

# The Genesis of Perfection

## The Stepping Stone of Perfection

By Steve Pruitt

When my first two children were small my wife and I decided it was time to buy a swing set. So, we did what most good parents do and went to the nearest Wal-mart to purchase the best but cheapest set we could find. Of course the entire set was in a box. There wasn't a chance we could get one that had already been assembled. Anyone who knows me well at all knows I am mechanically challenged. I have two left thumbs and even the simplest instructions throw me for a loop. As I pulled the parts from the box I began to wish I hadn't bought the thing. But, I am the daddy, and daddies are supposed to do these things, right? So, off I go with my wife lending assistance.

The first few pieces fit together well, and I gained confidence with every screw I turned. Just as I thought I had it licked I hit a snag. The next several minutes were spent in utter frustration. I skinned my knuckles several times and one of them was bleeding. To my shame I threw one of my screw drivers into the cow pasture behind our house. I looked for it later but never found it.

Finally after hours of hard labor the set was put together. I was so relieved. I had done my fatherly duty despite the cost. As I admired my work I realized I had put the rungs of the ladder to the slide on upside down. You can't imagine my dismay. After all that work it still wasn't right. I have always grown up with the idea that if you are going to do something do it right. So, I took the rungs off and started again. Thinking I had it fixed, I put the ladder back on the slide. Well, that swing set made it through four of our five children. The day we discarded it the rungs on that ladder were still upside down.

In Matthew 5:48 Jesus is quoted as saying, *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.* How many times have you read this scripture and had it scare you half to death? Maybe you asked, "How can I ever be perfect as the Father is perfect?" The Amplified Bible renders that verse this way: *You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect [that is, grow into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity].* That tells me what to be, but how do I get there from here? Let's look at three aspects of perfection.

### 1. The Old Testament law made nothing perfect

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 3:3, *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?* His argument with the Galatians was that they had been saved by faith (the Spirit) not the law, and faith (the Spirit) was going to perfect them. He was saying they could not be perfected by adhering to a written code of conduct.

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus had kept all the law from his youth and yet he realized there was something lacking in his life (Matthew 19:16-22). The law had not fulfilled him nor saved him. He was not made perfect by the law. Why? His riches had won his affection not God. It is relationship that matters to God not regulations.

Jesus said, *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* (Matthew 22:37-40) Those two commandments fulfill all of the law. If we love him we will keep his commandments (John 14:15).

The Jews were law focused. Jesus was love focused. Law focuses on the sin and leads to judgment. Love focuses on the Savior and leads to justification. This is not to

say the law is bad. The law is good but imperfect; unable to bring justification or perfection.

Hebrews 10:1 says, *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.* Hebrews 7:19 reads *...for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

What is this better hope? Maybe I should ask, "Who is this better hope?"

## **2. Jesus was perfected for us**

Jesus was not only made perfect for our salvation he was also made perfect for our perfection. The writer of Hebrews captures this concept.

*...though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him.*

Hebrews 5:8-9

*For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

Hebrews 2:10

*Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?*

Hebrews 7:11

*For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*

Hebrews 7:28

If the law makes us perfect then Jesus died for nothing. What the law could not do Jesus did by giving his life on the cross for us. We are unable to keep the law so Jesus was perfected and became the fulfillment of the law for us.

## **3. In God's eyes we are already perfect.**

No way, you might say! I am not at all perfect. However, we must understand that when God looks at us he sees us through his Son. In his eyes it is a done deal. God's word assures us that in his Son we are complete. Paul wrote to the Colossians, *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* (Colossians 3:3) *For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are **complete** in him, who is the head of all principality and power.* (Colossians 2:9-10) He also wrote to the Ephesians, *...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...* (Ephesians 2:6)

God called Moses to a burning bush that was not consumed and told Moses to take off his shoes for the ground where he was standing was holy (Exodus 3:5). What made that ground more holy than the ground ten feet away? It was just dirt. That particular piece of ground was holy because God set it apart. It was holy because God said it was holy.

I heard a great bible teacher by the name of Al Whittinghill say once, "The only way to be holy is to have the holy one living inside you." The only way to be perfect is to have the perfect one living inside you. The starting point of perfection is salvation

through Jesus Christ. You must be born again (John 3:3). You must become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). When that takes place your spirit has been made perfect, but your mind will and emotions have some catching up to do.

We are powerless to perfect ourselves or bring ourselves to maturity. Only the Holy Spirit can perfect his work in us. A mature Christian is one who is not trying to live the Christian life on his own power. I had all the instructions to the swing set I had bought my kids, but I still put it together wrong. Just when I thought I had it mastered I realized I hadn't. In the same way we can follow all kinds of rules and moral codes of conduct, regardless of how sincere, and still miss perfection. Even after we are born again we hit snags and find out just how far away from being perfected we really are. God intends for those snags to be stepping stones not stumbling blocks.

Have you taken the first step toward perfection? Maybe you have been trying to reach perfection by your own power and have given up hope. You will never be perfect without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You can begin that relationship right now by asking him to forgive you of your sin and be the Lord of your life. If you have taken that first step remember that reaching perfection is a life long journey. The way you continue the journey is the same way you started; faith in Jesus.

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