

# "BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT"

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Thus the foundation of the kingdom established by the New Covenant, as expressed by the Apostle Paul:

**Romans 3:23** *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [KJV]*

Followed straight away by:

**Romans 3:24–25** *being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; [KJV]*

It is foundational, because it recognizes unambiguously and unquestionably my starting position before God: a transgressor in need of rescue; followed by the reality of God's mercy and love to provide the rescue by means of Christ's redemption.

It convicts me of the need of a Redeeming Savior.

If I do not recognize the utter helplessness of my sinful condition, I may believe that I can compensate for any shortcomings or "lapses" and escape the subsequent divine judgment by doing or saying something virtuous.

Not so: what secures righteousness before God is repentance and the acknowledgment of both my sinful condition and of the redeeming function of Christ's immolation.

The righteousness of Christ and the redemption He accomplished are historically unique in that they extend beyond the person of Jesus, Who Himself was without sin, and Who covers us as no one else could. In the words of the prophet:

**Ezekiel 14:14** *even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God. [NRSV]*

Only the righteousness of Christ avails for me:

**1 Corinthians 1:30** *But it is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became God-given wisdom for us — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. [HCSB]*

We begin to grow spiritually when we let the Holy Spirit convict us of sin and convince us of the all-encompassing redemption of the Cross:

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [KJV]*

As we learn this, we must not forget that this is only the foundation — essential, necessary and inescapable foundation and starting point — but it is not the goal: not at all the goal.

The ultimate goal — equally glorious as it is incredible — is perfection, as the Lord Himself exhorted at the beginning of His earthly ministry on the Mount:

**Matthew 5:48** *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [KJV]*

The fact that I have not achieved perfection is no ground for my denying or ignoring the exhortation and dismissing the goal. In fact, this was the perspective of the Apostle Paul:

**Philippians 3:12** *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. [NLT]*

If, on the other hand, I feign humility and practice self-pity by holding that the goal of perfection is not for me, since I am only a sinner I — in fact — do not demonstrate any humility; rather I show both pride and blasphemous unbelief.

I show my pride by *de facto* ascribing any possible spiritual progress to myself, my abilities and my doings (which admittedly are indeed limited), rather than to the Lord and His mercy, which abounds.

Specifically, we have been told by the Lord that:

**John 15:5b** *..... Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. [NRSV]*

I must take note that the Lord did not say, "apart from me you can do only little things, but no great things"; rather, He said, "you can do nothing" that is fruitful (or of any spiritual fruit and value).

The truth is that in the Kingdom of God I am completely dependent on God, as a child is:

**Matthew 18:3** *This is the truth: unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [VOICE]*

I am completely dependent on God, as I abide in Him and I deny my independence:

**John 12:24** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit. [DARBY]*

Hence, if I rely on myself and my exertions, rather than die to myself in obedience, I do not bear fruit, because I "abide alone" rather than "abide in me."

I show my unbelief and blasphemy by making my condition, my limitations, my sins constraining, impassable limits for God's mercy and power.

This is never the case.

In fact, much of Jesus' work was precisely in demonstrating every day the omnipotence of God.

**Matthew 19:26** *But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible." [NRSV]*

The context of this saying of the Lord was the disciples finding it impossible "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" for it is easier for "a camel to go through the eye of a needle."

Who am I to deny God the ability and the pleasure to make me as perfect as He is?

The truth that:

**Luke 1:37** ..... *nothing will be impossible with God.* [ESV]

was also the teaching of the angel to Mary, who had marveled at the announcement of her having been chosen to give birth to the Son of the Most High, since she was a virgin.

Shall I then not learn from Mary, the mother of Jesus, who admirably attested her faith by answering:

**Luke 1:38b** ..... *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."* [ESV]

And, accordingly, dare I believe that it is possible for God to make me perfect, according to His wish and dare I look forward to that day?

Just as essential as it is to recognize that we are far from having attained perfection, so it is essential to trust that God is able to make us perfect according to His pleasure and will, if we let Him.

This is how the Apostle Paul described his standpoint and personal plan:

**Philippians 3:13-14** *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. [NLT]*

The recipe is not to dwell on past failures and sins, but not to belittle them either, because they are offensive to God and earn us eternal damnation. Rather, we must confess them immediately, rejoice in the power Christ earned to forgive sin and aim for perfection not by our earnest endeavor, rather by our dedicated obedience and faith in the power of God and in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Since:

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, (Hebrews 11:1 [NRSV])*

we may hope for perfection and, by faith, receive the assurance of our hope of achieving it.

Then — when "the time of our departure has come" — each one may say:

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. [NRSV]*