

Study for the Month of July, 2008

BIBLICAL PERFECTION

Part I

By Nathaniel M. Fajardo

God Requires Perfection of His people: What kind of perfection?

Jesus himself declared, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matt 5:48, K.J.V. This is perhaps one of the most controversy-ridden passages in the Bible, especially when isolated from its context and spiritual meaning.

So many arguments have been made as to what Jesus meant by "perfect"---some of which arrive at the unfortunate conclusion that He didn't actually mean what He said, and thus could be ignored or glossed over "since we are already saved by grace." Or that He merely meant *spiritual maturity*---that kind that strangely eliminates the moral law of Ten Commandments as the standard by which it is measured by, the law being the transcript of His character and the standard of judgment.

In the original Hebrew, this word was generally *tam*, or *tamin*, meaning, "complete," "right," "peaceful," "sound," "wholesome," "blameless." In the Greek it was generally *teleios*, meaning "complete," "perfect," "full grown," "mature," "fully developed," or "having attained its purpose."

One Bible Dictionary has this entry on perfect and perfection (emphasis mine):

"In the Old Testament *tam* signifies completeness, *integrity*, and *sincerity*, but always in a *relative sense* when used of man. A person with a 'perfect heart' was a man whose life was completely devoted to the Lord (1 Kings 8:61; 1 Chron. 12:38; Isa. 38:3, KJV). Thus Job was designated as 'perfect' (Job 1:1, 8, KJV) despite weaknesses revealed later by adversity (see chapters 40: 2-5; 42:2-6), showing that his perfection was relative rather than absolute. Similarly, Noah was said to be 'perfect' (Gen. 6:9, KJV) though later he succumbed to the weakness of the flesh (ch. 9:21). Perfection was the ideal God set before Abraham (ch. 17:1). The RSV generally translates *tam*, as 'blameless.'

"In extra-Biblical Greek literature *teleioi*, 'perfect ones' or 'mature ones,' is used of flawless sacrificial victims, of mature animals, of adult human beings, and of trained, fully qualified professional men. In the New Testament 'perfection' consists essentially in maturity as distinguished from immaturity, as adults differ from children and youth. [1] A mature person is one who has attained the normal limits of stature, strength, and mental power. This concept of maturity is clearly evident in such passages as: 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4: 13, 14; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:14. Paul speaks of himself and his fellow Christians as already perfect (1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15, KJV), but in almost the same breath makes it evident that there is a sense in which perfection is a goal yet to be attained (Phil. 3:12). [2] The Christian is to be 'perfect' in his finite sphere as God is 'perfect' in His

infinite completeness (Matt. 5:48). Thus a man may be ‘perfect’ before the Lord, but there are ever new heights to which he may aspire. **[3]** *In this life he never attains to ultimate perfection.* **[4]** *A person whose heart and life are wholly devoted to the worship and service of God, that is, to the goal of constant growth in grace and in the knowledge and practice of spiritual truth, and* **[5]** *who has gained a measure of experience in cooperating with the Holy Spirit, has attained to Christian perfection* (Col. 4: 12; James 3:2). He is no longer a ‘babe’ in Christ, occupied with the rudimentary facts and practices of religion (see Heb. 5:12 to 6:2). **[6]** *A perfect man in God’s sight is thus one who has reached the degree of development expected of him at any given time.* He is a mature Christian fully dedicated to the Lord, and who, *though he still has weaknesses to overcome, presses onward toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:12-15).” – *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, Commentary Series, vol. 8.*

Now let us examine the highlighted statements more closely:

1. “A mature person is one who has attained the normal limits of stature, strength, and mental power.”

The question here is not the three dimensions of growth addressed, namely, stature, strength, and mental power---but their “normal limits.” Who establishes and determines the standard of “normality” of the limits for each of these dimensions? This is essential to know for what may be deemed normal and achievable by one may be abnormal and unachievable to another. Still, to many others, such as those naturally born with congenital defects, handicaps, criminal family history, bad upbringing in a neighborhood where drug-dealing, prostitution, and deadly violence is way of life--determining the “normal limits in such situations is almost next to impossible.

According to the context of the topic, the “normal limit” of stature, strength, and mental power, and it should be added, *moral power* as well, that a mature Christian can, and must attain, cannot but be that which Christ modeled and set as a standard *in His adopted human nature* for all men to aim for. Thus there is only one normal limit of stature, strength, mental, and moral power that all Christians must be *daily* striving for by God’s limitless grace in Christ Jesus through the imparted power of the Holy Spirit and aid of the heavenly angels that excel in strength. As Jesus himself said, “Without Me you can do nothing” meaning, with Me you *can* do what is humanly impossible, if you *will* to do so. John 15:5. Paul repeated the same truth by inspiration and actual experience, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil. 4: 13.

2. “The Christian is to be “perfect” in his finite sphere, as God is “perfect” in His infinite completeness (Matt. 5:48).”

This is partially explained by the foregoing with the added qualification of the limitation of fallen man---his *finite sphere* and condition, compared to God’s limitless, *infinite* sphere of perfection. A proper definition of both words, finite and sphere, will be most helpful in understanding this phrase. Notice:

Finite means “**1.** Having definable limits **2.** Having a character or being completely determinable (in theory or in fact) either as an object of thought, or as susceptible of complete enumeration or measurement. **3. a** Of numbers, attainable or surpassable by counting; less than an integer that may be assigned. **b** Of a magnitude, neither infinite nor infinitesimal.” – *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed., 1942.*

Sphere means “1. (In *geometry*), a body of space bounded by one surface, all points of which are equally distant from a point within called its *center*. 2. Any globe or globular body, especially a celestial one. 3. (In *astronomy*), a The apparent surface of the heavens (half of which forms the dome of the visible sky) b in ancient astronomy, one of the revolving spherical transparent shells in which stars, sun, planets, and moon were supposed to be set. 4. *Circuit or range of action, knowledge, or influence; compass; province; place or scene of action or existence*. 5. Rank; order of society; social position or class.”- *Ibid*.

While **finite** means having *definable* limitations, it is also of a magnitude which is “neither infinite nor infinitesimal,” the latter meaning, “that which approaches zero as a limit; immeasurably or incalculably small; very minute.” Thus, our finite nature, though fallen and sinful, is never to be considered completely valueless on one hand, nor assigned powers that it lost on account of sin on the other. Yes, we are finite, sinful, fallen, helpless mortals whose flesh is corruptible at death. But we are still the only creature created in God’s very own image and likeness which is also why He devised the plan of redemption *before* man fell.

Some say we are *nothing* but dust, repeating the very words of the psalmist, and that is the plain truth. The psalmist himself says: “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” Ps. 104:14, NKJV. But to *treat* or handle oneself or others *as dust* or dirt is a perversion of this truth. God himself knows that we are dust having created man from dust; but He never sees us nor treats us as dust but as *diamonds* in the rough as it were, needing to be purified from all the dross. His trade as a carpenter is significant of His work and mission on earth. Perfection was found in every detail of His humble carpentry work for this would be His work of perfecting characters after the similitude of the heavenly palace—one which was worthy of His dwelling place. As Paul says, “Do you know that *you are* the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17, NKJV.

Thus sphere means *the circuit or range of action, knowledge, or influence; compass; province, including the place or scene of action or existence*. Its size and magnitude, on a natural, individual basis, is specific to the scope and range of action, knowledge, or influence that each person has, which is never exactly identical with anybody else’s. No two experiences are exactly alike. On the broader scale of the human experience, however, this sphere is *the whole human plane of existence and scene of action*—during the lifetime of the person—with all its potential for spiritual growth and development. It is to this aspect that there can be no limitations—when wrought out by God’s grace in Christ, as imparted and directed by the Holy Spirit, with the individual’s complete submission and co-operation.

So man’s sphere, though finite, comprehends a vast area of potential and possibilities as well as responsibility and accountability within the borders of its definable limits of growth, particularly the spiritual. Therefore man’s potential for character perfection in *his sphere*, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is far greater than he is aware of, or wants to acknowledge for fear that he will see things more clearly, and condemn himself, if he fails to give up many of the things and ideas he has learned to love but are in opposition to the pure and holy principles of God’s law. But ignorance of the law does not excuse us from its transgression, especially if it is done in willing ignorance.

Does this mean that the *human nature* of Christ should therefore have been also *finite in some qualified sense*, in order for His humanity to be *the* standard for the development of the four dimensions of growth in perfection up to the “normal limits” of his human sphere?

The answer has to be YES, for it was the perfect, sinless human nature of Christ that was subject to temptation; divinity is above and beyond temptation. And it was this same human nature that *died* at Calvary as the perfect substitute and surety for sinful mankind. His *quiescent divinity* could not die for God alone is immortal. But we must be quick to point out that *this finiteness of Christ's incarnated human nature is not exactly the same* as the finiteness of every son and daughter of Adam, as Christ's humanity was *not altogether like our fallen humanity*. Christ had no propensities to disobedience as every human being born after the fall has. He was *the only sinless humanity* that ever walked on earth else He could not be *spotless* “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” (see our previous series on the “Humanity of Christ.”) Full of meaning was the declaration of angel Gabriel when he announced to Mary and Joseph that His name, in addition to Jesus, the Savior *from* sin, would also be “Immanuel, being interpreted, ‘God with us.’” Matt. 1: 21, 23,

3. “In this life he never attains to ultimate perfection.”

That is, the ultimate perfection, with emphasis on *ultimate*, that is outside and beyond the “normal limits of stature, strength, mental and moral power” achievable by God's grace in man's finite sphere. And because of the infinite completeness and perfection of God, the original image in which Adam and Eve were created, the perfection likewise in this eternally saved state is never attained to its ultimate fullness; it is as limitless as eternity. And yet it is what the gospel is designed to restore, from here to eternity.

Thus, a man may be perfect before the Lord, but there are *ever new heights* to which he may aspire and attain to. This is the reason why genuine Christianity in this fallen world never reaches the point of becoming boring, and why eternity's bliss, happiness, and pure excitement will be never-ending for there will be ever new heights to gain in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This gives us more reason and inspiration to contemplate on what Paul wrote by inspiration and revelation, having been taken in vision “to the third heavens, even Paradise” itself (2 Cor. 12: 1-10) where he testifies that “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But of the spiritual wisdom that we need to understand the plan of salvation, Paul adds, “God has *revealed* them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes he deep things of God.” 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10 (to 15), NKJV.

4. “A person whose heart and life are wholly devoted to the worship and service of God, that is, to the goal of constant growth in *grace* and in the knowledge and practice of spiritual truth.”

Grace has several meanings or definitions (see Titus 2: 11-15, for e.g.), all pointing to one central truth—that it is *the character and power of God*. The original Greek of grace is *charis* which means “*the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.*” (See Strong's Greek Dictionary). This goal is a heart and life work which is the same work as sanctification, a process of a lifetime worshipping and serving God in all walks and pursuits of life, including the secular activities. And the highest and most sublime

form of worship to God is loving and intelligent obedience to His law, His will written in the heart and mind as the New Covenant. Heb. 8:10; 12:16. Christ's principles are brought to bear upon all that is imagined, thought, said, and done—which shall all be brought to judgment, Eccl. 12; 13, 14.

5. “And has gained a measure of experience cooperating with the Holy Spirit, has attained to Christian perfection.”

One vital aspect to our ultimate salvation that many of us Christians do not still fully appreciate is the daily work of intelligently co-operating *fully* with the Holy Spirit! Co-operate means “to act or operate *jointly*.” Now, if we do not know exactly what the appointed office, role, and work of the Holy Spirit is, in the plan of salvation, we will not know what to do and how to co-operate with Him. Many Christians, in fact, are not only failing to co-operate with Him but in fact are doing things that are grieving away the Holy Spirit! Inspiration reveals the most fearful truth that countless have already fully grieved away the Holy Spirit by committing the unpardonable sin and have closed their own probation themselves. Some examples given in the Bible are Cain, the impenitent antediluvians, the pharaoh who would not let Israel go from their Egyptian bondage, king Saul, Balaam the false prophet, all the Jewish leaders who had a hand in the death of Christ, Pilate, Herod, Ananias and Sapphira, the papal powers who persecuted and tortured to death the martyrs of the Dark Ages, etc.

The designated works of the Holy Spirit are very specific. And unless one knows what they are, he cannot fully co-operate with the Holy Spirit! These are: *to comfort those who are grieving over their sins, to reprove the world of sin and righteousness, convict, convince, teach and guide into all truth, bring all things to remembrance whatsoever God has taught and we have learned, show us things to come, testify of Jesus in the heart and mind, glorify Jesus—not any one, intercede our prayers with groanings that cannot be uttered, and seals us to our day redemption.* John 14: 16, 17, 26,27; 15: 26, 27; 16:7-14; Rom. 8: 26; Eph. 4:30.

6. “A perfect man in God’s sight is thus one who has reached the degree of development expected of him *at any given time*.”

This definition of a perfect man, in God’s sight, here and now, is profound for it presupposes the following:

a. One should be intellectually and spiritually *informed*, at the very least, as to what God, in His word, precisely expects of him so that he is quite sure that it is indeed “God’s sight,” or His view of the matter, not that of any man or institution. This is only quite possible if the individual has disciplined himself to study the word diligently, comparing scripture with scripture, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the angels, has decided the truth for himself, as he is to stand before the judgment seat alone.

b. Only thus informed will he be able to determine *what degrees* of spiritual development is *expected* of him by God at *any given time*—else he, even unconsciously, volunteer his own degrees of self-expectation that can hardly be expected to be in harmony with that of a perfect God, him being “a Christian *with weaknesses still to be overcome*”—as the next sentence concludes.

c. “At any given time,” in connection with the development of the work of perfection, means constant progression, and an examination of this progress being made without prior notice or warning, hence, “at any given time.”

d. Furthermore, one must know without a doubt as to what he is actually “pressing onward to,” and what, in actuality, is that “mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” for Paul himself said:

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected: but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also lay hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead [or “before;” KJV], I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil 3: 12-14, NKJV.

Many Christians have, no doubt, in sincerity, arrived at their own conclusions and definitions of what “the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” amounts to. But seeing how much mainstream Christianity, previously the Reformation which became Protestantism, then steadily deteriorated scripturally and morally since then by compromising and yielding up their once-pure doctrines to the traditions and Christianized heathen doctrines of the “man of sin,” it stands to good reason that their expositions on the subject cannot be trusted.

Call me “legalistic” if you will, but I must raise this question: Why, in all the different definitions of *perfect*, in both their original Hebrew and Greek, which cannot but be their correct meanings, is this *relative perfection* not pegged to the *moral perfection* required by **the law**—for which it was given? Are there different standards by which God measures human behavior and human finite perfection? Was there any standard to begin with? Did He expect anything of Adam and Eve before the fall? Obviously He did for the sacred record says He specifically commanded them *not* to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, its transgression of which was death! Gen. 2: 16, 17.

Was it the same standard after their fall? Or was it somehow changed, adjusted as it were to the changing needs of the times, as many suggest; in fact, “lowered” to meet fallen men’s progressively deteriorating condition, morally and spiritually? Are those who claim to be the sons and daughters God six thousand years after the fall, measured by these lowered standards as well? But Adam and Eve did transgress the command of God, which we know was the law of Ten Commandments, and thus were correspondingly condemned; they became mortals, condemned by the law to the penalty of eternal death. If not, then for what purpose did God Creator have to speak and write that law, hand it to Moses, instructing him to command Israel to obey it—as the mutual, *everlasting* covenant?

My concerns are not unfounded for I ran into a passage from the inspired Pen stating this very point and very concern, sub-titled “No Short Route to Holiness.” Note the following (emphasis mine):

“This is an age famous for surface work, for easy methods, for boasted holiness aside from the standard of character God has erected. **All short routes, all cut-off tracks, all teaching which fail to exalt the law of God as the standard, is spurious. Perfection of character is a lifelong work**, unattainable by those who are not willing to strive for it in God’s appointed way, by slow and toilsome steps. We cannot afford to make a mistake in this matter,

but we want day by day to be growing up into Christ, our living Head.” – *Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library*, p. 65.

Note that: “All teachings which fail to exalt the law of God as *the standard*, is spurious.” And we cannot but agree. The psalmist says, “The law of the Lord is *perfect*, converting the soul.” Ps. 19:7. Paul echoed this truth saying, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Rom. 7: 12, KJV.

The inspired Pen says that in their sinless, unfallen state, Adam and Eve were yet to grow in knowledge and stature throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Note:

“When Adam came forth from the Creator’s hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, *a likeness to his Maker*. ‘God created man in His own image.’ (Gen. 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived *the more fully* he should reveal this image---the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe---the ‘wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge’ (Job 37:16)---invited man’s study.

Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more have reflected the Creator’s glory.”-*Education*, p. 15.

So the object and purpose in the creation of man---the crowning work of the Creator’s creative genius and power, the exact opposite of what evolution teaches---was for His masterpiece to reveal His image, that is, His moral character throughout the universe—both to men and angels---and *to reveal it more fully the longer he lived!* I will not pretend and say I know what this actually means, for just the thought alone staggers my imagination, although it makes me better appreciate what kind of Biblical perfection is expected of us *now* in our fallen human nature, and, what kind of progressive perfection is expected of those who will be eternally saved throughout eternity, as seen by what it should have been *before* the fall! It is in this sense that the glorious past sheds a blazing light on the incomprehensible glorious future of the finally saved.

We only know too well, oftentimes with great consternation and regrets, that our first parents fell through yielding to temptation and compromise, *interrupting the original divine plan for them and us*. But we also know that the gospel, the plan of salvation and redemption, contemplated in the heavenly council before the foundation of the earth, was immediately activated the same moment man fell. What then was the specific object and purpose of the gospel? Note (all emphasis mine):

“But by disobedience this was forfeited [the original purpose of his creation]. Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man’s physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death. Yet the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. **To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized---this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.**

“Love, the basis of creation and redemption, is the basis of [true] education. **This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life.** The first and great commandment is, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.’ Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. **It means that in the whole being---the body, the mind, as well as the soul---the image of God is to be restored.**

“Like the first is the second commandment---‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Matt. 22:39. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. **Unselfishness underlies all true development.** Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts.”- *Education*, pp. 15, 16.

But this expectation of perfection from His follower was merely our Savior’s concluding statement to what He was expounding on from verses 1 through 47 of the gospel of Matthew ,of what is called the “Sermon on the Mount,” which includes the Beatitudes (5: 3-12: Luke 6:20-23). In fact, this lengthy mountain-top discourse continues up to chapter seven, where it concludes. Thus chapter 8 begins with these words: “*When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him*” (KJV).

The Expositor of the law on the mount was the very same one, who, with His very own finger wrote the law of Ten Commandments *twice* on two tables of stone at the top of Mt. Sinai. Exo. 32:15, 16; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 10: 2-4. Here on the latter mount He explained, or more accurately *magnified* the spiritual meaning and applications of what He spoke and wrote on the top of Mount Sinai, with the command that His people enter into a covenant with Him to obey it. These two mountain-top instructions of Christ cannot but emphasize the truth that the true keeping of His law is a *spiritual mountain-top experience*. And since “spiritual things can only be discerned spiritually” (1 Cor. 2:10-14), it follows that the carnal mind, the heart of stone---the opposite of the spiritual mind and the heart of flesh, cannot keep the law for “it is at enmity to the law.” Rom. 8:7.

Only God who created all things can re-create fallen, sinful man—if he submits and fully co-operates with our Savior who will write or engrave that law on the two tables of his heart and mind, i.e., intellectually and spiritually. Apostle Paul attests to this, saying, “For *by* Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created *by* Him, and *for* Him: and He is *before* all things; and *by* Him all things consist.” Col. 1:16, 17. The apostle says “There is One Lawgiver who is both able to save and destroy.” James 4:12.

This whole discourse on the mount was to explain the *principles* and the *spirit* rather than *the letter* of the law contained in the Ten Commandments with its practical applications, and its fruits as well. The religious leaders in Jesus’ time taught the letter of the law rigidly while they broke every principle of it. They and the Roman Catholic religion share one thing in particular---the idolatry of ceremonialism, the worship and veneration of traditions and symbols which is the very substance of heathen worship liberally mingled with spiritualism in the veneration of the dead.

But the fundamental example of this spiritual, soul-destroying blindness is the rejection of Jesus by His very own people. Jesus was the Substance merely symbolized by all the sacrificial offerings and the priestly ministry of the Levitical and Aaronic priesthoods of the Jewish Dispensation that for a thousand years offered and performed their functions in their temples. When the prophesied Messiah came, they not only rejected Him but crucified Him, accusing of Him of performing His miracles by "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

When Substance met the shadow and Antitype met its type, the idolaters at heart who had veiled their inward corruption with ostentatious show of religiosity, revealed the sum and substance of their worship and religion—nothing but self-worship. Pretense and hypocrisy long hidden from the people were clearly laid bare. The religious leaders and spiritual guardians taught the people to worship the temple (or the church today) and reject what it merely represented—Jesus Christ. They were taught that their salvation depended on perfect obedience, not to the law of God itself, but to the multitude of man-made religious laws they had manufactured. The same had reached its darkest point, as prophesied, during the Dark Ages (538- 1798 A.D.) when *the church usurped Christ's* office, power, and authority as the savior of mankind, and relentlessly destroyed anyone who lifted up Christ and His word as the only source of salvation. Today, we are in no less danger of the same soul-destroying error, in a more subtle, hence, deadlier form. "You don't have to worry about keeping the law of God as long as you stay in the church and go to church every week and return your tithe regularly." And this is the measurement of their "perfection."

Biblical perfection is an everlasting hope, a perpetual goal, and it is God's love alone that gives us this hope and empowers us to be constantly growing towards it both here on earth, and in the life hereafter.

E.G. White explains what this passage, "Be ye therefore perfect" comprehends. In *Mount of Blessing*, p.116, we read the following (emphasis, words, and verses in brackets supplied by this writer):

"The word 'therefore' implies a *conclusion, an inference from what has gone before*. Jesus had been describing to His hearers the unfailing mercy and love of God, and He bids them *therefore* to be perfect. Because your heavenly Father is 'kind unto the unthankful and to the evil' (Luke 16:35), because He has stooped to lift you up [Heb. 2:10, 14-18], *therefore, said, Jesus, you may become like Him in character, and stand without fault [Jude 24] in the presence of men and angels. The conditions of eternal life, under grace, are just what they were in Eden,---perfect righteousness, harmony with God, perfect conformity to the principles of His law.*

The standard of character presented in the Old Testament is the same that is presented in the New Testament. *This standard is not one to which we cannot attain*. In every command or injunction that God gives, there is a *promise*, the most positive, underlying the command. God has made *provision* [not to sin, nor for sin, but] that we may *become like unto Him*, and will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will, and thus frustrate His grace." . . .

God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin *from* the heart. By it [agape love] He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith.

The Jews [Moslems, Catholics, and many Christians today as well] had been *wearily toiling to reach perfection by their own efforts*, and they had failed. Christ had

already told them that their righteousness could *never* enter into the kingdom of heaven. [Matt 5:6 cmp. to Mat 6:33]. *Now He points out to them the character of the righteousness that all who enter heaven will possess.* Throughout the Sermon on the Mount He describes its *fruits*, and now in one sentence He points out *its source and its nature*: Be perfect as God is perfect. The law is but a transcript of the character of God. Behold in your heavenly Father a perfect manifestation of the principles which are the foundation of His government.”

God is love. Like *rays* of light from the sun, *love and light and joy* flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His *very life* is the outflow of unselfish love. ‘His glory is His children’s good; His joy, His tender Fatherhood.’ He tells us to be perfect as He,---[meaning], in the same manner. *We are to centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe.*”

We have *nothing* of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us, and we are to *reflect* its brightness. ‘In His *borrowed goodness* good,’ we may be perfect in *our* sphere, even as God is perfect in *His* sphere.”

Jesus said, Be perfect as *your Father* [emphasis original] is perfect. If you are the children of God, you are partakers of His nature, and you cannot but be like Him. *Every child lives by the life of His father.* [That is, he wouldn’t have been born without being fathered]. If you are God’s children,---begotten by His Spirit,---you live by *the life* of God. In Christ dwells ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’(Col. 2:9); and the life of Jesus is made manifest ‘in *our* mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11). That life *in* you will produce the *same character* and manifest the *same works* as it did in Him. *Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.*” (Ps. 19:7, margin).

Through love, ‘the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.’(Rom. 8:4). In *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 315, “*Without A Wedding Garment*” chapter, pp. 307-319, which is based on Matt. 22: 1-14, we read:

“God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and is the standard of all character. This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ was a perfect expression of God’s law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christ-like in character, they will be obedient to God’s commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family in Heaven [see Eph 3:14-21].”

The apostle repeats this same injunction: “But as He which hath called you is holy , so *be ye holy* in all manner of conversation (living-*margin*) because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:15,16),---an echo of Lev. 11:44,45. Compare to 2 Cor. 7:1.

Notice once more: It is Jesus, not any mortal, who says to His disciples and followers on earth that *they must be perfect and holy*, and that that perfection and holiness are measured by and can only be by the standard of the perfection and holiness of God the Father, which is revealed in His law. Jesus, the Perfect, Sinless One, did not even claim that for Himself. He did not say, “Be ye therefore perfect and holy even as *I am* perfect and holy,” even if that were what was meant, and could only be what is meant for He is the outshining of the glory of the Father and His express image.

Thus, it can only be the antichristian principle at work whenever any one, in any of its various forms, suggests by either word or action, that he, relative to the erring around him, is a standard of character by which others are measured; and this may not even be necessarily consciously maintained. The holier-than-thou, self-righteous attitude is

symptomatic of this condition and is manifested in isolationism, bigotry, self-righteousness, and short-fused intolerance.

On the other hand, it must also be pointed out that many times those who are actually guilty of isolationism, bigotry, self-righteousness, intolerance, and impatience over the faults of others (but not his), accuse those who don't agree with them of what they hold as "truth" of these very things. How this distortion and outright contradiction can find legitimacy and function in the minds of a supposed enlightened generation is through the "rule of the majority," actually, the *tyranny* of the majority. This is couched in such terms as "for the good of the people;" "the general interest of the people;" "the majority can't be wrong."

But how can we sinful, fallen, mortals, 6,000 years degenerated after the Fall become perfect, even the perfection of God the Father when divine inspiration tells us that even unfallen *angelic perfection failed in heaven, and sinless, human perfection failed in Eden* (5BC 1132)?

Since it is impossible for God, "the Strength of Israel" to lie (1 Sam 15:29; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and because all His ways, laws, and works of His hands are perfect (Ps. 18:30; 19:7; 111:7), God never requires of us that which He doesn't empower us to do by living faith, nor that which isn't for our temporal benefit as well as for our eternal salvation. A God of perfect love and perfect knowledge cannot contradict Himself. A God who so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son as the Ransom for every sinner ever born in this world, cannot contradict himself; He cannot and will not abandon anyone who earnestly seeks Him with all his heart, soul, and mind.

Where lies then the problem? Simply this: Often, through sinful ignorance of God's Word, thus His ways, we measure His perfection by our imperfect understanding of the Father's perfection, as revealed through His Son. We substitute out of convenience, our flawed, self-justifying, self-serving standard of measuring perfection, though we often studiously avoid mentioning the word itself. This is no different than measuring the imperfection and unrighteousness of others by our imperfect interpretation of righteousness. Although we may not be aware of it, because of our natural propensity for pride and rebellion against the truth, we are often guilty of "comparing ourselves with some that commend (lift up-*margin*) themselves, and those who measure themselves by themselves." (2 Cor. 10:12).

The only safe course for all to pursue is to constantly compare and measure ourselves by God's eternal, unchanging standard of perfection and righteousness, as manifested in the life, words, and works of Jesus Christ--Himself the law in the flesh! As His life in the fallen human nature was one of *uninterrupted* victory over every temptation to which mankind is subjected to, it is also by an uninterrupted *connection* with the Father through Christ, that every son and daughter of God receives the *very same power* that Christ, in His humanity, received from the Father. This perfection of the Father in the life of the Son is imparted to us by the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*.

How to gain and retain the Holy Spirit is a deep and separate study in itself. For one, the Holy Spirit will *not* dwell in the heart of one who is knowingly defiling it. 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 6: 19, 20.

Jesus is God in the flesh, Emmanuel being the name that denotes that, as announced by the angel Gabriel who appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matt 1: 20, 23). Paul testifies that God, *through* His Son, was before all things, created all things by Him, for Him, and through Him, the worlds being upheld by the power of His word, and by Him all things consist. (Col 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2, 3; 11:3) He is the manifestation of the Father (1Tim. 3:16), the outshining of the glory of the Father (John 17:1, 5).

On one occasion, Philip, who, like most of us, fail to discern God in Jesus, said to Him, "Show us the Father, and it will suffice us." Jesus answered him, "Have I so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" John 14:8,9.

After He ascended to heaven to become our High Priest and Advocate before the Father in the glorified human flesh, He sent the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit as His manifestation and Presence on earth. Both the Father and the Son are *in* the Holy Spirit today, knocking on the doors of the hearts, i.e., the conscience and the mind of every man, woman, and child, seeking a full entrance so that their divine power and perfect righteousness may become ours by impartation.

When we receive Christ in and through the Holy Spirit working through the *written Word*, and by faith that works by love we obey His commandments and do His will, we become a human vessel for the manifestation of Jesus to the world. This is what Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life meant when He said to His disciples, "You are *the light* of the world." The Apostle Paul uses similar language to reveal this staggering truth: "Christ *in* you the hope of glory." Col. 1:27.

Jesus is the Word that became flesh, and the Holy Spirit, which inspired the writing of the word, is *in* the word. Word means the word itself, more importantly the *thought* behind it. So that when we read the Word and assimilate it, as we eat of the physical bread and digest it, we assimilate Christ through the Holy Spirit of Christ in the Word. Christ is the visible and audible thought of God the Father, and once more, not just the image of, but "the *express* image of His person." This word *express* is used only once in the Authorized (KJV) version of the Bible. It is the Greek *charakter*, meaning a graver (the tool or the person), i.e., by implication, engraving, character, the figure stamped; i.e., an exact copy or representation."- *Strong's Greek Lexicon*.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF WHAT PERFECTION COMPREHENDS AND IN WHAT AREAS IT IS ACHIEVED

Work Habits: Working as Christ Worked Even Secular Labor

See Rom. 12: 11. "The life of Christ from His earliest years was a life of earnest activity. He lived not to please Himself. He was the Son of the infinite God, yet He worked in the carpenter's trade with His father Joseph. *His trade was significant. He had come into the world as the character builder, and as such all His work was perfect. Into all His secular labors He brought the same perfection as into the characters He was transforming by His divine power. He is our pattern.*"- *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 345.

“It is the *duty* of every Christian to acquire habits of order, thoroughness, and dispatch. There is no excuse for slow bungling of at work of any character. When one is always at work and the work is never done, it is because mind and heart are not put into the labor. The one who is slow, and who works at a disadvantage, should realize that these are faults to be corrected. He needs to exercise his mind in planning how to use the time so as to secure the best results. By tact and method, some will accomplish as much work in five hours as another does in ten. Some who are engaged in domestic labor are always at work, not because they have much to do, but because they do not plan so as to save time. By their slow, dilatory ways, they make much work out of little. *But all who will, may overcome these fussy, lingering habits.* In their work, let them have a definite aim. Decide how long a time is required for a given task, and then bend every effort toward accomplishing the work in the given time. The exercise of the will power will make the hands move deftly.” – *Ibid*, p. 344.

Management of God's Time

See Ps. 90: 12; Eph. 5:16. Time is a most precious talent that all who have lived and are still alive, have in common. It is not, in the end, the amount or length of time that really matters but what we did with it when it was available. And this is because *without life there is no time*, and life come from the Life-giver alone. Therefore---

“*Our time belongs to God.* Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time.

The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. *We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity.* We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin. It is *now* that we are to form characters for the future, immortal life. It is *now* that we are to prepare for the searching judgment.

The human family [has] scarcely begun to live when they begin to die, and the world's incessant labor ends in nothingness *unless* a true knowledge in regard to eternal life is gained. The man who appreciates time as his working day will *fit* himself for a mansion and for a life that is immortal. *It is well that he was born.*

We are admonished to redeem the time. But time squandered cannot be recovered. We cannot call back even one moment. The *only* way we can redeem our time is by making the most of that which remains, by being co-workers with God in His great plan of redemption. In him who does this, a *transformation* of character takes place. He becomes a son of God, a member of the royal family, a child of the heavenly King. He is fitted to be the *companion* of angels.

Now is our time to labor for the salvation of our fellow-men. There are some who think that *if they give money to the cause of Christ, this is all they are required to do*; the precious time in which they might do personal service for Him passes unimproved. But it is the privilege and duty of all who have health and strength to render to God active service. All are to labor in winning souls to Christ. *Donation of money cannot take the place of this.*

Every moment is freighted with eternal consequences. We are to stand as minute men, ready for service at a moment's notice. The opportunity that is now ours to speak to some needy soul the word of life may never offer again. God may say to that one ‘This night thy soul shall be required of thee’ [Luke 12:20] and through our neglect he may not be ready. In the great Judgment-day, how shall render our account to God?

Life is too solemn to be absorbed in temporal and earthly matters, in a treadmill of care and anxiety for the things that are but an atom in comparison with the things of eternal interest. Yet God has called us to serve Him in the temporal affairs of life. Diligence in this work is as much part of true religion as is devotion. The Bible gives no endorsement to idleness. It is the *greatest curse* that afflicts our world. Every man and woman who is truly converted will be a diligent worker.

Upon the right improvement of our time depends our success in acquiring knowledge and mental culture. The cultivation of the intellect need not be prevented by poverty, humble origin, or unfavorable surroundings. Only let the moments be treasured. A few moments here and there, that might be frittered away in aimless talk; the morning hours so often wasted in bed; the time spent in travelling on trams and railway cars, or waiting at the station; the moments for waiting for meals, waiting for those who are tardy in keeping an appointment—if a book were kept at hand, and these fragments of time were improved in study, reading, or careful thought, what might not be accomplished! A resolute purpose, persistent industry, and careful economy of time, will enable men to acquire knowledge and mental discipline which will qualify them for almost any position of influence and usefulness.”- *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 343, 344.

Management of Money as a Trust of God

“God also entrusts men with means. He gives them power to get wealth. . . . Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means is the Lord’s. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they see fit. But in this they make a mistake. All we possess is the Lord’s, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. It in the use of *every penny* it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.

Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God’s children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. It is a defense for the oppressed, and a means of help for the sick. But money is of no more value than *sand*, only as it is put to use for the *necessities* of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ.

Hoarded wealth is not merely useless, it is a curse. In this life it is a *snare* to the soul, drawing the affections away from the heavenly treasure. In the great day of God its witness to unused talents and neglected opportunities will condemn its possessor. The Scripture says, ‘Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corrupted, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached ears of the Lord of the Sabbath.’ James 5: 1-4, NKJV.

But Christ sanctions no lavish or careless use of means. His lesson in economy, ‘Gather up the *fragments* that remain, so that none is lost’ (John 6:12), is for all His followers. *He who realizes that his money is a talent from God will use it economically, and will feel it a duty to save, that he may give.*

The more means we expend in *display and self-indulgence*, the less we can give to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Every *penny* used unnecessarily deprives the spender of a precious opportunity of doing good. It is *robbing God* of the honor and glory which should flow back to Him through the improvement of His entrusted talents.”-*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 351-2.

Treatment of the Body as the Temple of the Living God

“Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Our impulses and passions have their *seat* in the body, and it must be kept in the best possible condition physically, and under the most spiritual influences, in order that our talents may be put to the highest use.

Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind, and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good, and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.

The misuse of our physical powers *shortens* the period of time in which our lives can be used for the glory of God. And it *unfits* us to accomplish the work God has given us to do. By allowing ourselves to form *wrong* habits, by keeping *late hours*, by *gratifying appetite* at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness.

By neglecting *physical exercise*, by *overworking* mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus *shorten* their lives and unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature’s laws, *are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow-men also.* The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short. And they have *unfitted* themselves to do even that in a briefer period of time they might have accomplished.

Transgression of physical law is transgression of the moral law; for God is as truly the author of physical laws as He is the Author of the moral law. His law is written with His very own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every faculty, which has been entrusted to man. And any misuse of any part of our organism is a violation of that law.

All should have an intelligent knowledge of the human frame, that they may keep their bodies in the condition necessary to do the work of the Lord. The physical life is to be carefully preserved and developed, that *through humanity* the divine nature may be revealed in its fullness. *The relation of the physical organism to the spiritual life is one of the most important branches in [true] education. It should receive careful attention in the home and in the school.* All need to be acquainted with their physical structure and the laws that control life. He who remains in *willing ignorance* of the laws of his physical being, and who violates them in ignorance, *is sinning against God.* All must place themselves in the best possible relation to life and health. Our habits should be brought under the control of a mind that is itself under the control of God.

‘Or do you not know,’ says the apostle Paul, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20, NKJV.”- *Ibid*, pp. 347-8.

Fullest Development of the Mental Faculties

Faculty means **1.** ability to act or do **2.** A physical power or function; as, the *faculty* of hearing. **3.** *Archaic.* That in which one is trained; trade. **4.** Natural aptitude. **5.** Power, authority, or prerogative given or conferred . . . **9.** *Psychology.* One of the powers into which psychologists formerly divided the mind (as will, reason, instinct), and through the interaction of which they endeavored to explain all mental phenomena.” – *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 5th ed., 1943.

“God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldling, and He is displeased with those who are too careless and too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers. The Lord bids us love Him with all the heart, and with all the soul,

and with all the strength, and with all the mind [Mark 12:30]. *This lays upon us the obligation of developing the intellect to its fullest capacity, that with all the mind we may know and love our Creator.*

If placed under the control of the Holy Spirit, the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God. *The uneducated man who is consecrated to God and who longs to bless others can be, and is used by the Lord in His service. But those who, with the same spirit of consecration, have had the benefit of a thorough education, can do a much more extensive work for Christ. They stand on vantage ground.*

The Lord desires us to obtain all the education possible, with the object in view of imparting our knowledge to others. None can know where or how they may be called to labor or speak for God. *Our heavenly Father alone sees what He can make of men.* There are before us possibilities which our feeble faith does not discern. Our minds should be so trained that if necessary we can present the truths of His word before the *highest earthly authorities* in such a way as to glorify His name. We should not let slip even one opportunity of qualifying ourselves *intellectually* to work for God.

Let the *youth* [as well as those young in the faith] who need an education set to work with a determination to obtain it. Do not wait for an opening; make one for yourselves. Take hold in any small way that presents itself. *Practice economy. Do not spend means for the gratification of appetite, or in pleasure-seeking. Be determined to become as useful and efficient as God has called you to be.* Be thorough and faithful in whatever you undertake. Procure every advantage within your reach for strengthening the intellect. Let the study of books be combined with useful manual labor [dancing is not one of them!], and by faithful endeavor, watchfulness, and prayer, secure the wisdom that is from above [James 3: 17]. This will give you an all-round education. Thus you may *rise in character*, and gain an influence over other minds, enabling you to lead them in the path of uprightness and holiness.

Far more might be accomplished in the work of *self-education* if we were awake to our own opportunities and privileges. *True education means more than colleges can give.* While the study of the sciences is not to be neglected, there is a higher learning to be obtained through a vital connection with God. Let every student take his Bible, and place himself in communion with the great Teacher. Let the mind be trained and disciplined to *wrestle* with hard problems in the search for divine truth.

Those who hunger for knowledge that they may bless their fellow-men will themselves receive blessings from God. Through the study of His Word their mental powers will be aroused to earnest activity. *There will be an expansion and development of the faculties*, and the mind will acquire power and efficiency.

Self-discipline must be practiced by every one who would be a worker for God. This will accomplish more than eloquence or the most brilliant talents. An ordinary mind, well-disciplined, will accomplish more and higher work than the most highly educated mind and the greatest talents without self-control."— *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 333-5.

"As becomes beings to whom the Lord God has given the *faculties of reason and of action*, we should use our powers in accordance with the divine purpose. God desires to be honored and glorified in the work of His hands. Every human being will have to give an account to God for the way in which he has used his entrusted talents. We are under obligation to use our powers aright that we may be qualified for eternal life in the kingdom of God. *God demands perfection of every human being.* We are to be perfect in this life of humanity, even as God is perfect in His divine character.

God made every provision in man's behalf, creating him only a little lower than the angels. Adam disobeyed, and entailed sin upon his posterity. But God have His only

begotten Son for the redemption of the race. Christ took on Him the nature of man, and passed over the ground where Adam fell, to be tested and tried as all human beings are tested and tried. Satan came to him as an angel of light to induce Him, if possible, to commit sin, and thus place the human race entirely under the dominion of evil. But Christ was victorious. Satan was defeated, and the race was placed on a vantage ground with God.

When the Father gave His Son to live and die for man, *He placed all the treasures of heaven at our disposal. There is no excuse for sin. God has given us all the advantages He possibly could give that we may have strength to withstand the temptations of the enemy.* Had man, when tested and tried, followed the example of Christ, he would have given his children and his children's children an example of steadfast purity and righteousness, and the race would not have deteriorated but improved. . . .

Man act in this our day as though this were a matter of small importance. But *had the human family, even after the fall of Adam, worked according to the example of Christ, every father and every mother would leave their children and example of how to conduct themselves so as to fulfill their obligations to God, then the world would have been as Eden. The earth, now a desert of sin, would have rejoiced and blossomed as a rose.*" —Letter 143, Nov. 5, 1900/ TDG 318.

Influence of a Christ-like Life

Are we aware that our influence is either a savor (aroma, NKJV) of life unto life or a savor of death unto death? (2 Cor. 2:16). That everything about us preaches a living sermon? That we absolutely have no right to think or say "this is my life; I can do anything I want to do with it," or "If you don't want what you see in me, then don't look"? This is the Cain mentality. Earth's first murder lived for himself in a most perverse way. In answer to God's question, "Where is your brother?" after killing His brother Abel, he insolently answered, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9, 10). In the judgment this influence will weigh in and will testify as a witness as to whether we are worthy of eternal life or eternal death—because our character example either imparted power and motivation to good, or to do evil. Enoch and Elijah have long been translated, Moses has long been resurrected, Job, Daniel, Elisha, and a long line of God's saints mentioned in the Bible have long since died, but the godly influence of their life examples are still as powerful as sources of inspiration and motivation today!

"The life of Christ was an ever-widening, shoreless influence, an influence that bound Him to God and to the whole human family. Through Christ, God has invested man with an influence that makes it impossible for him to live to himself. Individually we are connected with our fellow-men, a part of God's great whole, and we stand under mutual obligations. No man can be independent of his fellow-men; for the well-being of each affects others. It is God's purpose that each shall feel himself necessary to others' welfare, and seek to promote their happiness.

Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own,— an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. *By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.*

This is a responsibility from which we cannot free ourselves. *Our words, our acts, our dress, our deportment, even the expression of the countenance, has an influence.*

Upon the impression thus made there hang results for good or evil which no man can measure. Every impulse thus imparted is *seed sown* which shall produce its harvest. It is a *link* in the long chain of human events, extending we know not wither. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same influence upon others, and they upon still others. Thus by our unconscious influence *thousands* may be blessed.

Character is power. The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life the character of Christ we co-operate with Him in the work of saving souls. It is only by revealing in our life His character that we can co-operate with Him. And the wider the sphere of our influence, the more good we may do. When those who profess to serve God follow Christ's example, practicing the principles of the law in their daily life; when every act witness that they love God supremely and their neighbor [anyone who needs our help] as themselves, then will the [true] church have power to move the world.

But never should it be forgotten that influence is no less a power for evil. To lose one's soul is a terrible thing; but to *cause* the loss of other souls is still more terrible. That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought; yet this is possible. Many who profess to gather to Christ [as "soul-winners"] are scattering from Him. That is why the church is so weak [in moral character though strong numerically]. Many indulge freely in criticism and accusing. By giving expression to suspicion, jealousy, and discontent, *they yield themselves as instruments of Satan.* Before they realize what they are doing, the adversary has *through them* accomplished his purpose. The impression of evil has been made, the shadow has been cast, the arrows of Satan have found their mark. Distrust, unbelief, and downright infidelity have fastened upon those who otherwise might have accepted Christ. Meanwhile workers for Satan look complacently upon those whom they have driven to skepticism, and who are now hardened against reproof and entreaty. They flatter themselves that in comparison with these souls they are virtuous and righteous. *They do not realize that these sad wrecks of character are the work of their own unbridled tongues and rebellious hearts. It is through their influence that these tempted souls have fallen.*

So frivolity, selfish indulgence, and careless indifference on the part of professed Christians, are turning away many souls from the path of life. *Many there are who will fear to meet at the bar of God the results of their influence.*

But we must constantly remember that: "It is only through the grace of God that we can make a right use of this endowment [influence]. There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our helplessness and our need of divine power, we shall not trust to ourselves. We know not what results a day, an hour, or a moment may determine and *never* should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and *if* we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When *unconsciously* we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, *prompting* us to a better course, choosing our *words* for us, and influencing our *actions*. Thus our influence may be a *silent, unconscious, but mighty power* in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world." – *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 339-342.

Growing in grace is copying Christ

"It is no real evidence that you are a real Christian because your emotion is stirred, your spirit stirred by truth. The question is, Are you growing up in Christ, your living Head? Is the grace of Christ manifested in your life? God gives His grace to men, that they may desire more of His grace. God's grace is ever working upon the human heart,

and when it is received, the evidence of its reception will appear in the life and character of its recipient, for spiritual life will be seen developing from within. The grace of Christ in the heart will always promote spiritual life, and spiritual advancement will be made.

We each need a personal Savior or we shall perish in our sins. Let the question be asked of our souls, Are we growing up into Christ, our living Head? Am I gaining advanced knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent? We do not see the plants grow in the field, and yet we are assured that they grow, and may we not know of our own spiritual strength and growth?"- *Review & Herald*, May 24, 1892/ TMK 163

"When we are truly Christ's, our hearts will be full of meekness, gentleness, and kindness, because Jesus has forgiven our sins. As obedient children we shall receive and cherish the precepts He has given, and shall attend to the ordinances He has instituted. We shall be seeking constantly to obtain a knowledge of Him. *His example shall be our rule of life.* Those who are Christ's disciples will take the work where He left it and carry it forward in His name. *They will copy the words, the spirit, the practices, of none but Him.* Their eye is upon the Captain of their salvation. *His will is their law. And as they advance they catch more and clearer views of His countenance, of His character, of His glory. They do not cling to self, but hold fast His Word. . . . They reduce the knowledge of His will to practice. They hear and do the things that Jesus teaches. . . .* Such are entitled to all the promises of His Word. Becoming one with Christ, they do the will of God, and exhibit the riches of His grace." - *Review & Herald*, Aug, 4, 1891/TMK 163.

Growth through Impartation

Phil. 1:9, 10. "It is the Lord's desire that His followers shall grow in grace, that their love shall abound more and more, that they shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness. . . .

Where there is life there will be fruit bearing; but unless we grow in grace, our spirituality will be dwarfed, sickly, fruitless. It is only by growing, by bearing fruit, that we can fulfill God's purpose for us. 'Herein is My Father glorified,' Christ said, 'that you bear much fruit' (John 15:8). In order to bear much fruit, we must make the most of our privileges. We must use every opportunity granted us for obtaining strength.

A pure, noble character, with all its grand possibilities, has been provided for every human being. But there are many who have not an earnest longing for such a character. They are not willing to part with the evil that they may have the good. Great opportunities are placed within their reach. But they neglect to grasp the blessings that would place them in harmony with God. They work at cross-purposes with the One who is seeking their good. They are dead branches, having no living union with the Vine. They cannot grow.

One of the divine plans for growth is impartation. The Christian is to gain strength by strengthening others. 'He that watereth shall be watered himself also' (Prov. 11: 25, KJV). This is not merely a promise; it is a divine law, a law by which God designs that the streams of benevolence, like the waters of the great deep, shall be kept in constant circulation, continually flowing back to their source. . . .

Christians, is Christ revealed in us? Are we doing all in our power to gain a body that is not easily enfeebled, a mind that looks beyond self to the cause and effect of every movement, that can wrestle with hard problems and conquer them, a will that is firm to resist evil and defend the right? Are we crucifying self? Are we growing up unto the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus?" - *Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1901.

Fitting up for Heaven

Heb. 11:16. "We profess to be pilgrims and strangers on earth, journeying to a better country, even the heavenly. If we are indeed but sojourners here, traveling to a land where none but the holy can dwell, we shall make it our first business to become acquainted with that country; we shall make diligent inquiry as to the preparation needed, the manners and character which we must have in order to become citizens there. Jesus, the King of that land, is pure and holy. He has commanded His followers, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy' (1 Pet. 1:16, KJV). If we are hereafter to associate with Christ and sinless angels we must here obtain a fitness for such a society.

This is our work---our all-important work. Every other consideration is of minor consequence. Our conversation, our deportment, our every act, should be such as to convince our family, our neighbors, and the world that we expect soon to remove to a better country. . . .

Those whose faith is daily confirmed and strengthened by their works will become acquainted with self-denial in restricting appetite, controlling ambitious desires, bringing every thought and feeling into harmony with the divine will. . . .

The land to which we are traveling is in every sense far more attractive than was the land of Canaan to the children on Israel. . . . What stayed their progress just in sight of the goodly land? It was their own willful unbelief that turned them back (see Heb. 3, 4). They were unwilling to risk anything upon the promises of God. . . . The history of the children of Israel is written as a warning to us 'upon whom the ends of the world are come.' 1 Cor. 10: 11.

2 Cor. 4: 18. "We are standing as it were, upon the very borders of the heavenly Canaan. We may, if we will, look over on the other side and behold the attractions of the goodly land. If we have faith in the promises of God we shall show in conversation and in deportment what we are not living for this world, but are making it our first business to prepare for that holy land!" – *That I May Know Him*, p. 169.

"Satan has worked continually to eclipse the glories of the future world, and to attract the whole attention to the things of this life. He has striven so to arrange matters that our thoughts, our anxiety, our labor, might be so fully employed in temporal things that we should not see or realize the value of eternal realities. The world and its cares have too large a place, while Jesus and heavenly things have altogether too small a share in our thoughts and affections. We should conscientiously discharge all the duties of everyday life, but it is also essential that we should cultivate above everything else, holy affection for our Lord Jesus Christ."

Views of heavenly things do not incapacitate men and women for the duties of this life, but rather renders them more efficient and faithful. Although the grand realities of the eternal world seem to charm the mind, engross the attention, and enrapture the whole being, yet with spiritual enlightenment there comes a calm, heaven-born diligence that enables the Christian to take pleasure in the performance of the commonplace duties of life.

The contemplation of the love of God manifested in the gift of His Son for the salvation of fallen men will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else will. The work of redemption is a marvelous work; it is a mystery in the universe of God. But how indifferent are the objects of such matchless grace!

If our senses had not been blunted by sin and by contemplation of the dark pictures that Satan is constantly presenting before us, a fervent and continuous flow of gratitude would go out from our hearts toward Him who daily loads us with benefits [Ps. 68:19] of which we are wholly undeserving. The everlasting song of the redeemed will be praise to Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and if we ever sing that song before the throne of God, we must learn it here." – *Review & Herald*, Jan. 7, 1890/TMK 168.

If we only half realized the importance of our own personal role to our salvation, we would not fall for the deception that we have little or nothing to do with it. Then, earth to

us will not be our goal or destination but the fitting-up place for heaven. When thus considered, how differently we shall be laying our plans and living our lives!

How to reach the heavenly Canaan—full character transformation

Eph. 4:13. “The tremendous issues of eternity demand of us something more than an imaginary religion. A stately form of worship and high devotional ceremonies do not constitute a light to the world, and yet truth that is looked upon and admired in the same way as a beautiful picture or lovely flower, and not brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul, is thought by many to be all that is required in a worshipper.

We shall be saved eternally when we enter into the gates into the city. Then we may rejoice that we are saved, eternally saved. But until then we need to heed the injunction of the apostle, and to ‘fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.’ (Heb. 4:1).

Having a knowledge of Canaan, singing the songs of Canaan, did not bring the children into the vineyards and olive groves of the Promised Land. They could make it theirs in truth only by occupation, by complying with the conditions, by exercising living faith in God, by appropriating His promise to themselves. . . .

Christ is the author and finisher of our faith [not we ourselves], and when we yield to His hand we shall steadily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. *We shall make progress until we reach the full stature of men and women in Christ.* Faith works by love and purifies the soul, expelling the love of sin that leads to rebellion against, and transgression of, the law of God . . . Through the agency of the Holy Spirit the character is transformed and the mind and will of the human agent are brought into perfect conformity to the divine will, and this is conformity to the divine standard of righteousness. To those who are thus transformed Christ will say, ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ (Rev. 22: 14, KJV).” – *That I May Know Him*, p 162.

This is why no one, particularly those who stand as spiritual guardians of the people should assure their members or hearers that they “are already saved,” even if they have public declared accepting Jesus as their personal Savior, assented to all the doctrinal points of salvation, and even after being baptized into the church in the prescribed method of immersion. Why? Here’s only one, among others that explains why:

“The gospel is a system of practical truths destined to work great changes in human character. If it does not work the transformation in life, in habits, and practices, it is no truth to those who claim to believe it. Man must be sanctified through the truth. And said Jesus, ‘Thy Word is truth’ (John 17:17). Unless the truth of God shall lift up man out of his depravity, his intemperate and profligate habits, and make him reflect the image of God, he is lost.” – *Letter 14, Mar. 13, 1885.*

Truth is no truth to those who do not practice it. As this truth must be the *whole truth*, not just parts of it, so must be the redemptive work of Christ in our lives: it has to be a perfect work, wanting in nothing, leaving absolutely no imperfection in it before we receive the mark of redemption in our foreheads, and are sealed for eternity. And since this determination is exclusively the work of the investigative judgment, currently taking place in the heavenly sanctuary, no one but God and Christ can declare *who* are saved. In fact we are told that there will be great surprises in heaven. One of that is, those whom many thought will be certainly saved will be *not* be there, while those whom they thought were beyond salvation, will be there! Jesus warned: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Matt. 7:11, 2. N.K.J.V.

To be continued next month as Part II.