

PERFECTION – PERFECTIONISM

- I. Representative Biblical references to "perfection"
 - A. Old Testament
 - Deut. 32:4 - "His work is perfect, all His ways are just"
 - Ps. 19:7 - "The Law of the Lord is perfect"
 - Song of Sol. 5:2; 6:9 - "my perfect one"
 - B. New Testament
 - 1. Greek words *teleios, teleiosis, teleioo, epiteleio*
 - a. Meaning: "to perfect, finish, complete; perfect, mature"
 - b. Root word *telos* means "end"
 - Matt. 5:48 - "you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"
 - I Cor. 13:10 - "when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away"
 - Phil. 3:12 - "not that I have already become perfect, but I press on..."
 - Phil. 3:15 - "let us...as many as are perfect, have this attitude..."
 - Col. 1:28 - "that we may present every man mature in Christ"
 - Col. 4:12 - "stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God"
 - Heb. 5:9 - "having been made perfect, He became source of eternal salvation"
 - Heb. 7:19 - "the law made nothing perfect"
 - Heb. 7:28 - "a Son, made perfect forever"
 - Heb. 12:23 - "the spirits of righteous men made perfect"
 - I Jn. 4:18 - "perfect love casts out fear..."
- II. Divine essence of perfection
 - A. God is absolutely perfect
 - 1. Character - Matt. 5:48 - "heavenly Father is perfect"
I Jn. 4:18 - "perfect love"
 - 2. Activity - Deut. 32:4 - "His work is perfect..."
 - B. Jesus Christ as the God-man was and is perfect
 - 1. Perfect in Being - Heb. 7:28 - "a Son, made perfect forever"
 - 2. Perfect in behavior - II Cor. 5:21 - "knew no sin"
 - 3. Perfect in benefit
 - Heb. 2:10 - "to perfect the author of salvation through sufferings"
 - Heb. 5:9 - "having been made perfect, He became source of eternal salvation"
- III. Humanity and perfection
 - A. It's been said that "no one is perfect." Is that true?
 - B. Christian message pertains to God's perfection in reference to mankind.
 - C. Perfection and the Law of God
 - 1. Law is perfect - Ps. 19:7 - "the Law of the Lord is perfect"
 - 2. Law does not make man perfect
 - Heb. 7:19 - "law made nothing perfect"
 - Heb. 9:9 - "sacrifices cannot make worshiper perfect"
 - Heb. 10:1 - "the law can never make perfect"
 - D. Perfection of spiritual condition in Christ
 - 1. Made perfect only by presence of Perfect One, Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Made perfect spiritually
 - I Cor. 2:6 - "those who are perfect"
 - Phil. 3:15 - "as many as are perfect"
 - Heb. 10:14 - "He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified"
 - Heb. 12:23 - "the spirits of righteous men made perfect"

- E. Perfection of Christian behavior
1. Command of Jesus - Matt. 5:48 - "be perfect, as God is perfect"
 2. Realistic impossibility?
James 3:2 - "we all stumble..."
I Jn. 1:8 - "if we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves"
Phil. 3:12 - "not that I have become perfect..."
 3. Not a static stage or level of perfection
Eph. 4:13 - "until we attain...to a mature man"
Heb. 5:14 - "solid food is for the mature"
Heb. 6:1 - "let us press on to maturity"
 4. Behavioral perfection is a dynamic process
II Cor. 7:1 - "perfecting holiness in the fear of God"
Jn. 17:23 - "perfected in unity"
I Jn. 2:5; 4:12,17,18 - "His love is perfected in us"
 5. Christian perfection is by the grace of God
II Cor. 12:9 - "My grace is sufficient, for power is perfected in weakness"
Gal. 3:3 - "having begun by Spirit..perfected by flesh? No."
Phil. 1:6 - "He who began a good work in you will perfect it..."
Heb. 12:2 - "Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith"
 6. Christian perfection is the perfect character of God expressed in Christian behavior, one choice at a time, moment-by-moment.
 7. Christian perfection consummated in future.
I Cor. 13:10 - "when the perfect comes, the partial done away"
Phil. 1:6 - "He who began good work will perfect until day of Christ"

IV. Extremisms of "perfectionism"

- A. Psychological perfectionism
1. Personality pattern
 - a. Caught in cross-fire of "do it" and "do it right"
 - b. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well"
 - c. Fear of failure and embarrassment
 - d. Views life in polarities of "all or nothing," "good or bad"
 - e. Conditional experience of life - shoulds, oughts
 - f. Nothing is ever good enough
 - g. Results in anxiety, self-depreciation, discouragement, hostility, loneliness, external emphasis
 2. Selective perfectionism
- B. Theological perfectionism
1. Improper view of God and His intents
 - a. God has perfect standards - legalism
 - b. God hates world and sinfulness - monasticism
 - c. God wants man to have perfect knowledge - gnosticism
 - d. God wants man to overcome natural tendencies - suppressionism
 - e. God wants man to transcend physical - mysticism
 2. Improper understanding of Christian's spiritual and behavioral perfection.
 - a. Two examples
 - (1) Holiness movement
 - (2) Triumphalism
 - b. Theological problems
 - (1) failure to distinguish soul and spirit
 - (2) failure to understand "flesh"
 - (3) failure to understand "sin"