

# GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.



## Perfectionism: Spiritually Healthy or Unhealthy?



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## PERSPECTIVE:-

# Perfectionism: Spiritually Healthy or Unhealthy?

 By Nelson Thomas

Aiming at perfection is definitely a commendable trait. A carefree, shallow lifestyle makes one mediocre in every aspect of life. Especially, certain professions like medicine, engineering, etc., demand flawlessness even in minute details. In spiritual life also such perfection must be our standard and goal. Notice the words of our Lord, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48)

Throughout the scripture we see such call for a blameless, perfect life. (Gen. 17:1; Lev. 11:44; 19: 2; Eph. 5:1; James 1:4; 1Peter 1: 15, 16; 1John 3:3, etc.) We have been exhorted to imitate our Lord in every area of life. Any conformity to the worldly fashions and fleshly desires has been rebuked repeatedly. (Rom. 12:2; 1Cor. 11:1; 1John 2: 15, 16)

Nevertheless, even as we long and cherish a faultless Christian life, we should not forget the following facts.

## PERFECTIONISM:



## 1 We can never be perfect as God, Job 9:2c, 20

“How can a man be righteous before God? Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse.” (Job 9:2c, 20)

Job, about whom God Himself testified to be blameless and upright (1:8), confesses it. Solomon too learned it from experience. (Ecc. 7:20) Paul proved it beyond doubt that both Jews and the Greeks have all come under sin and thus fall short of God’s standard. (Romans 3: 9 – 23)

Remember, when the word of God exhorts His people to be perfect as God, it is actually about the communicable attributes of God, like His love, mercy, holiness etc. (cf. Matt. 5: 43 – 47; 19:21; Luke 6:36; 1Pet 1: 15, 16)

Any claim of sinless perfection is foolishness and deception. Apostle John writes “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.....we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1John 1: 8, 10b)

As we expect a faultless life like God we should not forget the inherent human incapability for the same.

## 2 Our perfection - if any - is in Christ alone, 2Cor. 5:21; Colo. 1:28; 2:9

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2Cori. 5:21) This is the thrust of the gospel; God graciously imputes the qualities of His Son Jesus Christ in the lives of anyone who confesses their sins and receives Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

The moment a sinner acknowledges the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ and calls upon Him for forgiveness and

deliverance, the Lord of glory begins to dwell in them. That’s why Apostle Paul wrote, “Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Colo. 1: 27c, 28)

God finds us in Christ and reckons His righteousness as our own. (Rom. 3:24; 1Cor 1:30). Today we are able to love and live like Christ only because He lives within us to equip and empower us. (Eph. 3:19; 2Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:13)

## 3 Perfecting divine nature within us is an on-going process, Phil 1:6

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Not only have we been declared righteous in Christ, we are being sanctified on a daily basis. Imparting divine qualities in a believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit is a continuous program and it involves many things:

- a) It has a divine as well as a human aspect, Phil. 2: 12b, 13 -

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (cf. 2Cor 7:1)

- b) It involves our experiences and associations.

God in His wisdom allows various events in our life to develop Christ-likeness within us. Similarly, God uses the people with whom we associate also. Their prayers, examples, exhortations, etc., also contribute in our pathway to maturity. (Colo. 1:28; 4:12; Eph. 4:13)



c) It involves time.

Spiritual development does not take place all of a sudden. Even after 25 years of Christian life and service Apostle Paul wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on...” (Phil. 3: 12 – 14)

So never forget, even as we target perfection and make every effort to advance towards a higher level of godly life, we can never claim to have arrived. Also it is utter foolishness to boast on our goodness because as we have already seen it is not of our own efforts!

## **4** Even the best could fall at any time. 1Cor. 10:12.

Finally, we should never forget Paul’s words of warning, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1Cor. 10:12)

Reminding the sad story of the Israelites, Paul exhorts the readers to be on their guard. None of us are impeccable. We still live in a lowly body. Our enemy is always looking for ways to bring us down using the flesh and the world. (1Peter 5:8; 1John 2:16, 17)

Search the sacred pages and history. Carefully examine the lives of devout men in the past; we cannot meet a flawless Person other than the ‘Man Christ Jesus’. (2Cor. 5:21; 1Peter 2:22; 1John 3:5) Abraham the friend God, Moses the most humble man, and David the man after God’s own heart, etc., were all godly no doubt, yet not everything was all right with them.

As long as we strive for flawlessness without forgetting the above mentioned truths, our perfectionist attitude would be in a healthy level. But quite often we slowly forget these realities and slip into an attitude of unhealthy

perfectionism. The consequences are far-reaching and disastrous. Let’s consider few of these:

### **a) Anger**

One of the terrible results of unhealthy perfectionism is the fierce fury towards oneself and others. Their false expectation of highest level of excellence at any cost makes them irritated and annoyed against themselves and others. They think rebuking and scolding the failed one is their right and duty. So they leave no opportunity to expose and judge the failures of others in the harshest manner.

Interestingly, often they conveniently neglect their own flaws, but highlight other’s defects out of proportion and react sharply against them.

### **b) Depression**

An unhealthy perfectionist finds no peace, no satisfaction in himself or others. He cannot bear with the imperfections around him. Forbearance, forgiveness and harmonious cohabitation are difficult for him. All these make him troubled and disheartened.

### **c) Loneliness**

The ever increasing high standard of the perfectionist makes it difficult for him to work with others. He prefers to work alone and even others too will desert him for his unattainable, unreasonable high demands. That results in broken interpersonal relationship, especially at workplace.

### **d) Procrastination**

Fear of failure makes a perfectionist to postpone assignments and activities. They expect to perform only in the best manner but that may never take place.

Ultimately, such perfectionists do not achieve much, other than mental

frustrations and troubled relations. Notice the ugly outcome of extreme perfectionism. All because it's just a selfish, arrogant attitude in which God has no place. In fact, the Lord hates such self-righteous, puffed-up pharisaic mentality. (Luke 16:15; 18: 9 – 14; James 4:1-12)

### *Be Humble and Sincere*

There is nothing wrong in expecting excellence in our moral, spiritual life, but that is impossible by human effort. Never

forget God's exceeding grace in bearing with all our imperfections and His miraculous working for us. Be ready to show the same compassion and concern for the fallen ones we come across. (Ecc. 7:22; Colo. 3:12, 13)

With all humility and sincerity let us confess with Apostle Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2Cor. 3:5) "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

## ANECDOTE:

# Full Pardon Refused

In the early 1800's, one George Wilson was sentenced to be hanged till death for some serious crime. His relatives approached President Andrew Jackson with a mercy petition and subsequently he issued a full pardon to the criminal. But arrogant Wilson refused presidential pardon. The jail authorities were confused, what to do, to hang him or not.

The matter reached the Supreme Court. Justice John Marshall declared, "The value of the pardon depends upon its acceptance. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." And Wilson was hanged. (cf. Rom 10:9; 1John 1:9)

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*“I fear much that many, in their horror of perfectionism, reject perfection too.”*


*- Andrew Murray*

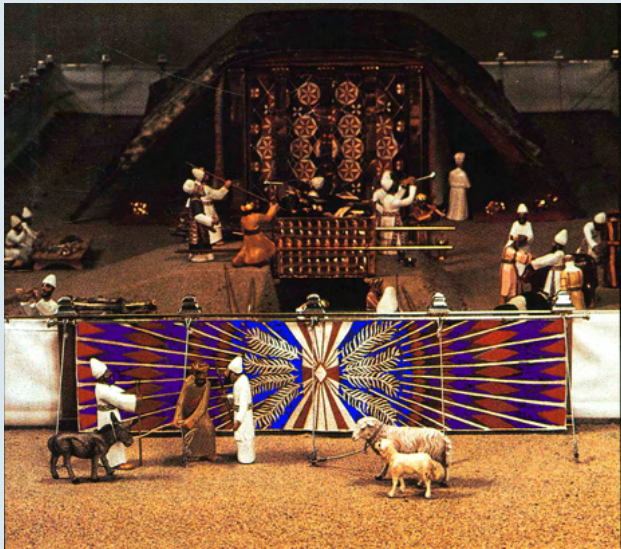
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## BRIEF STUDY:

Brief Notes on Tabernacle – 8:

# The Gate Of The Court

 By Charles .E. Wigg, Australia



*The Gate of the Tabernacle*

The gate (Exo 27:14) clearly typifies the person of Christ, and the different aspects of His glorious character. He said “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.” (John 10:9a) It is also borne out by the statement of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”. (John 14:6) Peter also stresses this when he said, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”. (Acts 4:12)

### *The colours of the gate :*

The gate was a curtain, which was made of fine twined linen, on which were embroidered the colours of blue, purple, and scarlet. These colours represent different aspects of the various glories of Christ, as set out for us in the four gospels.

#### COLOUR - BLUE

The colour of heaven, and represents the heavenly glory of Christ as the SON OF GOD. It is John's Gospel that emphasizes the glory of the Son of God. He first tells us of His Deity, His Eternal nature, His glory as the Creator, and then tells that “The Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us, and we have contemplated His glory, the Glory as of an only-begotten with the Father, full of grace and truth”, ch.1;14, (J.N.D. Trans). He stresses His heavenly character in chapter 3, 13, and 31. The miracles of John's Gospel are called signs, a sign points to something, and these signs point to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

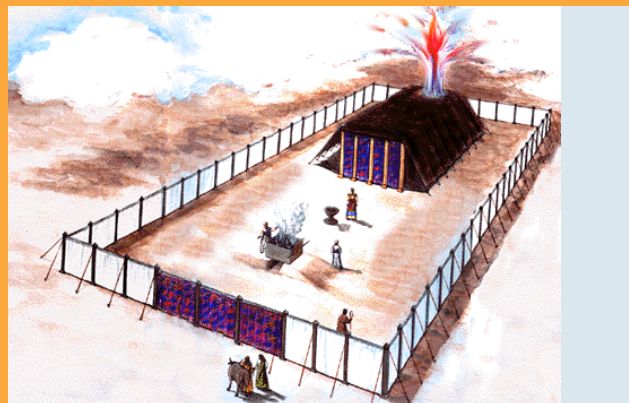
## COLOUR - PURPLE

The royal colour, the colour worn by Kings and the richest of the nobility, thus it represents the Royal Glory of Christ as the SON OF DAVID. It is Mathew who presents the Lord Jesus to us as the Son of David. Right from chapter one, where in the genealogy he traces the line back to David, to the last chapter, where we hear the Lord Jesus say, “All power is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth” (ch.28:18), these are the words of the King.



In chapter 2: 2, we hear the wise men ask, “Where is he that is Born King of the Jews?” The honour of being born king,

is unique in human history, no other person was ever born king. In chapter 9: 27, we hear the blind men cry, “Son of David, have mercy on us!”. In chapter 12: 23, the people ask, “Is not this the Son of David”.



In chapter 22: 42, the Lord Jesus asks the Pharisees, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David”, the Lord Jesus then goes on to point out that He is not only David’s son, but David’s Lord.

Many other passages could be cited, but for the purpose of these ‘Brief Notes’ these will suffice.

## OUTLINE:

### FIVE LOOKS OF JESUS

- |      |                     |   |  |
|------|---------------------|---|--|
| i.   | Look of Compassion  | — | On the Perishing. Matt.9:36                    |
| ii.  | Look of Desire      | — | On the Healed one. Mark. 5:32                  |
| iii. | Look of Complacency | — | On His own. Mark. 3:34                         |
| iv.  | Look of Anger       | — | On the hardened sinner. Mark. 3:5; Act.13:8—11 |
| v.   | Look of Pity        | — | On a backslider. Luke. 22:61                   |



## EXHORTATION:-

# When trials come! Part 3

 By Bro. Tom Johns, USA



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*“It is obviously futile to look for a Church totally free from faults.”*

- John Calvin

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God wants His people to be patient. The premature death of a loved one will not be the end of His plan for us. A handicapped child may bless our spiritual life at the end. A humiliating experience may bring glory later.

### True Stories

I know of a Christian couple who takes care of three grown children with “fragile X syndrome.” I talk with those parents often. They take turns coming to church, since at least one person must be with the children at all times. Now the children are in their twenties. Both the boys are around 6 feet tall and physically well built. The girl is a little more manageable, yet needs constant care.

All in all, they have 3 physically grown children with childlike mental capabilities. The parents’ lives are confined to the neighborhood they live in. They hardly could take a vacation together in the last twenty five plus years. The boys tend to break household furniture when they are excited, so they do not even have good furniture in the house. The father or mother has to rise around 4 a.m. every morning to make breakfast and feed the boys. They get hungry often and more than normal children. This has been their life 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for twenty plus years. Yet I see them with smiles and in cheerful spirits. I am not sure why God gave them these 3 children. These parents take care of them like precious gifts from God. They know that they bear the image of God, although they carry around seriously marred emotions and underdeveloped brains in their “overgrown” bodies.

I also know of a young man, barely forty years old, whose doctors have confirmed he must use the “self-cath” procedure to empty the bladder for the rest of his life due to dead or inactive nerves. One of his family members, who is from a different Christian denomination, visited and assured him that if he were to join their group, his sickness would be healed! But this young man knew better and did not heed that advice.

When I am dissatisfied with my lot, I often think of these dear saints, and it helps me jump up from my pity pot.



## *Miracles and Miraculous Healings*

When we fail to see God's goodness even in the midst of trials, we drift into doubts and fears. When the so-called "healing ministries" prove to be farce, they drive us to depression and dejection. The miracles described in the Bible authenticate the prophets and apostles God had raised at that time, and they are never the norm.

Why do we call them "miracles" if they are daily happenings at our beck & call? The young man who has to go through the self-cath procedure for the rest of his life may not enjoy a miraculous cure. But he can cling on to the promise of God "that all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). I can't explain how; but it will be. God did not resort to miracles while bringing salvation to this world. Yes, there was the miracle of the virgin birth; but that was more of a perceived taboo than anything so desirable. God chose ordinary people to carry out extraordinary tasks. We do not see miraculous lifting of burdens while carrying out those assigned tasks.

Even the apostle Paul had to engage in "tent making" while fully immersed in the ministries to support his personal needs. His prison cell remained cold, and he desperately needed a blanket to keep him warm (2 Tim. 1:16 & 4:13). No heat vent opened up from heaven.

I remember reading about our pioneer North Indian missionaries who had to undergo terrible adversities while enthusiastically engaged in evangelism. The late brother T. A. Kurien of Sagar (MP) had to fix his bicycle tires multiple times while travelling to rural areas with rough terrain. Often he had to push his bicycle several miles to locate someone to fix it. God never miraculously intervened and inflated those tires. God could have; but He chose not to.

## *The Perseverance of the Saints*

Mary was given the stewardship of the Son of God for a brief period of time and she proved to be faithful as a perfect stewardess for that task. It is reasonable to believe that her life, as a young mother to a homemaker to an older mother, was filled with the normal trials and challenges. Some of us are granted an opportunity to see the finished portrait at least through a veil, but others, like Mary, may have to wait longer even to have a glimpse of it. My friends with fragile X syndrome children have yet to see a spark in their lives.

God would honor His people as they persevere through trials. We desperately want to see the finished portrait. Even at the time of our death, God is not done with that portrait. He is still weaving it as we leave footprints of obedience during our lifetime on this earth. We are called to live our Christian lives through the trials of each day. It was not easy for Mary and certainly is not easy for me and you. But God's promise remains firm: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

As we fail to find a Good Samaritan on our trail; or eagerly looking, yet fail to find a miraculous sign from heaven; or see no sign of a celestial chariot to transport us out of misery; we still can depend on His words as we see in Psalm 34:18-19: "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all." Such deliverance comes at His perfect time. We are challenged to live our earthly lives displaying our faith in God. We are encouraged as we struggle through; knowing that ultimately God would show us that He indeed is compassionate and full of mercy.

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