



Christian Perfection

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

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I suppose that every Christian has been exercised at some time or other by verses in Scripture containing the word “perfect” or “perfection.” While convinced that those who lay claim to sinless perfection err, yet probably you have not been fully satisfied by any explanation which you have seen of those verses. For example, take such passages as the following: “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6): the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul acknowledges some *are* “perfect,” and He was referring to those still on earth. “This also we wish, even your perfection” (2 Cor. 13:9): that was the desire and longing of the Apostle for those saints; did he wish for something unattainable, impossible? “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . . that the man of God may be perfect:” such a verse ought to exercise us. “But the God of all grace . . . make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10): this too is while we are on earth. “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Rev. 3:2), which clearly intimates they ought to have been: the Ephesians were being rebuked because their works were imperfect.

Such verses as the above have puzzled and troubled many. Honest hearts have been exercised as to the exact meaning of the term “perfect” or “perfection.” I want then, to try and give you an outline of the teaching of God’s Word on this important subject. Let us turn next to Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect.” Yet in 9:20 Job says, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.” There seems to be a flat contradiction between those two verses. The explanation is simple: the word “perfect” is used in different senses in those two passages. Job 9:20 signifies, If I were to say I am sinless, faultless, absolutely perfect, I should lie. But what is meant in Job 1:1 where God Himself says that he was “a perfect man?” The term there, and in many other passages of the Old Testament means “sincere, honest;” such verses speak of a perfection *of*

sincerity as opposed to hypocrisy; compare Ephesians 6:24.

But there are other verses, especially in the New Testament, where that definition does not fit, where the word “perfect” signifies much more than “honest” or “upright,” and which are by no means easy to interpret. I refer to such verses as we looked at the beginning. Those verses trouble sincere souls, for such feel that they are very imperfect. While it is true that the Christian may be able to rejoice over what he reads in Hebrews 10:14—“by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”—yet he mourns and grieves over many imperfections. Coming more closely to our subject, I want to carefully consider what *kind* of “perfection” is attainable in this life by the saint. In Philippians 3:15 Paul says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,” and yet in the twelfth verse of the same chapter the Apostle affirmed of himself, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Now Scripture does not contradict itself, yet we need to make distinctions, discriminating between things that differ.

1. We must discriminate between *legal and evangelical perfection*. Legal perfection is that complete and constant conformity in desire, thought, word and deed which God requires from us unto His holy and righteous law. This is the perfection which God demands from every creature—a full and flawless obedience, both internal and external, loving Him with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves; and this, not occasionally, but perpetually. This has been God’s demand in every age, and it cannot be lowered. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10), is the Divine sentence resting upon every transgressor. There must be a steady perseverance in doing those things which God has commanded, and in abstaining from all those things which He has prohibited. But no fallen human being can possibly meet that demand. As Romans 8:3 declares, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh:” an imperfect man cannot live perfectly; a sinful creature cannot yield sinless obedience.

Now it is at this point the marvellous grace of God towards His

people appears. As Romans 8:3-4 tells us, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” God sent His Son here as *the surety* of His elect to meet the demands of the law by perfectly obeying it in their stead. But does this mean that Christ fulfilled the law for us so that *our* responsibility to the law has been removed? Does it mean that Christ has kept the law so that there is no longer need for *us* to keep it? No, that could not be. God cannot forego His claims, and Christ would be the minister of sin if He had introduced a system of lawlessness. What then? Christ has procured for His people the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in regeneration the Spirit begets in our hearts *a love for the law*, a desire after that which is holy and righteous before God, and the real Christian longs to meet God’s claims, walk obediently, and endeavours *to* do so. Through Christ God accepts this real desire and genuine effort to obey Him. Here then is where we must draw the first distinction on “perfection:” we must discriminate between legal and evangelical perfection.

Legal perfection or sinless obedience was found only in Christ. Evangelical perfection or sincere obedience is found in every Christian. By “sincere obedience” is meant an honest desire and a real effort to keep the law, please God in all things, not allowing any known sin. Evangelical perfection is primarily a thing of the heart, at which God ever mainly looks. The Christian seeks to please and honour God in all things: I speak of what is characteristic or general of him, that which marks the main tenor of his heart and life. Let me illustrate this point to you. The needle of a ship’s compass which is in working order, always points to the north. You may take that compass and jar it, and the needle will swing in another direction; but when that compass regains its level, or the interfering finger is removed, the needle resumes its normal and correct relation. Now the normal condition of the heart of a regenerated person points toward God, seeks God, desires God, aims to please Him. There are times—in the storms of life, in the disturbances of temptation, in the assaults of Satan—when the

heart is deflected and turned away from God; and this happens frequently in the experience and life of every Christian for “in many things we offend all” (James 3:2). Nevertheless, just as surely as the needle of the compass when released from an interfering power turns again to the north, so the heart of a regenerated person comes to itself, recovers its poise, and instinctively turns back to God.

Now this evangelical perfection has marked God’s children in every dispensation. Unto Abraham—the father of all them that believe—the Lord said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). That was God’s standard then: a heart completely surrendered to His claims, a sincere desire and determination to please Him in all things. “I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and *with a perfect heart*, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” (2 Kings 20:3). This is a verse which has puzzled many, particularly the words we have placed in italics. Was Hezekiah lying? Can you conceive of a man who was dying turning to the Lord and uttering a deliberate falsehood? Was he mistaken? No. The mistake is ours, if we fail to interpret this in the light of other Scriptures. Hezekiah did not mean that his was a sinless heart, nor one that had never deviated from God: but instead, a heart that, in its deepest depths, in its genuine nature, in its real tenor, desired to please God, and which despite many failures, had sought *to* do so. And this is something which every one that will enter Heaven must have.

“And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with *a perfect heart and with a willing mind*: for the Lord searcheth all hearts” (1 Chron. 28:9). Here is another scriptural declaration which helps us to understand the nature of evangelical perfection: the obedience which God requires must be performed readily and not by constraint, with a willing mind. It must be spontaneous, and not compulsory. It must proceed from love, and not from terror. That obedience which is acceptable to God issues from the gratitude of a renewed heart, and is rendered freely, and not from external constraint. So that to serve Him with “a perfect heart and a willing mind” signifies to obey Him, readily

and gladly, freely and out of love. As a contrast from 1 Chronicles 28:9 take 2 Chronicles 25:2, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, *but not with a perfect heart.*” Amaziah had received a godly training and had acquired certain godly habits: his external conduct was according to God’s law; but He who looks within declared that his heart was not perfect—which refers not to a state of sinlessness, but signifies that his heart was not even honest, it did not ring true. There was not a real desire to please God and an ardent effort to carry out that desire. That is very solemn. It makes one think of James 1:8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways,” and O how many such there are in Christendom today!

Perhaps some amplification of what has just been before us may prove helpful. How often we meet with people who are scarcely the same twice together: they are as variable as the weather. On some occasions they appear to be really spiritual, ready to talk about Divine things, anxious to know the way of the Lord more perfectly, desirous of pleasing Him. But, perhaps only a few days later, you find them thoroughly wrapped up in the things of the world, with no appetite at all for spiritual converse. The hearts of such people are like the pendulum of a clock in action: never stationary, ever swinging to and fro. It is as the Lord said of Israel of old, “Their heart is divided” (Hosea 10:2)—vacillating between love of self and love of God, fluctuating between occupation with Christ, and occupation with the world. O my friends, this is solemn and searching: God will not tolerate a rival. Do not mock Him by seeking to give Him half your heart; do not insult Him by imagining that you can love Him and the world too. Be either one thing or the other: 1 Kings 18:21, Revelation 3:15.

Now to sum up this first point of distinction. Legal perfection is that sinless perfection which the Law demands from man: that absolute, undivided, continuous obedience, both inward and outward, to all its precepts. This strict and faultless obedience Christ rendered unto the Law in the stead of and on behalf of His people. Evangelical perfection is that sincere desire of a renewed heart to please God in all things, a desire which is inseparably

linked to an honest determination and effort *to* do so. True, that desire is never fully realized by any of us in this life; yet He who looks at and knows the heart, perceives its true and deep longings after Himself, and so, for Christ's sake, accepts the will for the deed.

2. We must distinguish between *absolute and relative perfection*. And here too the former was found only in Christ, for He alone received the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34). He is the only one that could truthfully say, "I do *always* those things which please Him" (John 8:29). How blessed and refreshing it is for our hearts to turn away from the world, from considering our own failures, and contemplate that blessed One who lived here for thirty-three years, the eye of the Father ever upon Him and always seeing that which delighted Him, ever able to say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And *Christ* is the standard which God sets before us. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5); "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21); "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

God has set before us a perfect standard, but it is never fully reached by any Christian, for the flesh is still left within us, and "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" (Gal. 5:17). Now that very opposition between the flesh and the Spirit in the Christian, issuing in so many failures and sins, causes him to hang his head in shame, groan and cry "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24). That was true of Paul himself: this was his experience. It was the beloved Apostle who said, "O wretched man that I am," and he said it not before conversion, nor during the early years of his Christian life, but much later on. So with us there is a daily failing, and need for a daily forgiveness. Yet, while sinless perfection is unattainable by us now, there *is* a relative perfection which should be reached by the Christian, and which may be attained in this life. Let me seek to define the nature of this.

It is really twofold. First, *as Christians are compared with non-Christians*. In contrast from the unconverted, the saints are subject to Christ: they have surrendered to His Lordship, accepted His yoke, and so are “perfect” in contrast from those who yield not themselves to Him. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt *be perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow Me” (Matt. 19:21). The obvious meaning of that word was, “If thou wilt be a Christian, if you are anxious to be saved, here is what you must do—go and sell what you have, give to the poor, come and follow Me.” In other words, if you wish to enjoy the *privileges* of the Gospel you must submit to the *rules* of the Gospel. Thus, the word “perfect” is used here in a relative way, to describe the Christian in contrast from the non-Christian. In Christianity “perfection” is found, in contradistinction from Judaism: see Hebrews 6:1. Judaism was but the blade; Christianity is the full corn in the ear. When one becomes a Christian he has reached relative “perfection,” in contrast from those who are not Christians.

Before passing on, we had better anticipate a question, suggested by “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast,” which should be linked up with Luke 14:33. The question is this, Does God require me to part with all that I have? The answer is Yes, and No. Yes, in the sense that God requires me to hold everything that I have at His disposal; and it may be that before many months have passed He will put some of us to the test. God requires me to hold every object I have in this world at *His* disposal, so that if He makes it clear I am to relieve His poor suffering people to the extent that I should give away every cent, I am to do so. Nothing that I have is *mine* absolutely: this must be recognized and owned. What I have is only loaned me by God. Then does this mean that it is wrong for me to have any money in the bank at the present time? No; it means I am to say, “Lord Thou hast been pleased to prosper me, I have so much on hand, but it is for Thee to say how it shall be used: if it is Thy will for me to keep it, Thy will be done; if it is Thy wish for it to be used in relieving the distress of others, I am ready to do so.” The man who does this has a

“perfect” heart: there is no reserve in it, it is fully yielded to God. The man who has not done this is no Christian: he is not regenerated, for his heart treasures gold more than God; if he will not place his gold at God’s disposal, that money is his god—which proves that he is unsaved. When God saves a man He works in him *a miracle* of grace: He changes the natural character or bent of the heart. It is the natural bent of the heart to hold on to that which we have worked hard to obtain; but the supernatural grace of God makes us willing to lay all at the Lord’s feet.

This is true not only of gold, but of our *children* also. A regenerated person will place each child at the absolute disposal of God, saying, It is not mine, it is Thine to do with as Thou pleaseth; to enlighten or to leave in darkness, to save and send forth as a missionary to the heathen, or to remain here; it is *Thy* creature, and my heart relinquishes all absolute claims upon it. Everything we have and are must be laid before God, and by the heart truly held at His sovereign disposal. This is the nature of *relative* Christian “perfection:” it is the difference between the heart of a converted and an unconverted person.

Second, there is a relative perfection *as one Christian may be compared with other Christians*. Even saints differ much among themselves. Though none attain unto absolute and sinless perfection, yet there are several degrees of grace and diversity of growth among Christians. There are babes, young men, fathers: (1 John 2;13): the strong and mature Christian is relatively “perfect” in contrast from the weak and immature, who has less wisdom to detect error and less strength with which to resist sin and Satan. I want us to look at Scripture in connection with this point. “That we be no more children, tossed to and fro” (Eph. 4:14); God is not honoured by our remaining spiritual dwarfs; He is not glorified by a Christian continuing a spiritual child all his days. We should outgrow our spiritual baby hood.

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6): “perfect” here means matured, fully grown, in contrast from spiritual babes. The Corinthians were squabbling, one saying “I am of Paul,” and another “I am of Apollos:” they were so carnal as

to be fighting among themselves; consequently the Apostle said, “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ” (3:1). So you see there *are* differences among God’s people. “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age” (Heb. 5:13, 14). “Brethren, be not children in understanding: . . . be men” (1 Cor. 14:29)—act like such. “Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Those who are well instructed by the Spirit in the mysteries of the faith, who have made real progress in practical godliness, who are firm and established in their love for God, are, comparatively “perfect” in contrast from the “babes” in Christ.

3. There is also a “perfection” *of parts*. Let me illustrate from the physical. A child born minus a limb lacks a complete or perfect body; so one born with two arms and loses one, no longer has a complete or perfect body. Thus it is if a Christian lacks the development of any of the really vital graces: he may have faith, zeal, perseverance, but if he lacks compassion, he is deficient—his spiritual character is maimed. If a Christian has tenderness, patience, great consideration for others, but lacks courage, faithfulness, unflinching righteousness, he is lacking in parts. 2 Peter 1:5-7 is for the correcting of this, inculcating the fully developed Christian character, bidding us cultivate all the graces of the Spirit, and thus be a “perfect” Christian, that is, complete in all his parts. “May grow up into Him in *all* things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15)—not only in faith, courage, patience, but in everything.

4. There is also a “perfection” *of degrees* or growth in grace, an advancing from spiritual baby hood to spiritual maturity. “When I was a child I spake as a child . . . but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). See the little one surrounded by its toys in the nursery: behold the same child fifteen years later—it has no use for those toys, it has outgrown them. So it should be with us spiritually. Look again at an infant: it is easily peeved, it cries at almost anything: that is the characteristic of a “child;” and it is largely the same with a “babe” in Christ—

worrying and fretting over trifles. “When I became a man, I *put away* childish things:” God help us all to do so.

Let me first restate the four principal points. First, there is an evangelical perfection in contrast from that absolute perfection which the law demands, God in His grace accepting from His people (through Christ) sincere obedience of the heart: that genuine desire and sincere effort to please Him in all things. Second, relative perfection in contrast from absolute: this is what distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian. Third, perfection of parts, that is, the adding of one grace to another, so that a well-rounded Christian character and conduct is developed. Fourth, perfection of degrees, that is, growth from spiritual babyhood to youth, and from youth to full maturity. It is after the third and fourth we should daily and prayerfully strive.

By way of application, let me point out, first, that the Christian ministry has been appointed by God for “the perfecting” of His saints: see Ephesians 4:11, 12. God sends His servants that you may be instructed, nourished, sanctified. “Night and day” Paul “prayed exceedingly” that he should come unto the Thessalonian Christians, and this that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess. 3:10): this is the yearning of every true servant of Christ’s. Second, our improvement of this means, the response which God requires His people to make unto the ministry of His servants: “As ye have received of us *how* ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess. 4:1): may this be true of you. Third, nothing short of this should be our aim and diligent endeavour, that you may “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12).

1. Reasons Why We Must Be Perfect.

That is, not only sincere, with a heart desiring to and seeking after the glory of God, not only having all the spiritual parts of a Christian, and striving after the highest possible growth, but that we may actually attain unto all that is possible for us in Christ, in this life. First, we have to do with a perfect God, and therefore we should seek perfection of character and conduct: “Be ye therefore

perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). The main reason why God has been pleased to make known His attributes, to reveal unto us His perfections, is that we should take them for our copy. Second, a perfect standard is set before us, and God will not lower it. To Abraham He said, “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). Abraham is the father of us all (Rom. 4:16, Gal. 3:7), therefore what God says to him, He also says to us.

Third, we have a perfect rule to regulate us: see 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Those verses show that the strictness of the law is embodied in the Gospel. The high standard which God has set up under the old covenant, has not been lowered under the new covenant. The exhortations of the New Testament are but so many explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments. Fourth, we have a perfect and all-sufficient Redeemer to rely upon: Colossians 2:9. There is everything in Christ which is needed by us, and all that is in Him we may appropriate. God has not only given Christ *for* us, but He has given Him *to* us. *Christ Himself* is ours: O that the Holy Spirit may teach us how to draw from His infinite fullness.

2. Motives to Stimulate.

First, all that we lost in Adam should be found again in Christ, or we do not honour Him. The last Adam is far more able to save than the first Adam was to destroy: Romans 5:17—yet that “abundance of grace” has to be diligently sought; it is not given to the lazy and half-hearted. O that the Spirit may deeply impress each of our hearts with the fact that the more we “grow up in Him in *all* things,” the more Christ is glorified through us.

Second, we *pray* for perfection (at least, I hope we do) and therefore, should strive *after* it with all our might, otherwise our prayers are but a pretence. True prayer is a solemn binding of ourselves to use the means that we may obtain the blessings which we ask: if this be not the intention of our hearts, then our prayer is merely empty words. When we truly ask God to make us more holy, we pledge ourselves to use every means which makes for holiness, and strive our utmost to be holy. Prayer was never

designed to be a substitute for diligent effort. Therefore if we are praying for the highest perfection attainable in this life we must strive after it.

Third, we should remind ourselves more frequently of what we lose when we slacken in our efforts after spiritual growth. All around us we behold illustrations of the fact that God has closely linked together sin and misery; so also has He inseparably connected holiness and true happiness. Therefore we should consider how much we miss when we slacken in our efforts after Christian perfection. It is those who take Christ's yoke upon them that find rest unto their souls; it is those who walk closest with Him that enter most into His joy. Not only so, but they who live a holy and happy life have a triumphant exit from this world: Psalm 37:37. Balaam said he wished that he might die the death of the righteous, but he was unwilling to live the life of the righteous. If our daily lives be right with God He will look after us in death: this thought is also brought out in 2 Peter 1:11, which supplies the climax to the whole of that passage.

3. Means to Help.

First, make sure that a Divine work of grace has begun in you; and, my friends, we cannot be too sure, nor be too diligent in the duty of self-examination. But there must be life before there can be growth: it is no use trying to grow if you do not have spiritual life. If you are in doubt, get alone with God and earnestly beseech Him to begin a good work in you. We must definitely choose God for our portion before we can cleave to and serve Him. Just as a young man selects his vocation or calling, and later chooses the woman to be his wife, so the Christian must definitely choose God. The enjoyment of God, the service of God, the pleasing of God, must become the soul's portion for time and eternity; but we cannot cleave unto God, walk with Him, or go on with Him, until we first take Him for our portion. David said, "The Lord is my portion."

Second, give special attention to the radical graces. Just as in our physical bodies there are some organs and members more vital

than others, playing a larger part in determining whether we are well or sick, weak or strong, so there are certain graces in the Christian character which are more vital and radical than others. What these are is intimated in 1 Corinthians 13:13: faith, hope, and love. Let us be especially concerned to have a strong faith, a lively hope, and a fervent love. Remember that word of the Lord to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23: they were very careful about minor things, most punctilious about washing their hands, so particular they would not eat if the shadow of a Gentile even crossed their path. But God is not found in such things, neither is the spiritual life promoted by them. Give your attention to that which is vital and fundamental.

Third, seek grace to appropriate Philippians 4:13, and turn it into earnest prayer: "I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Unbelief says, I cannot; previous failures say, I cannot; past experience says, I cannot; the example of fellow-Christians says, I cannot; Satan tells me, I cannot. But faith says, "I *can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me:" turn that statement into believing, fervent, persistent prayer. Count upon God making it good. Fourth, remind yourself frequently that failure to strive hard and constantly after perfection dishonours Christ. O that the love of Christ may constrain us, that gratitude to Him will compel us to seek a closer conformity unto Him. The more I am like Him, the more I honour Him; the less I am like Him, the more I dishonour Him. We must realize this if our hearts are to be stirred up unto renewed efforts after perfection.

4. Tests.

Here there are two extremes to guard against. On the one hand, the workings of pride, assuming that I have made more progress than is really the case. On the other hand (and to a genuine Christian, this danger is just as real), the workings of unbelief, a mock humility denying that I *have* made true progress. Now every real Christian should be anxious to know what measure of growth he has attained unto. You know how it is with growing children: how anxious they are to test themselves. They make a mark on the

wall to register their height, and in a month's time see whether they have gone beyond it: so it should be with us spiritually. I am going to mention five things by which we should test ourselves concerning our growth.

First, increasing deadness to the world. The closer we approximate to Christian perfection, the deader will our hearts be unto the world. The more fully we are conformed unto the image of Christ, the less power will the world have to attract us. When I say that, I refer to something more than its amusements and grosser sins; I mean also its pretty things. One of the marks of a child is to value a thing not according to its worth and usefulness, but according to its attractiveness to the eye. There are many forms of worldliness: Isaiah 3:22 warns against "changeable suits of apparel"—such savours of pride; it is an unnecessary expense; and, it is a denial of our strangership.

The more we are really growing in grace the less shall we be attracted by such baubles, and the more attention shall we give to the adorning of our souls. One half of practical godliness is a dying unto the world; the other half is a living unto God: the mortification of self-love, and the strengthening of love to God. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14)—that is the language of a perfect Christian, that is the experience of a mature saint: dead to the world. It no longer has any attraction for him and no power over him.

Second, increasing dissatisfaction with our present attainments. Instead of being pleased with and proud of the progress he has made, the growing Christian increasingly mourns over the littleness of it, groans daily because of his sinful failures, and is burdened over his lack of conformity to Christ. Instead of self-complacency for having attained unto this or that, there is a realization that "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Josh. 13:1). The nearer I come to real Christian perfection, the more imperfect I feel myself to be. Therefore, dear friends, the measure of spiritual growth you have made during the past year is the extent to which you have grown out of love with

yourself.

Third, increasingly being moved by love rather than by fear. The weak and immature Christian is most obedient when he is most in fear of punishment from God—either fear of His law or fear of His chastisement. But the mature Christian, he who has grown in grace, is moved more by the love of God and love to God: this is what regulates his actions: “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). The extent to which we have grown spiritually during the last twelve months may be gauged by the measure in which our conduct is now regulated by love to Christ.

Fourth, increasing humility. Where there is real and deep humility, one sees more quickly and is more concerned about *his own* defects than those of his fellow Christians. A proud man is quick to note the faults of other people, but it takes an humble man to recognize and acknowledge his own. A babe in Christ is far more likely to be proud of his spiritual attainment than is a mature Christian: the latter is filled with self-abhorrence. Thus, increasing holiness means increasing self-loathing.

Fifth, increasing deliverance from childishness. I believe the analogy holds good at every point between the natural and the spiritual. Let me name one or two points of resemblance. First, touchiness characterizes an infant: a little child will cry over every trifle, but as he gets older he outgrows that. The same holds good spiritually: alas, that such growth does not always keep pace with the added years. Oftentimes one who has been a Christian for twenty years has really grown less than one who is only five years old spiritually. Where there is growth, one is less sensitive of being hurt over trifles.

Second, a child is regulated very largely by his senses, rather than by his reason. Take food as an example: if something looks nice, tastes nice, smells nice, the child wants it, whether or not it is good for him—he is regulated by his senses. But as he grows older he learns that some things which look and smell good are injurious, and so he learns to leave them alone. So it is spiritually: a developed Christian is regulated by his judgment rather than by his senses.

Third, a child is incapable of helping others very much: it is always needing attention itself. But as the child grows older it increases in usefulness: it becomes able to help mother in the home, and later on to do other things in the world. So it should be spiritually. That Christian who is all the time needing attention and help from others is not growing; he is only a spiritual babe.

Finally, a child is always getting into mischief or trouble, constantly doing something or other which it ought not, so that it is not safe to allow it to be long out of sight. But as it grows older, if it be properly trained, it grows out of that. Now, my friends, honestly measure yourselves by these tests.

In closing, let me say, praise God for any real growth that you can see has been wrought in you: to Him alone belongs all the glory. Strive earnestly after further growth, avoiding all things which hinder and retard it, making a diligent use of all the means of grace which God has appointed for the promotion of the same.

