

The Prayer for Christian Perfection

by Samuel Chadwick

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian Perfection, which is surrender to, acceptance of, and efficiency in, all the will of God, and it encourages believers to pray for perfection and trust in God's ability and good faith.

Scripture: Psalm 138:8, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 13:20, James 1:4, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Prayer And Holiness"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches on the pursuit of perfection through prayer, emphasizing the importance of surrendering to God's will and allowing Him to work in us to be well-pleasing in His sight. He discusses the challenges of claiming perfection and the significance of the covenant through the blood of Jesus in our journey towards holiness. Chadwick highlights the role of prayer in aligning our will with God's and seeking His grace to perfect every good thing in us.

Transcript

"Now the God of peace, which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good thing, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

To that prayer I say Amen, and to that covenant I set my seal.

It is not for any man to say he is perfect. The doctrine is scriptural and the defense of it is sound, but the profession of the experience in terms of perfection is not to be commended. It may be true, but it is not expedient. Testimony should never need to be explained. If a man were to say he was perfect, he would need always to safeguard his testimony by explaining what he did not mean. Even then most people would remember the statement and forget the qualifications. It is well to leave the witness to our perfection to other people, and yet the experience cannot be retained without confession. It is assured to the soul by the witness of the Holy Spirit, and what He witnesses we have also to testify. The word may be inexpedient, but the reality must not be refused because the label is not acceptable. It is the experience that matters. Other terms have been used, but they are less expressive than those of scripture. Perfect love is scriptural and interpretative. Sanctification is also a scriptural word, but less popular in this country than in America. Full salvation is comprehensive and less definite, and that is true also of the terms which set forth the fullness of the Spirit. "Christian Perfection" would still be best if we talked Greek, but we

speak English and to English-speaking people who have no means of distinguishing between the perfection of grace for efficiency in all the will of God, and the perfection of grace in the consummation of glory, between fitness and finality.

PRAYING FOR PERFECTION

Perfection belongs to the language of prayer. Christian truth finds sublimest expression in prayer. There are no expositions of faith like those in the inspired prayer of Holy Scripture. Language finds its wings in the prayer-life of the soul. Prayer is an exercise that calls for every faculty of man's nature. We have all known people who were naturally slow of speech who were wonderfully gifted in prayer. One reason may be that we talk more freely to God than to anyone else. I remember presiding over a Conference to which there was submitted a resolution on the union of the churches. There was a phrase in it I did not quite like, and I asked that it might be withdrawn. The mover of the resolution expressed surprise that I should make such a request, for the words were quoted from my own prayer at the previous Sunday morning service. There was a laugh at the expense of the president, until I assured them that I said many things to God that I never said to anyone else. Hannah poured out her soul in prayer to God. That is prayer, and in such prayer there are no boundaries or restraints. God knows what we mean. There is no need to weigh our thoughts or measure our words, lest the dictionary should condemn us. We pour them all out knowing that God looks at the heart, and nowhere are we so conscious that we are not perfect as in His presence. We know that above all things we seek to do His will, and our hearts are assured before Him, but our holy things need His grace and the cleansing of His blood. Prayer reviews life and motive in the light of His countenance. There is always something to correct, something to improve, something to claim. Prayer cannot ask too much. Hope dwells within the veil. Faith goes in to possess. We pray not only that we may be perfect in every good thing to do His will, but that we may be perfected in the consummation of grace in the glory of our glorious Lord. In prayer faith finds its function and its creed. Therefore, pray!

PERFECT IN EVERY GOOD THING TO DO HIS WILL

Prayer is definitely concerned with the will of God. To do His will we must know what it is, have grace to will it, and to do it. Both are found in prayer. The Perfection is the perfecting of every good thing. The evil things have been done away. It is the good that needs to be perfected. The prayer includes every good thing. In many there remains some good not perfected. When Brother Brice preached in the College Chapel he took the Potter for his subject, and told us some things the commentators did not know. He told us that the vessel on the wheel was not spoiled by some foreign element like stone or glass, wood or iron, but by something of the same nature as itself. It was a bit of clay, and it was quite as good as the rest, but it had not been tempered to the proper pliability. It was not made perfect for its purpose. All the rest was all right, but it was all spoiled because that bit of good clay had not been made perfect for the will of the potter. That illustration tells its own story. The trouble is the imperfect good thing.

Christian Perfection is surrender to, acceptance of, and efficiency in, all the will of God. It is not the attainment of some mystical ecstasy, or the achievement of some heroic sacrifice, but just doing the will of God out of a pure heart. Some people invent tests for themselves that God never imposed. One man I knew was kept from the joy of unreserved surrender for years because he was afraid God would send him to China. God never wanted him for China. Neurotic piety is always inventing impossible heroics. It keeps good people on the jump from one impossibility to another.

THE GUARANTY TO FAITH

God has given guaranties of His ability and good faith. It is not a question of man's will and ability, but of God's purpose and power. I believe in holiness, because I believe in the holiness of God. I am not able, but He is able. Unbelief measures God by man. Faith measures man by God. Unbelief asks if God can. Faith affirms His ability to do. Can God? God can. His very nature demands it, for He is the God of Peace. He makes peace. He gives peace; even perfect peace. There are no antagonisms He cannot reconcile, no dislocations He cannot adjust, no discords He cannot harmonize, no faults He cannot remedy, no diseases He cannot heal, no lack He cannot supply. He is the God of peace, and peace is the perfect relation of every part to every other part, and of all the parts to the whole.

He has proved His power. He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. The resurrection of our Lord from the dead is not mentioned elsewhere in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it is cited here as a guaranty of God's power to make His people perfect. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus is the New Testament standard of measurement for the power of God. It is the big thing by which all other things are measured. In the Old Testament it was the Red Sea. In the New Testament it is the empty grave. This is the example of what God can do. If He did that, He can do this. He is able, I believe.

He has provided a Great Saviour. The Risen Lord is the "Great Shepherd." He called Himself the Good Shepherd. God calls Him the Great Shepherd. After all salvation is not a question of mechanism, but a personal relationship. The Shepherd is everything to His flock. He protects and provides, leads and loves, heals and helps, corrects and controls. The Lamb of God has become the Shepherd of His people, and He so shepherds them that they neither hunger nor thirst, neither does the sun make them weary nor the hardness of the way distress them, for He leads them by still waters and living fountains, and with the gentleness of a mother God wipes away every tear from their eyes. I believe in holiness because I believe in the Great Shepherd.

God has put it in the covenant. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant the prayer for perfection is made. God has sworn by an oath. Every word of God is sure, but of this word He has given surety. It is His will we should be made perfect in every good thing to do His will. His only begotten Son is surety for His Word. He has undertaken it on covenant terms. It is a wonderful covenant, for in it God pledges Himself and undertakes for us. I love the covenant relationship. The blood of the cross is the security for our perfecting. I believe in Holiness because I believe in the covenant through the blood of the cross. Even that is not all. He works in us that which He wills to do for us. He works in us to will His will and to do His good pleasure. The end of it all is that we so live as to be well-pleasing in His sight. That is the Christian Perfection set forth in the great prayer which closes the Epistle on the Perfect Son, the Perfect Saviour, and the Perfect Salvation. How can I but believe that such a Saviour is able to save to the uttermost, and make me perfect in every good thing to do His Will?

Jesus, the First and Last,

On Thee my soul is cast:

Thou didst Thy work begin

By blotting out my sin;

Thou wilt the root remove,

And perfect me in love.

Yet when the work is done,
The work is but begun:
Partaker of Thy grace,
I long to see Thy face;
The first I prove below,
The last I die to know.

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