

BE YE PERFECT

The Last Three Discourses from Lessons on Faith

By A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner



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James 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion [is] vain.

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PREFACE

Revelation 14:6-12, the everlasting gospel, is the last message given to mankind before Jesus comes again. The Adventist's doctrine believed and taught that these messages began with William Miller and continued to swell until a major milestone was reached in 1888 when A T Jones and E J Waggoner preached messages on righteousness by faith.

Sister White wrote "God has given Brother Jones and Brother Waggoner a message for the people. You do not believe that God has upheld them, but He has given them precious light, and their message has fed the people of God. When you reject the message borne by these men, you reject Christ, the Giver of the message." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 1353.

"I have been instructed to use those discourses of yours printed in the General Conference Bulletins of 1893. I was shown that many would be helped by these articles, these arguments which were of the Holy Spirit's framing." Letter 230 July 25 1908

Waggoner and Jones wrote other doctrinal messages, which were compiled in the book Lessons of Faith around 1900. The last three discourses were the highlight of the volume and of the third angel's message, victory over sin and perfection of character. These messages have been extracted out and reprinted by the editor for the reader's enjoyment.

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Galatians 5:16-18

A. T. Jones & E. J. Waggoner

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law," because "as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." As sons of God, these have the mind of the Spirit, the mind of Christ, and so with the mind they "serve the law of God." Accordingly, whosoever is led of the Spirit of God and thus has the mind of Christ fulfills the law, because by that Spirit there is shed abroad in the heart the love of God, which in itself is the fulfilling of the law, in whomsoever has it.

On the other hand, whosoever is led of the flesh and so has the mind of the flesh does the works of the flesh and so serves the law of sin.

And the two ways, the way of the Spirit and the way of the flesh are always open before every man. As certainly as the flesh is there, it "lusteth against the Spirit" and as certainly as the Spirit is there it "lusteth against the flesh." Whosoever is led of the flesh cannot do the good that he would. He serves the law of sin and so is under the law. But whosoever is "led of the Spirit is not under the law."

And every man is always free to choose which shall be his way-- the way of the Spirit or the way of the flesh. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8:13.

Note that, in the text of Galatians now under consideration and its kindred texts in Romans and also in Colossians, it is stated

in words and constantly held in view that the flesh, in its true fleshly sinful nature, is still present with him who has the Spirit of God and that this flesh is warring against the Spirit.

That is, when a man is converted and is thus brought under the power of the Spirit of God, he is not so delivered from the flesh that he is actually separated from it with its tendencies and desires so that by the flesh he is no more tempted and that with it he has no more contest. No, that same degenerate, sinful flesh is there with its same tendencies and desires. But the individual is no longer subject to these. He is delivered from subjection to the flesh with its tendencies and desires and is now subject to the Spirit. He is now subject to a power that conquers, brings under, crucifies, and keeps under, the flesh, sinful as it is, with all its affections and lusts. Therefore, it is written that "ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5. Note that all these things are there in the flesh and would live and reign if the flesh were to rule. But since the flesh itself is brought into subjection to the power of God, through the Spirit, all these evil things are killed at the root and thus prevented from appearing in the life.

This contrast between the rule of the flesh and the rule of the Spirit is clearly shown in Romans 7:14-24 and in 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27. In the seventh of Romans is pictured the man who is under the power of the flesh, "carnal, sold under sin," who longs to do good and wills to do good but is subject to a power in the flesh that will not let him do the good that he would. "For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring

against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That describes the man who is subject to the flesh, "to the law of sin" that is in the members. And when he would break away from the power of the flesh and would do good, that power still brings him into captivity and holds him under the dominion of the flesh, the law of sin, which is in his members.

But there is deliverance from that power. Therefore, when he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" there is given instantly the answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is the way of deliverance, for Christ alone is the Deliverer.

And now this man, though he is thus delivered, is not delivered from a contest; he is not put into a condition where he has no fighting to do with the flesh. There is a fight still to be carried on and it is not a make-believe fight. It is not the fighting of a phantom. Here is the man of 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." What does he fight? What does he beat? Read: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Thus, in the battle that the Christian fights is his body, is the flesh with its affections and lusts. The body is to be, by the Christian, kept under and brought into subjection by the new power of the Spirit of God to which he is now subject and to which he became subject when delivered from the power of the flesh and the law of sin.

This is made yet more expressive by the fuller rendering of the Greek word translated "keep under," in 1 Corinthians 9:27: "I keep under my body." It means, literally, "to strike under the eyes, hit and beat the face black and blue." Accordingly, Conybeare and Howson translate this passage thus: "I fight

not as the pugilist who strikes out against the air, but I bruise my body and force it into bondage."

Thus the seventh of Romans shows the man subject to the power of the flesh and the law of sin that is in the members, but longing for deliverance. the ninth of first Corinthians shows the flesh subject to the man through the new power of the Spirit of God. In the seventh of Romans, the flesh is ruling and the man is under. In the ninth chapter of first Corinthians, the man is ruling and the flesh is under.

And this blessed reversal of things is wrought in conversion. By conversion the man is put in possession of the power of God and under the dominion of the Spirit of God so that by that power he is made ruler over the flesh with all its affections and lusts and through the Spirit he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts in his fighting "the good fight of faith."

Men are not saved by being delivered utterly from the flesh but by receiving power to conquer and rule over all the evil tendencies and the desires of the flesh. Men do not develop character (in fact, they never could) by being delivered into a realm of no temptation, but by receiving power in the field of temptation exactly where they are to conquer all the temptation.

If men were to be saved by being delivered utterly from the flesh just as it is, then Jesus need never have come to the world. If men were to be saved by being delivered from all temptation and set in a realm of no temptation, then Jesus need not have come into the world. But never, by any such deliverance as that, could man have developed character. Therefore, instead of trying to save men by delivering them utterly from the flesh just where they were, Jesus came to the world and put himself IN THE FLESH just where men are and met that flesh JUST AS IT IS, with all its tendencies and desires, and by the divine power which he brought by faith, He

"condemned sin in the flesh" and thus brought to all mankind that divine faith which brings the divine power to man to deliver him from the power of the flesh and the law of sin, just where he is, and to give him assured dominion over the flesh, just as it is.

Instead of Jesus' trying to save men in a way in which they would be limp and characterless by setting them in a realm of no temptation, He came to man just where man is in the midst of all his temptations. Jesus came in the very flesh such as man has and in that flesh He met all the temptations known to that flesh and conquered every one of them, and by that conquest brought victory to every soul in the world. Bless His name.

And every soul can have in its fullness that victory, who will receive and keep "the faith of Jesus." For "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

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Galatians 5:22-26

A. T. Jones

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another."

We have seen somewhat of the essential evil and deceitfulness of the works of the flesh. But, thank the Lord, there is a better picture.

The Spirit of God, which, in His fullness, is freely given to every believer, lusteth against the flesh, so that in Him who is

led by the Spirit of God the flesh cannot do the things that it would. In such the Spirit of God rules, and causes to appear in the life "the fruit of the Spirit," instead of "the works of the flesh."

And though it be true "that they which do such things" as are described in the list of the works of the flesh, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God," yet in the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the grace of Christ, God has made full provision by which every soul, in spite of all the passions, lusts, desires, and inclinations of the flesh, can "inherit the kingdom of God."

In Christ the battle has been fought on every point, and the victory has been made complete. He was made flesh itself--the same flesh and blood as those whom He came to redeem. He was made in all points like these; He was "in all points tempted like as we are." If in any "point" he had not been "like as we are," then, on that point he could not possibly have been tempted "like as we are."

He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," because He "was in all points tempted like as we are." When He was tempted, he felt the desires and the inclinations of the flesh, precisely as we feel them when we are tempted. For "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts [his own desires and inclinations of the flesh] and enticed." James 1:14. All this Jesus could experience without sin, because to be tempted is not sin. It is only "when lust hath conceived," when the desire is cherished, when the inclination is sanctioned--only then it is that "it bringeth forth sin." And Jesus never even in a thought cherished a desire or sanctioned an inclination of the flesh. Thus in such flesh as ours He was tempted in all points as we are and yet without a taint of sin.

And thus, by the divine power that he received through faith in God, He, in our flesh, utterly quenched every inclination of

that flesh and effectually killed at its root every desire of the flesh and so "condemned sin in the flesh." And in so doing He brought complete victory and divine power to maintain it to every soul in the world. All this He did "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

This victory in its fullness is free to every soul in Christ Jesus. It is received by faith in Jesus. It is accomplished and maintained by "the faith of Jesus," which He has wrought out in perfection and has given to every believer in Him. For "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

He "abolished in His flesh the enmity" that separated mankind from God. Ephesians 2:15. In order to do this, He took the flesh and must take the flesh in which that enmity existed. And he abolished in his flesh the enmity," "for to make," in order to make, "in himself of twain," God and the estranged man, "one new man, so making peace."

He "abolished in his flesh the enmity," in order "that he might reconcile both" Jew and Gentile--all mankind who are subject to the enmity--"unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity in himself." Ephesians 2:16, margin. "The enmity" was "in himself" by being "in his flesh." And there "in his flesh" He slew it and abolished it. And He could do this only by its being indeed "in his flesh."

Thus Jesus took upon Him the curse in all its fullness, precisely as that curse is upon mankind. This He did by "being made a curse for us." but "the curse causeless shall not come" and never came. The cause of the curse is sin. He was made a curse for us, because of our sins. And to meet the curse as it is upon us, He must meet sin as it is in us. Accordingly, God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." and this "that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

And though He thus placed Himself entirely at the same great disadvantage as are all mankind--made in all points like us and so "in all points tempted like as we are"--yet not a single tendency or inclination of the flesh was ever allowed the slightest recognition, even in thought; but every one of them was effectually killed at the root by the power of God, which, through divine faith, He brought to humanity.

And thus, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:14-18.

And this victory which Christ wrought out in human flesh is brought by the Holy Spirit to the rescue of everyone in human flesh who today believes in Jesus. For by the Holy Spirit the very presence of Christ Himself comes to the believer, for it is His constant desire to "grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19.

Thus the deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin which holds the believer in triumph over all the desires,

the tendencies and inclinations of his sinful flesh, through the power of the Spirit of God--this is wrought today by the personal presence of Christ Jesus in human flesh in the believer, precisely as it was wrought by the personal presence of Christ in human flesh eighteen hundred and seventy years ago.

Christ is ever the same--"the same yesterday and today and forever." The gospel of Christ is ever the same--the same yesterday and today and forever. The gospel of Christ today is the same that it was eighteen hundred and seventy years ago. Then it was "God manifest in the flesh," and today it is the same--"God manifest in the" same flesh, the flesh of sinful men, human flesh, just as human nature is.

That gospel is "Christ in you, the hope of glory,"--Christ in you just as you are, sins, sinfulness, and all; for He gave Himself for our sins and for our sinfulness. And you, just as you are, Christ has bought and God "hath made accepted" in Him. He has received you just as you are and the gospel, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," brings you under the reign of the grace of God and through the Spirit of God makes you so subject to the power of Christ and of God that "the fruit of the Spirit" appears in you instead of "the works of the flesh."

And the fruit of the Spirit is--

Love--the love of God which is shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God. And instead of hatred or any of its kind ever being allowed, even in thought, no man can possibly do anything to you that can cause you to do anything but love him. For this love, being the love of God, is "the same yesterday and today and forever" and loves not for reward but for the mere sake of loving; it loves simply because it is love and being only that, it cannot do anything else.

Joy is "ardent happiness arising from present or expected

good." But in this case, the alternative "or" is excluded, for this joy is ardent happiness arising from present AND expected good, for the cause of it is eternal. Accordingly, it is everlastingly present and is everlastingly to be expected. And therefore it is "exultant satisfaction."

Peace--perfect peace that rules in the heart--"the peace of God which passeth all understanding," and which "keeps the heart and mind" of him who has it.

Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith--This faith--pistis, Greek-is "firm persuasion; the conviction which is based upon trust, Not upon knowledge [the faith of "the heart," not of the head; the faith of Christ, not of the creed]; a firmly relying confidence cherished by conviction and bidding defiance to opposing contradictions."

Meekness, Temperance--Temperance is self-control. Thus, the Spirit of God delivers the man from subject to his passions, lusts and habits, and makes him a free man, master of himself.

"Against such there is no law." The law of God is against nothing but sin. In human lives the law of God is against everything that is not the fruit of the Spirit of God. Therefore it is certain that everything in human life that is not the fruit of the Spirit of God is sin. And this is but stating, in another way, the eternal truth that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Therefore "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." And because we do live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, "let us not"--yea, we shall not; yea, we cannot "be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another."

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Christian Perfection

A. T. Jones

"Be ye therefore perfect." And the song, "Saved to the uttermost," which has just been sung, is sufficient ground for the "therefore"--"Be ye therefore perfect." Matthew 5:48. You know that such is the word of God. You know that we are exhorted to "go on unto perfection." Hebrews 6:1. You know that the gospel, the very preaching of the gospel which you and I preach, is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Colossians 1:28. 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, nothing short of 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? What is the standard which God has set? "Be ye 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 character 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 judgement seat of Christ and there every one of us shall be measured by that standard. God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:31.

The resurrection of Christ is God's pledge to the world that every man shall stand before the judgement 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--the way, that is all. It is settled, then, that mine is not the standard. Think of it! "Be ye 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: "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Ps. 119:96.

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: "I know it is so of a truth, but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand. . . . 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? "If I justify myself, mine 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. "If I say, I am perfect, it [my own mouth] shall also prove me perverse."

"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. "If I wash myself with snow-water and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Job 9:1, 2, 19-21, 30, 31.

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. Yea, His character itself 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 first chapter of Ephesians, beginning with the third verse in order correctly to get the story in the fourth verse:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath 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], 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?

The next text is Colossians 1:19-22: "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, 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. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable 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 that 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 "holy and unblameable 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 (Ephesians 4:7-13) what is really done in this, how fully He has supplied the need.

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." No think. What did the gift of Christ do, so far in our study? It "made peace through the blood of his 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 unblameable and unreprouvable 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: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers." What for? "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?

"For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, TILL"--given for an object; brought to us for a purpose, a defined, distinct, definite purpose and UNTIL that purpose is accomplished. It is given "for the perfecting of the saints" and it is given "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. "Be ye therefore 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, "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, 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, "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 "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable 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 could pay 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 alone belongs the task. And there stands the word: He "is able." He "is able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of his glory." He who is able to endure the cross is able to accomplish all that the cross made possible. So He "is able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of his

glory with exceeding joy"--When? That is the question. When?

[Voices: "Now."]

Precisely. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is as 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 sixth chapter, for it is occupied with this one story. The last two verses of the fifth chapter of Romans read thus: "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath 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 hath reigned." You know how sin reigned. Everyone 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. We longed to do right, but "the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." Romans 7:19. That is the reign of sin. Then when sin reigned, it was easier to do wrong than it was to do right.

"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. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

[Voices: "God forbid."]

You say, "God forbid." That is right. Now God has put His forbid and you endorse it, 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?

[Voices: "Yes."]

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.

So then the first verse of the sixth chapter of Romans shows that God intends that we shall be kept from sinning, doesn't it?

What does the second verse say? "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. "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: Knowing this, that our old man

is crucified with Him. What for? "That the body of sin might be destroyed." And what is that for? "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. "Crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, 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 you 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 in 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 "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 lasting 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.

Crucifixion, destruction, and then henceforth not serving sin--there, then, is the way to Christian perfection. Why? "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Romans 6:7. 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: "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 sixth chapter of Romans all intend that we shall be kept from sinning.

How about the ninth verse? "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." How was it that death ever had dominion over him at all? Because of sin--not his own, but ours, for He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Then death hath 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. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." Then both the ninth and tenth verses also intend that we shall be kept from sinning.

The eleventh verse: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." And thus again He intends that we shall not sin.

"Neither yield ye 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. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye 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.

"What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid." Thus from the first verse to the fourteenth of the sixth 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. "Let us go on unto perfection."

Listen: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto

righteousness?" Delivered from the power of sin, to whom did ye 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, "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which has delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye 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. "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh, for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." The Lord in this appeals to your experience and mine. "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." You know that that is so. Take now the complement of it: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye 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 sixth 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 to 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.

Let us look again at the statement that the gifts are for the perfecting of the saints, "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 first-born 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, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Jesus, born of the Holy Ghost, born again, grew "in wisdom and stature," unto the fullness of life and character in the world, to where He could say to God, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest 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 "perfect through sufferings." For "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 2:10; 5:8,9. 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.

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 fourth of Ephesians. This is a suggestion, thrown out to you and me, how we may attain to this perfection, "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." I read the thirteenth verse; now couple with that verses 14-16: "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: 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; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even 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 in to him"--in how much? "In all things."

You remember that "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field." And "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, unblameable, 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.

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, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." For it is written, "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? "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "God . . . 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, "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, 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. 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.

July 18, July 25, August 1, 1899



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Rev. 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. 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.