

Moral Perfection

A Condition Without Which You Cannot Be Saved

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Our Lord commands us to 'Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect.' (Matt. 5:48) As John Wesley said, 'There is scarce any expression in Holy Writ which has given more offence than this. The word perfect is what many cannot bear.'

The very sound of it is an abomination to them. And whosoever preaches perfection (as the phrase is,) that is, asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them worse than a heathen man or a publican." Few professing Christians today will hear such a statement without taking great offence and making rash charges of heresy. The words "moral perfection" are words that many cannot bear. The very concept is an abomination to them. And whoever preaches moral perfection is placing his neck on the chopping block of orthodoxy, where through the ages many prophets of God have lost their heads in their opposition to hypocrisy. Whoever preaches the moral duty of man to be sinless risks being labeled a legalist, an heretic, a cultist, and a teacher of a salvation based upon works, and will be banned from most of the church pulpits in America (as would Jesus)!

Let me define my terms. Just what is moral perfection? "Perfect" means "complete", so moral perfection is complete conformity to your obligation to keep the moral law. What is the moral law? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt.22:36-40). Anything less than "all" falls short of what God demands and therefore is unacceptable and wicked! Moral perfection is synonymous with holiness, righteousness, or sinlessness. The perfect man loves God supremely and his neighbor equally. "Put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness" (Col.3:14).

Moral perfection does not imply freedom from unwillful ignorance, mistake, bodily infirmities, or temptations. These things are involuntary, and God's law does not legislate over them. Sin is voluntary transgression of God's law (I Jn.3:4). Sin is doing what you know you should not do and not doing what you know you should do (Jas.4:17). All sin is an act of not loving God supremely and your neighbor as yourself.

Let's examine the Scriptures. "Behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, ... If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? 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. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great

possessions” (Matthew 19:16-22).

“If thou wilt be perfect....” In other words, if you want to be perfectly compliant with God’s law and find eternal life, distribute your wealth to the poor and follow Me. He claimed to keep God’s law, but was not. Jesus put His finger on his greatest sin and insisted that he must give this up to Him before he could be saved. The man had broken the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” - he loved his possessions more than God. A return to obedience to God’s law was a condition without which he could not be saved.

. Jesus told the inquirer that he could do something right that moment to be perfect. This perfection could not mean maturity, for that is a growth in wisdom and knowledge and is not instantly obtained. It could not be mental or physical perfection, for that will not be obtained in this life. It could not refer to God mystically imputing him with Christ’s moral perfection (as many teach), for that blood had not yet been shed, and therefore that type of perfection could not be instantly obtained. The only other type of perfection mentioned in the Bible that it could be is personal moral perfection, or sinlessness, through repentance and faith which works by love. For this fellow, it meant giving his wealth to the poor and following Jesus. Unfortunately, this sinner rejected Christ’s invitation into the Kingdom of God. Unless he forsook his sin and began to love the Lord with ALL his being (not simply some or most), and his poor neighbors as himself before he died, he is experiencing the torments of hell at this very moment!

If this young man had responded to the altar call of your typical evangelical church in America today, he probably would have prayed the sinner’s prayer, been baptized, tithed, and maybe even done great works for God. But if temptation ever made him have to choose between his riches and the Lord, the true god of his heart would have been evident for all to see. We would label him a “backslider”, but the truth is he never slid forward in the first place! Jesus required death to self, turning from all sin, and perfect submission as a prerequisite to salvation. Jesus demanded moral perfection from the onset for one to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus must be your First Love if you are to be God’s child.

When a lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life in Luke 10:25-28, Jesus told Him that he must love God supremely and his neighbor equally in order to live forever! This is in harmony with the teachings of Christ throughout the Gospels. “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom.2:13). If someone is not in perfect compliance with God’s law of love, they are not saved! They either have not repented, or they have repented of their repentance.

The Bible makes it very clear that repentance is a necessary condition for salvation (Luke 13:3; Mk.1:15; Prov.28:13; Isa.55:7; etc.). Repentance in today’s evangelical church has been perverted to mean anything but what the Bible says it is. Repentance is forsaking sin, and sin is transgression of God’s law - so repentance is a return to obedience to God’s law. They that have repented do not sin anymore, but keep God’s law (I Jn.3:4-10)!! They do as King David said, “Stand in awe, and sin not” (Ps.4:5). They do as Paul

said, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (I Cor.15:34). They do as Jesus told the lame man to do, "Sin no more!" (Jn.5:14). They do as Jesus told the adulterous woman to do, "Go and sin no more!" (Jn.8:11). Not "Go and sin less!" Not "Go and sin occasionally, but feel guilty afterwards and confess it." Not "Go and sin more, but don't worry about it because My grace will make up for your deficient repentance." SIN NO MORE!!! This is everywhere the doctrine of the Bible. Repentance is a 180 degree change of moral direction - from self-gratification as the ultimate aim of your life to God-glorification as the ultimate aim of your life, from loving self supremely to loving God supremely. Repentance is a return to perfect obedience to God's law. I emphasize perfect obedience because anything but perfect obedience is disobedience! Anything but perfect submission is rebellion! (Read I Samuel 15 if you doubt it.)

Jesus taught that you cannot serve God and sin at the same time! "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (worldly gain)" (Matt.6:25; also John 8:34). Where a servant of God is, love for sin cannot be! "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit... Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn (cut) down and cast into the fire" (Matt.7:16-20; also Matt.15:33-37; Jn.15:1-8). Where a good tree is, bad fruit cannot be! It is a FACT: sin and salvation are mutually exclusive, just as Satan and Jesus are, and for the same reason - God is holy! Unless you are living holy, there is no doubt, you are not right with God and are headed for hell!

Many consider their emotional affections for God and the Bible as proof of their love for God, and the warm feelings they experience when they do good to their neighbor as proof that they love their neighbor. But the love that God's law demands is not an emotion, but benevolence, or good-willing. You might have "good feelings" about your wife yet still cheat on her! If you do, you do not really love her. If you loved her, you would keep your vow to her and be faithful to her. Likewise, you might have "good feelings" about God, even strong affections, yet still be unfaithful to Him. If so, you do not really love Him. If you loved Him, you would obey His commandments. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous (or burdensome, impossible to keep)" (I Jn.5:2-3). God's commandments are not burdensome or impossible to keep - and those that love God say, "Amen!"

Those who profess to love God and their neighbor, yet still sin, really do not love God or their neighbor. It is clear that upon God's law of love hangs all of the commandments of God (Matt.22:35-40; 23:23). One who loves God supremely and their neighbor equally will not sin against God or their neighbor in any way. It is impossible! "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom.13:8-10; Gal.5:14). "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" (I Jn.2:10). Those that love God supremely and their neighbor equally are "unblameable in holiness" (I

Thes.3:12-13; Eph.1:4). If this law of love is written upon their heart, “none of their steps shall slide” (Ps.37:31).

Jesus made it so clear that even a child could understand it: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments... He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me... If a man love Me, he will keep My words... He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings...” (Jn.14:15, 21-24). “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him” (I Jn.2:3-5). According to these passages, if you are not keeping His commandments, you do not love God or know God! “Be ye perfect” is one of the commandments of Jesus, albeit, one of the most unpopular (Matt.5:48). However, those who love Him happily comply!

The Lawgiver did not repeal His just law in 33 A.D. (Matt.5:17). The law still stands - KEEP IT OR BE DAMNED FOREVER!!! “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10 - this is in the New Testament!). One who breaks just one of the moral commandments of God shows he does not love God, and is guilty of all! In other words, not saved, not forgiven, not pardoned, not a recipient of God’s grace, not a Christian, but a wicked rebel on the highway to hell!

The O.T. prophesies of the New Covenant show that man will be holy, righteous, sinless, perfectly obedient to God’s law of love in this New Covenant (Deut.30:1-10; Jer.31:31-34; 32:37-41; Eze.11:17-21; 36:24-29; Heb.8:7-12; II Cor.6:14-7:1). If you are not living holy, you are not in the New Covenant! Jesus’ sacrifice motivates the guilty beholder to lay down his bloody mallet and sin no more - to love God supremely and his neighbor equally. He came to set the captives free from sin (Jn.8:31-36)! If you still commit sin, Christ said you are a servant to sin and unless you are set free by the power of the cross, you will perish in your sins (Rom.6:16,21-23)!

The power of the cross is the influence it has upon the believer to make him sinless (not sin less)! We love Him (keep His law) because He first loved us (I Jn.4:19)! The blood of Jesus perfects those who believe: “Through the blood of the everlasting covenant”, God makes the believer “perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb.13:20-21; Heb.10:14). He reconciles us through the blood of the cross to make us “holy and unblameable and unreprouvable” (Col.1:20-23). He died so that we might be “dead to sin” and “live unto righteousness” (I Pet.2:24). Hallelujah! There is power in the blood! If one’s moral character has not been perfected by the blood, he is not washed in the blood and is on his way to hell!

Do you think, O lukewarm professing Christian, that you can continue breaking the law of the omnipotent Lawgiver while you tread the blood of Christ underfoot and be guiltless on Judgment Day? Do you think He will judge you with favoritism and not according to your works (II Cor.5:10-11; Eze.33:7-20)? Do you think your “good works” short of perfect obedience will bribe God to pervert justice on that Day of Woe and not

condemn you for your sins? If so, you are deceived! Wake up, hypocrites! “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”, or depart from the name of Christ now! Be not deceived, unless you repent and become morally perfect, you will surely go to hell, and that forever!

OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SINLESS PERFECTION:

#1. “But the Bible says we are saved through faith, not the works of the law!”

Answer: The Apostle Paul emphasized salvation through faith in his opposition to a contemporary false doctrine that required Gentiles to be circumcised and conform to the civil and ceremonial law of the Jews in order to be considered Christians. Gentiles are not obligated to keep the civil and ceremonial laws which were unique to the Jewish nation, but are obligated to keep the moral law only, which is written upon their consciences. It is the moral law only to which Gentiles must conform by faith or be damned (Rom.2:6-29; I Cor.7:19; Luke 10:25-28). “Faith alone” was a theme of the Reformation when many were saved out of Roman Catholicism, which bases its system of salvation on works which God’s moral law does not require (like infant baptism, praying the rosary, mass, confession to a priest, last rites, etc.).

Unfortunately, many have hailed this “faith alone” doctrine as they continue in their evil works, presuming their sins will not damn them because they “believe” in Jesus. They have prayed the “sinner’s prayer”, made a profession of faith, and now they think that they can keep on sinning and are still saved because their works have nothing to do with their salvation! They are deceived!

Faith, the Bible says, works by love (Gal.5:6). Faith and love cannot be divorced. Faith is only a means to an end, the end being full compliance with the law of love. This verse makes it clear: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom.3:31). Faith provides what the law demands: perfect love and obedience. Faith is that trust in God and commitment to the truths of the Gospel which the law demands from the onset. Faith is a “weightier matter of the law” according to Jesus (Matt.23:23). All of the O.T. saints “wrought righteousness” only by faith (Heb.3,4 & 11). Obedience to His law of love is impossible without faith, and the believer will not sin as long as he remains in the faith (James 2:14-26; I Jn.3:9)! If one professes to believe in God yet disobeys God, James compares his faith with the faith of devils (2:14-26)! Even Satan believes in God, yet he is not heavenbound. The only verse in the Bible that has the words “faith” and “alone” in it, says we are not saved by faith alone (Jam.2:17)!!! Faith and sin are incompatible. Faith without perfect obedience to God is dead faith, and it cannot save you anymore than a dead lifeguard can.

#2. “But Ephesians 2:8-9 and other Scriptures teach salvation is of free grace, and not of works!”

Answer: I do not believe compliance with God’s law in any way merits salvation any more than I believe faith merits salvation (if you believe in Jesus, you still do not deserve

to be saved.) Salvation is a gift of undeserved grace! However, moral perfection is a condition without which you cannot be saved. What you must do to receive an undeserved pardon from Jesus is repent (return to obedience to God's law), believe in Jesus, and persevere therein.

#3. "Doesn't the Bible say that God sees us as perfect, because He 'imputes' us with Christ's righteousness and sees us 'through the blood' even though we sin every day?"

Answer: This popular doctrine is extra-Biblical, mystical nonsense! The blood of Christ makes man righteous by influencing him to do righteousness! The power of the cross is to transform the sinner into a new creature who does righteousness, not to mystically "impute" him with righteousness while he keeps on sinning (II Cor.5:17, 21; I Pet.2:24). Jesus died so "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom.8:3-4). His sacrifice redeems us "from all iniquity" and purifies us a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The grace of God teaches us to live righteously and godly in this present world (Tit.2:11-15). We are reckoned to be righteous by faith because we can only do righteousness by faith! God does not "see you through the blood" and pretend you are righteous if you do not do righteousness! This verse makes it clear: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (I Jn.3:7). God accepts he who "worketh righteousness" (Ps.15:1-2; Acts 10:35; Matt. 25:46). "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (I Jn.3:10; I Cor.6:9). Be not deceived! If you are not doing righteousness or if you are doing unrighteousness, there is no doubt, you are on your way to hell! If you do not possess the faith that purifies you, you do not possess saving faith (Acts 15:9)! Only the pure in heart shall see God, and no sin can dwell in a pure heart (Matt.5:8; 15:1-20)! Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Heb.12:14)! Oh! Forsake forever these devilish doctrines which excuse sin and render the blood of Christ no more powerful than the blood of a dead beast (Heb.7:19; 9:9; 10:1-4,11). How dare you slander the blood of Christ so!

#4. "But the Bible says nobody is perfect but Jesus! Everybody sins!"

Answer: No, the Bible does not say Jesus was the only perfect person. Many were called morally perfect in the Bible: Job, Noah, David, Asa, Hezekiah, the parents of John the Baptist, etc. (Job 1:6-8; Gen.6:9; Ps.18:30-36; Ps.101:2-3; I Kings 15:14; II Kings 20:3; Luke 1:6). Many others were called righteous, godly, holy, or sanctified, which is synonymous with "morally perfect". However, these do differ from Christ in that He never sinned. These did, but when they repented and persevered in obedient faith, they were compliant with their moral obligation and, hence, morally perfect. Contrary to popular belief, everyone does not sin! "He that is born of God does not commit sin" (I Jn.3:9)! All true Christians have repented (quit sinning) and love God supremely and, hence, are morally perfect.

#5. "But Christians are continually sanctified on earth and will not be perfect until heaven!"

Answer: To be sanctified is “to be set apart to God.” Sanctification in the believer is not the gradual putting off of sin. This type of sanctification is a prerequisite to justification (I Cor.6:11; II Cor.6:14-18). Until one is set apart from all sin unto God, he is not forgiven. Man must become morally perfect on earth, or he will never be perfect. No one would deny that saints are morally perfect in heaven. Well, the Bible says that all that pertains to life and godliness is ours now (II Pet.1:3-4)! There will be no infusion of holiness when we die. All that happens when we die is that we get a perfectly new body. However, our moral character at the moment of death is forever fixed (Rev.22:11-12). If you are not morally fit for heaven before you die, you are fit for hell!

#6. “But what about Paul the Apostle? In Philippians 3:12, he said he strives to be perfect, but is not yet.”

Answer: In Phil.3:12, Paul is speaking of a physical perfection which he had not yet obtained, not moral perfection. He says he presses on to “attain unto the resurrection of the dead”, when Christ shall “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” This bodily glorification is “the prize of the high calling of God” which he had not yet apprehended, not righteousness (sinlessness), which he had already obtained by faith. The context makes these points clear (vs.5-21). In vs. 15, he exhorts those who were already perfect to strive for and hope for the same goal, which if a man will do, he will be pure, “even as He is pure” (I Jn.3:2-3)! Let us look at what Paul says about himself in three other passages to see that he was indeed already morally perfect: “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (I Cor.9:27). “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (I Thes.2:10). Paul said in his defense to Felix, “And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). Furthermore, Paul claims that all Scriptures and all the promises of God exist to make men morally perfect (II Tim.3:16-17; II Cor.7:1). He makes it his prayer and ministry goal to produce morally perfect disciples, and he beseeches them to morally imitate him (Col.1:28; II Cor.13:9,11; I Cor.11:1; 4:16; Phil.3:17; 4:9).

#7. “Doesn’t Paul rebuke sin in the churches, proving that there is sin in the church and always will be?”

Answer: In the Apostle Paul’s letters to the churches, he does rebuke sin: adultery, fornication (sex outside of marriage), homosexuality, lust, stealing, drunkenness, strife, envyings, and the like. Some have dared to use this as an excuse for sin in the church! But when he rebukes sin in the church, he warns them in the same breath not to be deceived: “they which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” - even to the Christian, “the wages of sin is death.” He warns that no sinner “hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Gal.5:19-20; I Cor.5:1-13; 6:9-11; Eph.5:3-7; Col.3:5-6; Heb.10:26-31; Rom.6:16, 21-23; 8:12-13; & James 1:7-8; 5:20-21 - let God be true and every man a liar!). If there is any sin at all in your life, Paul’s rebukes apply: do not be

deceived - you are not heavenbound but hellbound! Unless, of course, you repent.

#8. “If you could be perfect, you would not need Jesus!”

Answer: Not true. It is because of Jesus that Christians can be morally perfect! I need His blood to wash me clean from my past sins, and I need the power of the cross, the Holy Ghost, and His assistance as my High Priest to deliver me from every future temptation (I Cor.10:13; Heb.2:17-18; Heb.4:14-16). “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil.4:13). Greater is He that is in me, than he that tempts me in the world (I Jn.4:4). Thanks be unto God who always causes me to triumph victoriously in Christ (II Cor.2:14; I Cor.15:57)! I am more than a conqueror through Him that loved me (Rom.8:37)! Now unto Him that is able to keep me from falling, and present me faultless before His throne with great joy - to Him be all the glory forever (Jude 24)! To God be the glory!

JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING!!!

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, and KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: for this is the whole duty of man. For GOD SHALL BRING EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” -Ecclesiastes 12:13-14', '-Visit Dr. Johnston's website at: www.wherethe truthhurts.org