

The Christian and Perfection

Phil 3:12-15

Introduction:

- A. Class teacher said “Only one perfect man ever lived”
- B. “Perfect” in two senses (vv. 12, 15)
 - 1. Relative: Complete in its parts – whole – mature (v. 15; cf. Matt. 5:48)
 - 2. Absolute: Without fault or blemish – like mostly used today (v. 12; cf. Jas. 1:25)
 - 3. Christians attain only relative perfection (maturity) in this life – press toward absolute.
- C. Three attitudes toward perfection found among Christians:

Discussion

I. “Mission Impossible” – Forget It!

- A. So, no need of trying for it? – wrong (v. 13).
- B. So, just continue in sins? – wrong (Rom. 6:1-4; Heb. 10:26-29).
- C. So, console self with “nobody is perfect” or “I can’t be perfect.”
 - 1. Gives us excuse to hang on to a beloved sinful or harmful habit.
 - 2. Gives us excuse to neglect critical duties.

II. Close Enough – Coast In!

- A. Set goal short of perfection – reach goal and coast.
- B. Become satisfied with certain level of growth and stop.
 - 1. Cease efforts to learn.
 - 2. Cease efforts to correct (cf. Jas. 1:25)
 - 3. Cease efforts to improve character (cf. 2 Pet. 1:5-11)
 - 4. Cease efforts to improve skills and develop new ones (Heb. 5:12-14)

III. Never Reaching It – Always Reaching *for* It.

- A. Paul had not reached it, but was always reaching for it (Phil. 3:12-14)
- B. “God does not require perfection, but does require faithfulness.”
 - 1. Faithfulness requires reaching for perfection.
 - 2. Both babes and mature in the faith can and must “go on unto perfection.” (Heb. 6:1)
 - 3. Will not be lost for not being perfect, but for not wanting and trying to be perfect.
- C. Our’s is a life of refining and perfecting.
 - 1. Our faith (2 Thess. 1:3).
 - a. By studying the source of faith (Rom. 10:17).
 - b. By profiting from adversity (Jas. 2:1-4)
 - 2. Our knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - 3. Our holiness (2 Cor. 7:1).
 - 4. Our abilities (Heb. 5:12-14)
 - 5. Our positions and dispositions (Eph. 4:2,31,32; Col. 4:6; Jas 3:13-18; Tit. 3:3)
- D. Sincerely reaching for perfection but unable to attain it makes us depend on the Lord more.
 - 1. For help (Heb. 4:16)
 - 2. For strength (Phil. 4:13)
 - 3. For forgiveness (1 John 1:8-2:1)

Conclusion:

- A. Let us not forget nor coast – but let us always work toward perfection.
- B. Let us not become frustrated at failure to reach perfection, but turn to God’s grace to fill in the gap.