect and ready for His appearing, as a church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

God shall present to His Son such a church. What a day of glory and satisfaction for the heart of God that will be! WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE IN THE WORLD BUT NOT TO BE OF THE WORLD We are called to live as sojourners, pilgrims and aliens in this life, seeking not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, but to become rich toward God, storing up treasure in heaven. We are called, together with all the saints listed in the faith chapter of the book of Hebrews, to be looking for a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God.

We are not to be setting our hearts' affections on the things of this earth, but on things above, where Christ is seated, and we with Him, at the right hand of God. God does expect us to work so that we have enough money to care for our needs and if we are blessed with extra, we ought to help those who lack. But the heartbeat of our lives ought not to be the making of a name for ourselves on earth nor laboring for those things that are perishing. Paul said we are to use the world's goods but not abuse them since the world and its fashion are passing away.

Those who are living as spiritual adults will not love the things of this world but will be devoted to doing the will of God. The things in this world include the lusts of the eyes and those things men desire from seeing, the lusts of the flesh which includes all the passions and cravings of the sinful desires within, and the pride of life which includes the tendency to boast, brag and trust in the things we possess. Spiritual adults will live on the meat of the Word which is to know and do the will of God irrespective of personal loss or cost!

As ambassadors, we are called to represent the interests of our King in this foreign country. Anyone called to be an ambassador who either fails to represent the interests of his King or begins to live with his own interests in view, moving and planning around his own goals and dreams, will be accused by the King as an unfaithful representative! Anytime we fail to grow up and remain as babes in Christ, we naturally will be unfaithful ambassadors, and will live a self-centered, self-serving existence, ultimately representing our own agenda and interests in our personal as well as church lives.

Our friends, family, business, careers, belongings and church life will all be used to serve our own agenda instead of serving God's purpose. When this happens, we, like Israel, fail to grow up and never qualify for the inheritance God has promised those who become mature in Christ. WE NEED ONE ANOTHER TO FULLY MATURE IN CHRIST Spiritual adulthood cannot be attained apart from being properly related to the rest of the body of Christ. The full grown man that Paul prays the church will come into is a corporate manifestation of the full stature of Christ being expressed through each member of the body, as each member supplies the life and provision it is receiving from the Head to the rest of the body.

Body life, under the government of the Holy Spirit is the necessary setting out from which spiritual adulthood can be realized in each individual member. As long as we keep doing our own thing and fail to learn the lessons of submitting to one another in love godly fear and in humility, we cannot grow up into spiritual adulthood. Many hope to mature by spending lots of time in prayer, reading lots of chapters of the Bible each day and for the most part, living an isolated life apart from others, with the exception of attending an occasion meeting or Bible study.

This is a misguided idea and will not produce spiritual maturity. Each local body of believers must learn to live in the spirit of Christ and be governed by the law of love. This emancipates the soul from self centered living and relates it in a meaningful and functional way with other members of the body. If Christ is to be the functional Head over the local church, then the local church must learn to live, not to self, but to the Lord's heart by serving others. The local body must learn to walk in the liberty of the law of love and organic unity that it is called into by Christ and begin to care for one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If Christ is to be the One from whom the Body receives its directions, then the body must awaken to its need to gather, as the body, under the Headship of Christ and expect the Lord to give guidance about the direction He would have the body take. If this is not happening then most likely the body is not under the Headship of Christ and spiritual infancy yet rules in its members lives. Many needs are represented in a local body but the Lord cannot meet these needs in the way He has chosen unless the members together seek for direction from the Head, who alone can give the orders and guidance necessary.

Through corporate seeking of His will the individual members can be enabled to care for one another, and the local body can be built up through that which every joint supplies. For example, the body must grow in its capacity to gather together to seek the Lord's guidance to be able to acknowledge those He has chosen to serve in the capacity of overseeing brothers, and recognize them by giving to them honor and when necessary, support, especially those who labor night and day in the Word, prayer and in sound teaching.

Also the body must come together before the Lord and ask Him for His guidance in caring for any widows or needy ones who are part of the local fellowship. Additionally, the local body must grow in its capacity to seek guidance from the Lord for all matters regarding its spiritual needs and to know from the Head in what manner He has chosen to meet those many needs. The body must grow in its capacity to come together in fellowship and one share a teaching, one share a revelation, one share a song or Psalm, or one be given opportunity for equipping of the saints who may possess this gift.

God's desire is for the body to be able to discern His direction in these matters and not leave them for one or two to decide. Each member has a function and contribution to make and must contribute to the whole in whatever way God has ordained. The local church does not exist to serve the minister or ministry of one

particular gifted person. Rather, all the gifts and those given to the church are to serve the local church, all contributing to God's end--which is spiritual maturity among all its members.

One particular member or gift cannot become so important as to diminish another gift or member of the body. One member cannot say there is no need of another member. Nor can the body say, "we are a body and have no need of specific members and their contribution." Sometimes a body can grow in a mature understanding of the value of everyone's contribution and may despise the need for specific teachers. Likewise, when a body has among its members strong leaders and gifted teachers they may become overzealous and seek too much ministry among the body and despise other's contributions.

Everything must work together and serve to edify, encourage, correct, rebuke and instruct the body with God's ultimate purpose as the goal before everyone's eyes. GOD'S GOAL IN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IS TO HELP BRING ABOUT MATURITY IN EVERYONE God's goal in giving gifted men to the church is that they may serve as a means to God's end and never become an end in themselves. God's end is to beautify His church with the radiant glory and moral likeness of His only begotten Son so that together as a whole, the fullness of His Son can be seen, in ever increasing measure, in each member as they are related to one another in love.

This is the true meaning of spiritual adulthood. We must never give too much honor to one member of the body; nor can we place too little value on any contribution within the body. This is why it is important that all the members be given honor, and value be placed on everyone's contribution as the means that God uses to bring about spiritual adulthood. An example of this can be seen in a soccer game, when there is a tendency to make much of the one person who scores the winning goal.

Often the team will run to him, placing him on their shoulders, giving him a place of special honor. This is not a good practice however, because it encourages a wrong and misguided idea. The winning score was not the result of simply the one who made the goal, but the result of the entire team all playing faithfully in their designated places. If there were no other team members playing their part, the winning score would not have been possible! Each member is essential for a successful win.

Therefore when there is joy over a victory, all members of the team should be honored and not just the more visible ones. This principle is true in the local body too. Our coming to spiritual adulthood and the winning of daily victories cannot be attributed to the skill or talent of just one or two of the members of the body that may be more visible than others. Sometimes, because of spiritual infancy which so often prevails in a local church, it seems that many times the labor of only a few mature ones are often overburdened.

But this is not to be the normal persisting condition. This may occur for the beginning stages of a local church and those leading may have to work extra hard to compensate for the lack of spiritual strength of the other members. But eventually, this condition should be eclipsed by an increasing capacity in all the members to assume spiritual responsibility. When this happens, less and less does the body need to rely on one or two spiritually strong leaders for guidance and constant feeding.

Rather, each member begins to walk in the light with one another and together as a body, the Lord increases capacity for the body to discern the Lord's movements and leading for its daily guidance. Accordingly, the leaders can stop bearing more than their load and enter into the divine order of being members of the body, functioning with others who are bearing their part too in the building up of the body! Leading roles within the body are for the caring of the spiritual life of the flock by providing oversight and

sound, life giving teaching from the Word of God.

This is to occur through love, springing out of genuine relatedness to one another within the body. These roles are not intended to become a means to create unwholesome dependence from those benefiting from their service among the flock. Rather, leading roles are placed in the body to assist others to grow up to spiritual adulthood so that everyone can enjoy knowing the Lord and together discerning His will in matters that concern the life of the body. Leading roles in teaching and guiding are intended to promote the spiritual development of the entire body so that each member can be properly related to one another and supply the life and light being received from the Head.

Spiritual oversight ministry should not be neglected or despised, but rather welcomed. This welcome heart from the body makes it easier for those called to lead so they can fulfill their ministry to the Lord with joy and not grief. We are commanded to submit to and obey those who are speaking the Word of God to us and demonstrate a life of godliness and faith. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER In conclusion, God's purpose in saving us is to transform us from earthly, carnal people into spiritual adults that are ever increasingly bearing the moral likeness of His beloved Son.

This process occurs by being subject to tests and trials to gain experience and approval through a growing capacity to live on the basis of Christ's life. We must always be careful that we do not resist the Holy Spirit or despise the trials we have to go through lest we fail to yield in our spirit to God's purpose in helping us to grow up. If we persistently resist, we may forfeit God's highest purpose and fall short of receiving the full reward in the age to come. It is important to embrace, not only the historical cross and all its meaning but also to allow the Holy Spirit to apply the principle of the cross in our daily lives, helping us to die to our own ways and live only to the will of God, as defined in the Word of God.

Spiritual adulthood cannot be realized unless we become functionally related on a local level to other members of the body of Christ and learn to grow together in our capacity to discern the Lord's will. It is not possible to grow up spiritually by simply reading our Bibles often, going to prayer meetings and spending lots of time alone with God. While all these things may be good they cannot of themselves provide the proper setting for the attaining to spiritual adulthood. God says that adulthood is realized only as each member is related to each other, in an organic and functional capacity.

In this setting, we are growing with others through the process of each member contributing to one another that which is being supplied from the Head. This requires a deeper dying to self. By this, the body is build as a living expression of Christ, and God's love is more and more realized in an operational way, being seen in all the members caring for each other in very practical ways! God has called some to occupy leading roles within the body for the purpose of overseeing the spiritual lives of their brothers and sisters.

This is intended by God to assist the body to grow up into spiritual adulthood. We must not become too dependent upon leaders in our midst nor can we ignore them and neglect to listen to the Word of God that they speak to us. Rather, we recognize the value of each member and give proper honor to all so that there are no divisions or tears in the body. May the Lord give us a heart that will not settle for anything less than God's highest intention and grant us much patience to endure the necessary process we must all go through to arrive at His highest goal, mature adulthood in Christ, possessing a faith that has been approved by God as having passed through the fire of affliction and found to be to the praise and honor of Jesus Christ!

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