

Christian Perfection



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1. His Perfect Standard

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect.

BE YOU *therefore* perfect. You know that such is the word of God. You know that we are exhorted to...

Hebrews 6

¹ ...go on unto perfection.

You know that the gospel, the very preaching of the gospel which you and I preach, is to...

Colossians 1

²⁸ ...present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Then it is not for us to say that perfection is not expected of us. It *is* expected of us. You must expect it of yourself. I must expect it of myself. And I must not accept anything in myself or of myself that does not meet in perfection the standard of perfection which God has set.

What could possibly prevent us from attaining perfection more than to think that it is *not* expected? I say again, What could possibly prevent you and me from attaining unto perfection more than for us to say that it is not expected that we should be perfect?

Then, as it is settled that the Word says that you and I are to be perfect, the only thing for you and me to consider is the way. That is all. Let it be settled by you and by me that perfection as God has set it, is to be expected of you and me; and that you and I will not accept anything in ourselves, in what we have done, nor anything about us, that is a hair's breadth short of perfection as God has set it,—let this be settled by each one, and settled forever,—then inquire only the way; and the thing will be accomplished.

What is the standard then which God has set?

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The perfection of God is the only standard. And you and I must set ourselves right there, and stand face to face with ourselves, always demanding of ourselves that there shall be perfection such as God's is, in us; and that we will not look with a particle of allowance upon, we will not apologize for nor excuse, anything in ourselves that is in any conceivable degree short of that perfection.

It is plain enough that we cannot be perfect in greatness as God is, nor in omnipotence as He is, nor in omniscience as He is. God is character; and it is perfection of perfection as His is, that He has set for you and me, to which we shall attain, which alone we are to expect, and which alone we are to accept in ourselves.

Then when it is God's own perfection which you and I must have, and which alone we will accept of ourselves, and we hold ourselves to that standard always, you can see at once that that will be for you and me only to hold ourselves constantly in the presence of the judgment of God. There is where every one of us expects to stand, whether we are righteous or wicked.

Why not stand there, then, and be done with it? It is settled that you and I are to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, and there every one of us shall be measure by the standard.

Acts 17

³¹ [God] has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ is God's pledge to the world that every man shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. That is settled. You and I expect it, we preach it; we believe it.

Then why not put ourselves there, and stand steadily there? Why wait? Those who wait, and continue to wait, will not be able to stand there. The ungodly cannot stand in this judgment; but those who put themselves before the judgment-seat of God, facing the standard of judgment, and hold themselves there constantly in thought, word, and deed, are ready for the judgment any moment.

Ready for it? They have it; they are there; they are passing it; they are inviting the judgment, and all that the judgment brings; they stand there expecting to be passed upon: and only he who does this is safe. The very blessing that comes in that thing is all the reward that any person needs for putting himself just now before the judgment-seat.

And standing there, what has he to fear? Nothing. And when all fear is cast out, what is it that does it? Perfect love. But perfect love can come only by our meeting that perfect standard of the judgment, in the judgment, and can be kept only by standing there.

That being settled, let us inquire the way, that is all. It is settled, then, that mine is not the standard. Think of it!

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

His perfection is the only standard. Then whose measurement of the standard, whose estimate of the standard, is the proper one? Not mine. I cannot measure God's perfection. You remember the verse—perhaps it occurs to you this moment:

Psalms 119

⁹⁶ I have seen an end of all perfection: but your commandment is exceeding broad.

No finite mind can measure God's perfection. Then it is settled, so far, that we are to be perfect; our perfection is to be as His perfection is, and according to His own estimate of His

own perfection. Then that takes entirely away from you and me the whole plan, and everything about it as to the doing of it. For when I cannot measure the standard, how should I attain to it, even if it were given me to do? Then let it be settled also that as to the doing of it, it is put utterly beyond you.

This also was said long, long, ago:

Job 9

² I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

³ If He will contend with him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand.

¹⁹ If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?

And when I should come to plead, what then?

²⁰ If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.

If I can measure up myself to the satisfaction of myself, and pronounce the balance settled; when it is set alongside of His estimate, my own estimate is so far short that it condemns me utterly. There is in it no basis of justification.

²⁰ ...if I say, I am perfect, it [my own mouth] shall also prove me perverse.

²¹ Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

My own standard of perfection, when set in the presence of His, and seen in the light of His, would be so far short that I myself would despise it.

³⁰ If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean;

³¹ Yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me.

That is as near as we could come to the standard, if it were given to us to do. Then let us forever abandon all idea that perfection is anything that we are to work out. Perfection is

that to which we are to attain, nothing but that. God expects it, and He has made provision for it. That is what we were created for. The only object of our existence is to be just that,—perfect with God’s perfection.

And remember that we are to be perfect with His character. His standard of character is to be ours. We are not to have one made like it: it itself is to be ours. And that alone is Christian perfection.

Now that we must have that, the whole story is told in three texts. The first one is in the 1st chapter of *Ephesians*, beginning with the third verse in order correctly to get the story in the fourth verse:

Ephesians 1

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

⁴ According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world...

Now notice what He chose us for; this is the object He had before the foundation of the world, in choosing you and me, and bringing us to this hour. Then let us face the issue:

⁴ ...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

That is His only thought concerning us. That is all that He made us for; that is all we exist for. Then another word right there: When that is so, why shall we not face it? Why shall we not just now meet the object of our existence and be holy and without blame before Him in love?

2. The Way of the Cross

The next text is:

Colossians 1

¹⁹ It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell;

²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

²¹ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled

²² In the body of His flesh through death, TO PRESENT YOU holy and unblamable and unreprouable in His sight.

FIRST: He made us for that purpose. By sin we were swung entirely out of that purpose, the whole purpose was frustrated; but He endured the cross: it pleased God thus to do, and it pleased Christ thus to do it, that His original purpose might be fulfilled. The point is, that by His cross He reconciled us, in order that this original purpose might be met in us,—the purpose that he had before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

The blood of Christ, the reconciliation of peace which is brought to the world by Jesus Christ, is in order the HE might present us holy,—that HE might do that very thing that He had in mind before the foundation of the world,—that HE MIGHT PRESENT YOU AND ME...

²² ...holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight.

The way to Christian perfection is the way of the cross, and there is no other way. I mean there is no other way for you and me. The way to bring it to us, the only way, was by way of the cross. He came that way, and brought it; and the only way for you and me to get it is by the way of the cross. He has made provision that He himself shall do this; we do not come into it at all, for the doing.

Now notice what is really done in this, how fully He has supplied the need.

Ephesians 4

⁷ Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Now think. What did the gift of Christ do, so far in our study? It “made peace through the blood of the cross,” and reconciled all to God. And it did it to make US what, before the foundation of the world, He designed we should be, —“holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight.” That is the measure of the gift of Christ in this thing.

And it accomplished the purpose for all so far that it opened the way for all. And unto every one of US, just now, is given grace according to the same measure. Then what the cross brought TO us, and put within our reach, the grace of God GIVES us, and accomplishes in us.

Now let us read right on, and you will see that this is all so, right up to the very word perfection itself:

Ephesians 4

⁷ Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

⁸ Wherefore he said, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and GAVE GIFTS unto MEN.

¹¹ And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

What for?

¹² For THE PERFECTING of THE SAINTS...

Brethren, when those gifts are given for that purpose, what are we doing when we do not face the fact, and long for the gifts, and pray for the gifts, and receive the gifts, which accomplish the purpose? What are we doing otherwise?

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The gifts are given for an object; brought to us for a purpose, a defined, distinct, definite purpose; and UNTIL that purpose is accomplished. They are given “for the perfecting of the saints;” and...

¹³ TILL we ALL COME in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the FULLNESS OF CHRIST.

Thus perfection is the only aim. God’s standard is the only one.

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

We cannot measure it; and could not attain to it, if it were given us to do. It is the object of our creation; and when that object was frustrated by sin, He made it possible to all by the blood of His cross, and makes it certain to every believer by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Then again I ask, Why should we not constantly face Christian perfection, and accept nothing of ourselves but that? The 24th of *Jude* connects directly with what has been read and said:

Jude 1

²⁴ Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

²⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

He chose us before the foundation of the world:

Ephesians 1

⁴ ...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

By the cross He made it possible to every soul, even when by sin we had lost all chance. And by the cross He bought the

right...

Colossians 1

²² ...to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in His sight.

The right to do this belongs only to Him. You and I could not do it if it were given to us to do; but the right to do it does not belong to us. When we had lost it, nothing but the cross of Calvary could restore it. And no one could pay the price of Calvary but He who did pay it. Then as certainly as only He who paid the price that must bring this to us, so certainly the right belongs only to Him by right of the cross of Calvary.

And no one who has not endured the literal wooden cross of Calvary can ever have any right to take up that task to accomplish it. Only He endured the cross: to Him only belongs the task. And there stands the word: He “is able”:

Jude

²⁴ [He] is able...to present you faultless before the presence of His glory.

3. When Is It To Be Done?

HE WHO is able to endure the cross is able to accomplish all that the cross made possible. So,

Jude

²⁴ [He] is able...to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy

WHEN? That is the question. When?

Now. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is able just now as He was then, or as He will ever be. Yet bear in mind that it is ever true that only by the way of the cross does it come to you and to me just now or ever. Let us study the Word that you may see this.

Read *Romans* 5:21, and then glance through the 6th chapter; for it is occupied with this one story. The last two verses of the 5th chapter of *Romans* read thus:

Romans 5

²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

²¹ That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now the comparison, or rather the contrast,—for it is a comparison that amounts to a contrast,—“as” and “even so.” “As sin has reigned.” You know how sin reigned. Every one here knows how sin has reigned. Some may know even yet how it reigns.

When sin reigned, the reign was absolute, so that it was easier to do wrong than it was to do right. Isn’t that the truth? When sin reigned, it was easier to do wrong than it was to do right. We longed to do right; but:

Romans 7

¹⁹ The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would

not, that I do.

That is the reign of sin. Then when sin reigned, it was easier to do wrong than it was to do right.

Romans 5

²¹ ...even so might grace reign through righteousness.

When grace reigns, it is easier to do right than it is to do wrong. That is the comparison. Notice: As sin reigned, even so grace reigns. When sin reigned, it reigned against grace; it beat back all the power of grace that God had given.

But when the power of sin is broken, and grace reigns, then grace reigns against sin, and beats back all the power of sin. So it is as literally true that under the reign of grace it is easier to do right than to do wrong, as it is true that under the reign of sin it is easier to do wrong than to do right. So then the way is clear, isn't it? Let us go that way.

Romans 5

²¹ That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

² God forbid.

That is right. Now God has put His "forbid" against sinning that grace may abound. Then has not God put His forbid against sinning at all? Do you endorse that? Do you put your endorsement upon God's forbid that you shall sin at all under the reign of grace?

Then doesn't He intend that you and I shall be kept from sinning? And when we know that He intends it, then we can confidently expect it. If we do not expect it, it will never be done.

4. The Death of the Old Man

SO THEN, the first verse of the 6th chapter of *Romans* shows that God intends that we shall be kept from sinning, doesn't it? What does the second verse say?

Romans 6

² How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Well, how shall we? Then what does that verse intend? That we shall not continue at all in sin. Then being dead brings in the burial. Buried with him by baptism into death, and raised to walk in newness of life.

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

There is the course laid out before us, and it is the way of the cross. Now notice three things there:

1. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him." What for?
2. "That the body of sin might be destroyed." And what is that for?
3. "That henceforth we should not serve sin."

Unless the body of sin is destroyed, we will serve sin. Unless the old man is crucified, the body of sin is not destroyed. Then the way to be kept from sinning is the way of crucifixion and destruction.

The only question, then, for us each to settle is, Would I rather be crucified and destroyed than to sin? If with you it is everlastingly settled that you would rather be crucified, and rather meet destruction this moment than to sin, you will never sin.

Romans 6

⁶ ...crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be de-

stroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Then freedom from the service of sin lies only through crucifixion and destruction. Do you choose sin, or do you choose crucifixion and destruction? Will you choose destruction and escape sin? or will choose sin, and destruction, too? That is the question. It is not an alternative. He who would evade destruction, to escape destruction, meets destruction. He who chooses destruction escapes destruction.

Well, then, the way of destruction by the cross of Christ is the way of salvation. Jesus Christ went to destruction on the cross, to bring salvation to you and me. It cost the destruction of the Son of God on the cross, to bring salvation to you and me. Will we give destruction for salvation? Will you? Anybody who fixes it, and holds it in his hand as an everlasting bid, that he gives destruction, every moment of his life, for salvation, will never lack salvation.

But there is where the trouble comes. Destruction is not pleasant; it is not easy—that is, to the old man. To the natural choice, it is not easy to be destroyed; but to him who does it, it is easy. It is easy when it is done, and it is easy to continue it forever when it is done.

When is it that we are to do this? When is it that He presents us faultless before the presence of his glory? Now; and the only way is the way of destruction. Now is the time to choose destruction. Now is the time to deliver up yourself forever to destruction. But if I hold myself back, if I shrink from destruction, then what am I shrinking from? Salvation. For,

⁶ ...our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Then if I meet some experience that puts me into a pressure that seems like destruction, that is all right; for destruction is what I have chosen, that I may not serve sin. Such a surrender brings Christian pleasantness into the life; for the joy, the last-

ing peace, and the satisfaction of being kept from sinning, is worth all the destruction that can ever come to you and me. It is worth it. So it is not a hard bargain that is driven; it is the grandest one that ever came to men.

5. Freedom from Sin

CRUCIFIXION, destruction, and then henceforth not serving sin,—there, then, is the way to Christian perfection. Why?

Romans 6

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Thank the Lord, he that is dead is freed from sin. Then the only question that can ever come in my life or yours is, “Am I dead?” And if I am not, and something occurs that accomplishes it, freedom from sin is the only consequence; and that is worth all that it costs. See also the next verse:

⁸ Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

- The first verse intends that we shall be free from sin.
- The second verse intends that we shall be free from sin.
- The sixth verse says that we are not henceforth to serve sin.
- The seventh verse says he that is dead is freed from sin.
- The eighth verse says if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him.

Where does He live—in righteousness or in sin?

[Voices]: “In righteousness.”

Very good. Then it is plain that the first, the second, the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth verses of the 6th chapter of *Romans* all intend that we shall be kept from sinning. How about the ninth verse?

⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.

How as it that death ever had dominion over Him at all? Because of sin—not His own, but ours; for He was made...

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ ...to be sin for us, who knew no sin.

Then death has no more dominion over Him. He has victory over sin and all its consequences forever. Then what does that verse tell you and me? We are risen with Him.

¹⁰ For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.

Then both the ninth and tenth verses also intend that we shall be kept from sinning. The eleventh verse:

¹¹ Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.

And thus again He intends that we shall not sin.

¹³ Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.

The reign of grace lifts the soul above sin, holds it there, reigns against the power of sin, and delivers the soul from sinning.

¹⁵ What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

6. The Service of Righteousness

THUS from the first verse to the fourteenth of the 6th chapter of *Romans*, there is preached, over and over, deliverance from sin and from sinning. That is great, but there is something still in advance of that.

Hebrews 6

¹ Let us go on unto perfection.

Listen:

Romans 6

¹⁶ Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Delivered from the power of sin, to whom did you yield yourselves? To God; then you are His servants, set free to the service of righteousness. God does not intend there shall be a blank life in His keeping us from sinning. He intends that there shall be active, intelligent service; and that only righteousness shall be the result.

It is a wonderfully great thing to be made free from sin and to be kept from sinning; it is another wonderfully great thing upon that, to be made the servants of righteousness, so that our service is unto righteousness. Therefore let every soul echo:

¹⁷ God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which has delivered you.

¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, YOU BECAME THE SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Thank the Lord for that! He says you are; and when He says you are, it is so. Thank Him for it. Thank Him that you are delivered from sin; and thank the Lord that you are the servant of righteousness. He has made you so; for He says so. But that

is not all yet:

Romans 6

¹⁹ I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto HOLINESS.

²⁰ For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.

The Lord in this appeals to your experience and mine.

²⁰ For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.

You know that it is so. Take now the complement of it:

²¹ What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

²² But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto HOLINESS, and the end EVERLASTING LIFE.

We are not the servants of sin, free from righteousness; but we are the servants of righteousness, free from sin. As I have dwelt upon this, and the Lord has fed my soul upon the whole of it, I am reminded every once in a while of an expression of Milton's, where he speaks of the songs of the angels as notes of "measured sweetness long drawn out." This 6th chapter of *Romans* is one of those notes of measured sweetness long drawn out.

- It begins with freedom from sin: that is a great thing.
- Next upon that, freedom from sinning; and that is a great thing.
- Next upon that, servants of righteousness; and that is a great thing.
- Next upon that, unto holiness; and that is a great thing.
- And upon all, the end, everlasting life; and that is a great thing.

Isn't that a note, then, of the Lord's, of measured sweetness long drawn out? Oh, receive it, dwell upon it, catch the sweet tones, and let them linger in the soul day and night: it does the soul good.

And there is the way to Christian perfection. It is the way of crucifixion, unto destruction of the body of sin, unto freedom from sinning, unto the service of righteousness, unto holiness, unto perfection in Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost, unto everlasting life.

7. Unto the Fullness of Christ

LET us look again at the statement that the gifts are for the perfecting of the saints:

Ephesians 4

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

There is the pattern. The way that Christ went in this world of sin, and in sinful flesh,—your flesh and mine, burdened with the sins of the world,—the way He went in perfection and to perfection, is the way set before us.

He was born of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Jesus Christ was born again. He came from heaven, God's first-born, to the earth, and was born again. But all in Christ's work goes by opposites for us: He, the sinless one, was made to be sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He, the living one, the prince and author of life, died that we might live. He whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity, the firstborn of God, was born again, in order that we might be born again.

If Jesus Christ had never been born again, could you and I have ever been born again? No. But He was born again, from the world of righteousness into the world of sin; that we might be born again, from the world of sin into the world of righteousness. He was born again, and was made partaker of the human nature, that we might be born again, and so made partakers of the divine nature. He was born again, unto earth, unto sin, and unto man, that we might be born again unto heaven, unto righteousness, and unto God.

Brother Covert says that makes us as brethren. It does certainly make us as brethren. And he is not ashamed to call us his brethren either.

Then he was born again, by the Holy Ghost; for it is written, and was spoken to Mary:

Luke 1

³⁵ The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.

Jesus, born of the Holy Ghost, born again, grew...

Luke 2

⁵² ...in wisdom and stature,

–unto the fullness of life and character in the world, to where He could say to God:

John 17

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work You gave me to do.

God's plan and mind in Him had attained to perfection. Jesus, born again, born of the Holy Ghost, born of flesh and blood, as we were, the Captain of our salvation, was made...

Hebrews 2

¹⁰ ...perfect through sufferings,

–for:

Hebrews 5

⁸ Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;

⁹ And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

Jesus thus went to perfection in human flesh, through suffering; because it is in a world of suffering that we in human flesh must attain perfection.

8. Perfect at Each Stage

AND while growing all the time, He was perfect all the time. Do you see that? There is where many people misconceive the whole thought of Christian perfection—they think the ultimate is the only measure. It is in God’s plan; but the ultimate is not reached at the beginning. Look again at the 4th chapter of *Ephesians*. This is a suggestion, thrown out to you and me, how we may attain to this perfection:

Ephesians 4

¹³ ...the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Now couple with that the following verses:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even in Christ.

This is to be accomplished in you and me by growth; but there can be no growth where there is no life. This is growth in the knowledge of God, growth in the wisdom of God, growth in the character of God, growth in God; therefore it can be only by the life of God. But that life is planted in the man at the new birth. He is born again, born of the Holy Ghost; and the life of God is planted there, that he “may grow up into Him”—in how much?—“...in all things.”

You remember that:

Matthew 13

²⁴ The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

And:

Luke 8

¹¹ The seed is the word of God.

The seed is planted. He realizes that night and day it grows, he knows not how. But that seed is what? It is perfect; for God made it. It sprouts presently. What of the sprout?

[Congregation]: “Perfect, too.”

Is it?

[Voices]: “Yes.”

But it is not a head of grain; it is not a stalk standing full and strong; it is a mere sprout peeping through the ground. But what of it? Is it not perfect?

[Congregation]: “Yes.”

According to the rate of its progress, it is as perfect at that point as it will be when its course is finished, at the point of maturity. Do you not see? Let not that misconception abide anymore. Away with it!

When that sprout peeps through the ground, you stoop to look at it. It is a thing to be admired. It is charming, because it is perfect. That is as perfect a blade as ever appeared on earth, but it is a mere spindling thing, barely peeping through the ground. That is all there is of it; but it is perfect. It is perfect, because it is as God made it. God is the only one that had anything to do with it. Do you not see? It is all right.

So you and I, born again of that good seed of the word of God,—born by the word of God and the Holy Ghost, born of the perfect seed,—when that seed sprouts and grows, and begins to appear among men, people see the characteristics of Christ. And what is he? Perfect. Then what is the Christian right there?

[Congregation]: “Perfect.”

If we be born again through the power of Jesus Christ, and God himself directs the work, what will that be which appears? It will be perfect. And that is Christian perfection at that point. Jesus Christ presents you holy, unblamable, and unprovable, before the throne at that point.

That sprout grows and stands above the ground; presently another blade shoots off; there are two of them, and each is just as handsome as the other. The third one appears; it is now a stalk, and still grows. It now presents another picture altogether from that which it presented at first. Another picture indeed, but no more perfect than before. It is nearer to ultimate perfection, nearer to God's accomplished purpose; but, though nearer to ultimate perfection, it is no more perfect, as it stands now, than it was the moment that it peeped through the ground.

In time it grows to its full height. The head is full-formed. The bloom appears upon it. It is more beautiful on account of it. And at last appears the full head of grain, perfect; and the grains of wheat, each one perfect. The work, God's work, is finished upon it. It is perfected. It has attained unto perfection according to God's mind when he started it.

That is Christian perfection. It comes by growth. But the growth can be only by the life of God. And the life of God being the spring, it can grow only according to God's order. Only He can shape the growth. Only He knows, in perfection, the pattern. Christ is the pattern. God knows perfectly the pattern; and He can cause us to grow in perfection according to that pattern; because the same power, the same life, is in this growth that was in the growth of the original pattern, Jesus Christ.

9. Finishing the Mystery

AND as Jesus began, at his birth, as a little child in human flesh, and grew up and finished the work that God had given Him to do; so you and I, born again, growing up in Him in all things, come presently to the day when we, as did He, shall say, and say in righteousness:

John 17

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work You gave me to do.

For it is written:

Revelation 10

⁷ In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.

We are in that day. We have that mystery given to us to give to the world. It is to be finished for the world; and it is to be finished in those who have it. But what is the mystery of God?

Colossians 1

²⁷ ...this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ ...the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.

Then in these days that mystery is to be finished in one hundred and forty-four thousand people. God's work in human flesh, God being manifested in human flesh, in you and me, is to be finished. His work upon you and me is to be finished. We are to be perfected in Jesus Christ. By the Spirit we are to come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Is not that worth having? Is not the Lord's way a good way unto perfection? Oh, then:

Hebrews 6

¹ Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

² Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

He has freed us from the unstable foundation that we had when in sin. Let the only foundation be that of the service of righteousness unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

And to every soul who will face the Judgment, and hold himself in the presence of the Judgment, surrendering himself to crucifixion and destruction, that thing will be accomplished in God's own way, and in the short time in which He has promised to bring us unto righteousness. *Romans 9:28.*

Then it is only God, God's estimate, His standard, and Christ the pattern, and His the work, always, in all things, everywhere and forever! Then be of good cheer. Let it be Christ first, last, and all the time. The way is told beautifully in verse:

When times of temptation bring sadness and gloom.

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord;

The last of earth's treasures borne out to the tomb,

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.

This earth has no sorrow, for today or tomorrow.

But Jesus has known it and felt, long ago:

And when it comes o'er me, and I'm tempted so sorely.

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.

When out on the hilltops, away from all sin

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord;

When joyous and happy, the sunshine within,

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.

To know I'm forgiven is a foretaste of heaven,

And Jesus is dearer to me than before;

Such peacefulness fills me, such an ecstasy thrills me.

I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.

When weary with telling, and ready to faint,
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord;
He never refuses to hear my complaint,
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.
I'll cheerfully bear it, when I've Jesus to share it;
His yoke, it is easy; his burden is light.
When life becomes dreary, and I'm footsore and weary,
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.

When darkness is dimming my path to the sky,
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord;
When helpers shall fail me, and comforts shall fly,
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.
Though blurred my life's pages, by my sin and its wages.
He's, yesterday, now, and forever, the same;
I'll not be forsaken, though my life should be taken;
I will tell it to Jesus my Lord.¹

¹ John M. Whyte, Hymn: *I Will Tell It To Jesus, My Lord*.

