

*How is
Perfection Possible?*



Robert Brinsmead

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Is Perfection Possible? versus How is Perfection Possible?

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Contents

Foreword

How is Perfection Possible?..... 1

The Condition of the Natural Man..... 1

A Change of Nature Required..... 2

First Step: Justification..... 5

Second Step: Sanctification..... 6

Third Step: Final Atonement..... 7

Foreword

HERE is a short pamphlet from the early days of the Brinsmead Awakening message. It is a concise presentation of the 1888 gospel message, especially as touching the topic of the perfection of the saints.

I found it interesting, and therefore worthwhile to republish, because of its use of the terms: “eradicate” (1), “eradicated” (1), “eradication” (3). This word was also used frequently by F. T. Wright in the presentation of the gospel message. So this article shows yet another link between the Awakening message, and the message presented by F. T. Wright, which led to the formation of the Sabbath Rest Advent Church.

Of course, for a few years, Fred Wright was associated with the Awakening message, and was in harmony with many of their teachings; and through this revival of the 1888 gospel, his own soul had found release from the continual bondage to the power of sin.

The “death of the old man,” “freedom from the bondage to sin’s power,” the “regeneration of the heart,” and “cleansing from the power of sin,” are all the same ideas, and describe the process of the new birth, that turns a sinner into a saint, and makes him a child of God, through the impartation of the life of Christ. But first, there must be a death of the old ruling power in the heart, and this important step in the gospel message is often missing or misunderstood in modern presentations.

It was for this reason that Fred Wright was commissioned by Jesus Christ to dwell on this topic often, and also why the 1888 gospel message, that began to be revived in the Brinsmead Awakening of the late 1950’s to early 1960’s, also had the same emphasis.

Robert Brinsmead eventually left this clear understanding of the gospel, and wandered into many different ways. But this

early writing stands as a testimony to the truth that he once proclaimed, and which is still alive today.

Frank Zimmerman

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How is Perfection Possible?

Hebrews 6

¹ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.

NO ONE can read the New Testament without seeing the plain testimony that moral perfection, perfection of character, is the goal of the Christian. The completeness of Christian character is exemplified in the life of Jesus, the Pattern Man. He did not live and die only that His righteousness might be imputed to the believer, but that it might be imparted to him. Christlikeness is the goal of the Christian. Christ's perfection of character is the mark set before the believer. Listen to the great apostle:

Philippians 3

¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after...

¹⁴ I press toward the mark...

The Condition of the Natural Man

What does this perfection involve? In order to answer this question, we must realize the condition of the natural man. The Bible shows that we are all sinners, not just sinners by deed, but sinners by nature. This involves far more than a possession of "sinful flesh"—the weakened and degenerate faculties of man's being—for the real sinful nature of man lies in his heart and mind. It is controlled by the corrupt principle of selfishness, deeply dyed in the stain of original sin. Man is born with hereditary propensities to disobedience, with the whole bent of his mind biased toward evil. He is...

Psalms 58

³ ...estranged from the womb, [and] goes astray as soon as he is born.

To the hereditary tendencies to evil he adds cultivated ten-

dencies to evil. By nature he is an enemy of God.

Colossians 1

²¹ ...alienated and enemies in...mind,

Ephesians 2

³ ...by nature the children of wrath,

–is how the apostle Paul describes us. Jesus shows that this sinful nature is the fountain of all evil, or as he changes the figure, the corrupt tree that inevitably bears evil fruit of every stripe and hue.

Mark 7

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Matthew 7

¹⁷ Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

Paul identifies this sinful nature of the heart and mind as the “old man,” or the first husband to which the would-be Christian finds himself united.¹

A Change of Nature Required

Now we are ready to answer the question: What does this perfection involve? It is now very evident that it requires that this sinful nature of man’s heart and mind be eradicated and changed. His nature must be made pure and holy. The old sinful disposition, the bias and tendency to evil must be cut away from the character. This corrupt and carnal nature must be destroyed out of him, not just counteracted. Then he must be given new motives, new tastes, new tendencies, a new bias and bent of mind. He must be made a partaker of the divine

¹ *Romans 6:6; 7:1-5.*

nature.

Does the gospel make provision for such a change in this life? Does it make provision for the purification and eradication of this great fountain of evil which lies buried in a man's heart?

Purification of the fountain of evil, eradication of the sinful desires and inclinations, death and destruction of the "old man" is the verity of the gospel. The Bible employs the most explicit language and the most forceful illustrations to demonstrate that this is indeed God's purpose for the human soul.

The incurable leprosy had to be rent away from the infected garment in order that the garment could be clean.

Leviticus 13

⁵⁶ And if the priest look, and, behold, the plague be somewhat dark after the washing of it; then he shall rend it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof:

⁵⁷ And if it appear still in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; it is a spreading plague: you shall burn that wherein the plague is with fire.

Moses commanded Israel to circumcise (meaning to cut away, separate, eradicate) the foreskin of their hearts.

Deuteronomy 10

¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

God promised Israel that He would circumcise their hearts.

Deuteronomy 30

⁶ And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.

When the Lord, through Ezekiel promised believers a new heart, He made it clear what was to happen to the sinful nature of the old heart:

Ezekiel 36

²⁶ ...I will *take away* the stony heart *out of* your flesh.

John the Baptist declared that the axe was to be laid at the root of the tree—the motives, inclinations, and propensities of the natural heart. Then in the writings of Paul the reality of this great truth is forcefully stated. To him, the gospel of Christ spelled out the *crucifixion* and death of the “old man.” He preached that the old man was to be slain, not maimed.

Romans 6

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.

Paul showed that this “first husband” was not merely to be retired to the back room of the house, but that he was to be sentenced to death and destroyed.² He did not tell believers that Christ would share the house of the heart with the corrupt “old man,” just to *counteract* his evil temper and lustful practices. To the Colossians he declared:

Colossians 2 [Weymouth]

¹¹ ...you threw off your sinful nature in the circumcision of Christ...

Does this sound like a mere counteraction, or a positive eradication? Christ’s way of perfection is not just to throw some purifying substance into the turbid and filthy stream to counteract its poison, but it is to cleanse the fountain so that the streams might be pure. This work of moral perfection has already been wrought out in Christ, as it is written,

Hebrews 10

¹⁴ ...He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.

We have no business to ask,

“Is perfection possible?”

² *Romans 7:1-5.*

The only question is:

“Are we willing to have Christ’s perfection wrought out in us?”

Since this depends upon our faith and cooperation with Christ and the great agencies He employs in salvation, this work of moral perfection being wrought out in us is a *process*. Let us now examine this process. Broadly speaking, there are three great steps, and these three steps are most graphically illustrated by the outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place of the sanctuary service.

First Step: Justification

The first step is justification by faith. This takes place when the sinner is drawn to behold the love of Christ shining from the cross of Calvary. In its light he sees his heart as sinful and wicked, his whole life evil and depraved. Yet he believes that Christ died for the ungodly, and falling at the foot of the cross, he renounces the sinful life and enmity of his heart toward God. God receives, pardons, and cleanses the believer in Jesus. The perfect righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to him, and through this imputed righteousness of Christ he stands before God just as if he had not sinned.³

More than this, Christ changes his heart. Through the power of divine love, the old nature is broken up, there is a death to self and sin, a cutting away of sinful propensities, a putting off of the “old man” and his deeds;⁴ and to the soul is imparted new motives, new desires, new tendencies, new tastes. He becomes a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

³ *Romans 3 and 4.*

⁴ *Romans 6:1-4.*

2 Peter 1

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

All this was illustrated in the outer court ritual of the daily service:

- the gate (repentance),
- the altar (confession and death to the nature of sin),
- the laver (the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost), and
- the surrounding white linen of the outer court (the imputed righteousness of Christ which completely surrounds the believer).

Second Step: Sanctification

The second step is the daily process of sanctification. Conversion begins the process of making the believer holy; sanctification carries it forward in the daily life.

The reason that such a process is necessary is that when the believer first accepts Christ, the Saviour does not reveal to him all that He might. Although the prerequisite of justification is that the sinner die to all *known* selfishness and sin, his awareness of the deep depravity of the sinful nature of his heart and mind has only just begun. As he follows on to know the Lord, new glimpses of God's law in the face of Jesus Christ will reveal all too painfully the hidden selfishness and corruption of the human heart.

The true Christian experience will therefore be a daily, heartbroken confession of sinfulness and a humbling of soul before God. Deeper and deeper must go the work of *conversion*, deeper and deeper the experience of dying to the sinful nature, deeper and deeper the *uprooting* of the sinful propensities of the life.

1 Corinthians 15

³¹ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

There will be no boastful claim of freedom from sin. The Christian will ever be on guard against the wiles of the corrupt heart. He will cultivate humility and self-distrust. Because of his past familiarity with evil, he will be all too painfully aware that the old thought pathways and scars of sin have left their dwarfing effect upon his mind.

Jeremiah 17

¹ The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars.

Ezekiel 36

³¹ Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

This daily process of sanctification is illustrated by the service in the holy place of the sanctuary.

- The altar of incense points out the need of the constant covering of Christ's imputed righteousness and continual prayer from a broken and contrite heart.
- The table of shewbread points the believer to the necessity of "eating" the Word of God which will *destroy* the natural, earthly nature, and impart new life to the soul.
- The seven lamps point the believer to the continual need of the cleansing and keeping power of the Holy Spirit.

Third Step: Final Atonement

The final step is the experience with Christ in the cleansing of the sanctuary, an experience which will bring Christ's perfection fully to the heart and mind of the believer. Some claim that since in the history of the church in past ages there never

has been a people on earth without sin, there never will be. But Christ's entrance into the most holy place in 1844⁵ has opened to the understanding of God's people the crowning work of redeeming grace—the perfecting of the saints, the development of the sealed 144,000 who will be the firstfruits of the harvest of the saved of all ages.

This does not mean that Christ has kept something back from His people in past ages. No! No! It simply demonstrates that His people in past ages were not prepared or able to comprehend some of the vital issues of the plan of salvation and the great controversy. It is not that Christ wanted to wait 6000 years before He would enter the most holy place, but that His people were not ready to enter the experience of the most holy place until so many of the issues of the great controversy had been demonstrated to them.

The open door of the most holy place⁶ has brought into sharp focus the need of absolute perfection of character for the last generation. The light from the most holy place gives us a concept of God's purpose and requirements for the last generation that never entered into the understanding of His servants in past ages.

This message of the third angel makes it evident that we face the close of human probation and a time of trouble wherein the saints must live absolutely without sin, without a Mediator in the sanctuary, in the sight of a holy God. This message calls for translation from this earth without seeing death. It calls for a sealed people who will vindicate God's character before the whole universe in demonstrating that God is not unjust in requiring *perfect* obedience to His law.

Now in order to make the final demonstration of His love, mercy, and grace possible, our Lord has entered the most holy place for the work of cleansing the sanctuary. This work of

⁵ *Daniel* 8:14

⁶ *Revelation* 3:8.

cleansing includes the people of God as well as the temple in heaven.

Leviticus 16

³⁰ For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.

³¹ It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and you shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

³² And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

³³ And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

Malachi 3

¹ Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the Lord of hosts.

² But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appears? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

³ And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

The Israel of God is called to gather at the heavenly sanctuary by faith to join in the solemn work of great affliction of soul and special putting away of all sin.

Leviticus 16

²⁹ And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of

your own country, or a stranger that sojourns among you:

³⁰ For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.

Joel 2

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

¹⁷ Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare your people, O Lord, and give not your heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰ By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

²¹ And having a high priest over the house of God;

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised).

Then the High Priest will...

Malachi 3

³ ...purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Leviticus 16

³⁰ For on that day shall the priest make *an atonement* for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from *all* your sins before the Lord.

Through this special work of atonement, the Lord will purge the worshippers so that they will have...

Hebrews 10

² ...no more conscience of sin.

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

¹⁵ Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

¹⁶ This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

¹⁷ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

In this final atonement He will *blot out* the sins of His people so that they will never more be remembered or come into mind. In this great day of judgment He will...

Daniel 7

²⁶ ...take away his [Satan's] dominion [forever].

Acts 3

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

In these “last days” God will pour out His *perfecting* latter rain.

Joel 2

²³ Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He has given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

²⁴ And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

²⁶ And you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that has dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

²⁷ And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

This special outpouring of God's Spirit will:

- *complete* the work of God's grace in the soul,
- *wholly* transform His saints into the likeness of Christ, and
- prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man.

As Satan came to Christ and found nothing in Him, nothing that would respond to temptation, so in the last days, Satan will come to the 144,000 and find nothing in them. Every sinful propensity, every last trace of sin will have been removed from their souls. They will be spiritually perfected—sealed and secure from Satan's devices. Here is this last community of saints designated in prophecy:

Revelation 14

⁴ These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Notice that this faultless people are called firstfruits. They are the first community of saints upon this earth to attain, by God's grace, to the full stature of perfect men and women in Christ. They are fully mature, without sin. Their natures are pure and holy. God looks upon them with pleasure. His moral image is fully reflected in them. In them He answers Satan's

challenge and quietly says:

Revelation 14

¹² ...Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The great controversy is won. The great experiment of salvation from sin is complete.

Isaiah 4

³ And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy.

They are called holy. They do not call themselves holy. They are the last ones to parade their own righteousness, as Job of old said,

Job 9

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

But Jesus pronounces them holy in declaring of His saints,

Revelation 22

¹¹ ...he that is holy, let him be holy still.

God has committed to His Seventh-day Adventist people, the third angel's message, a knowledge of the book of *Revelation* which brings to view the special work of the last generation of saints. He has given to them a knowledge of the closing ministry of Christ in the most holy place. This message focuses on a special work of:

- blotting out of sins,
- the sealing,
- the latter rain,
- the development of the firstfruits,
- the close of probation,
- the necessity of being ready to live without a Mediator⁷

⁷ Without a Mediator but not without grace. The sinless Christ received grace on earth.

through the time of the seven last plagues,

- the people prepared for translation without seeing death.

All this spells out PERFECTION. These great and solemn truths are to cut a mighty cleavage between the remnant and its understanding of Christian perfection and Babylonian Protestantism and its understanding of perfection.

God forbid that His people lose sight of these mighty concepts which are intrinsic in the third angel's message!

God forbid that we deny the possibility of sinless perfection, like the Protestants who have rejected the third angel's message which shows the way into the most holy place!

God forbid that professed Seventh-day Adventists deal with the subject of perfection forgetting that there is such a thing as:

- the blotting out of sins,
- the latter rain,
- the sealing of the 144,000, and
- the book of *Revelation*!

May God save His people from being swept into the typical Protestant camp of righteousness by faith—which is simply:

“Sin and repent until Jesus comes.”

