

PERFECTION IN CHRIST

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A SERMON
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“Perfect in Christ Jesus.”
Colossians 1:28.

PERFECTION in Jesus Christ! What effect ought it to have upon our hearts if it really is ours? Perfection! What do we know of it from Scripture? We know that it is a word so large that, while it takes us little time to say it, yet it comprehends all words within its meaning. There is no good word of any description which can be applied to any creature but this word perfection takes it in; and though it is easy to utter it with our lips, I question whether there is any mortal mind capable of grasping the idea of perfection, any more than it can grasp the idea of eternity. When we begin to think of eternity, without beginning, without end, we are lost in trying to comprehend it, because we are finite; and when we once endeavor to conceive perfection, without fault, without flaw, we are lost because we are imperfect; and therefore we cannot understand perfection, any more than the finite can grasp the infinite! Perfection, indeed, seems to be the sole prerogative of God. He is perfect in everything. In all His attributes there is no lack; from whatever point of view we regard Him, He is without blot or blemish; and no man, speaking truthfully of God, can say that there is anything of imperfection in Him. If we speak of majesty, His glory is unsurpassed; if we talk of power, His is omnipotence, and that indeed is infinite power; if we speak of wisdom, His is the wisdom of the Godhead; He knows all things, from the minutest to the most immense; He comprehends all secrets, and grasps all knowledge in His mighty mind. It does seem, at first sight, as if perfection could belong only to the Creator, but we remember that the works of God are also perfect, and so are all His ways. When He made the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, He looked upon them and said, “They are very good.” Written on the face of nature, there was then this one word, Perfection. All God’s works were perfect, without a flaw; the great Artificer completed all His workmanship, and left nothing undone. There was no rough and crude matter which He had not formed; there was no substance He touched which He did not turn into the gold of perfectness. All things were good, yes, very good; all were perfect.

There is one thing on earth even now which is perfect. Albeit that perfection was blasted by the Fall, and ever since the Garden of Eden was devastated by the sin of man, perfection has gone, yet there is one thing on earth which we possess which is perfect. You all know what that is; it is the perfect will of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures. He who would be able to spell perfection in mortal language must read the Bible through, for he will find it perfect in all its parts—perfectly true, perfectly free from all error, perfect in everything that is necessary for man to know, perfect in all that can guide us to bliss, perfect in all that can warn us of dangers on the road. There is still left something of perfection here; but when we come to look within, where is perfection then, beloved?

I shall not stop to prove the depravity of mankind, I will not talk much about the fall of Adam, and how it injured us, and destroyed the perfection of our nature; but I would ask this simple question of you—Do you not feel in your own souls that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? And though there are times when you are striving to be like Christ, and seeking to serve Him, yet in the very striving and seeking you forget that you must live wholly on Christ, that you must trust Him as well in your duties to sanctify them as in your sins to forgive them; and then you begin to set up a perfection of your own, although you have so often had a view of your own heart, that you ought not for a moment dream of any perfection there. Without making it a doctrine, I simply state it as a fact which you will not deny, that in you, that is, in your flesh, there is not only imperfection, but there dwells no good thing. Honestly, from the depths of your soul, you must confess that, whether Adam lost perfection

or not, whether you ever had perfection when you were born or not, it is not to be found in you now, in your conduct, conversation, or life. You only wish it were there. Daily experience makes you bemoan the lack of it. Every tear that trickles from your eye says, "Imperfection"; every sigh which comes from your heart says, "Imperfection"; every harsh word which proceeds from your lips says, "Imperfection"; and every duty which is not done with the most holy, strict, and rigid observance of God's law, cries out, "Imperfection." You sit down, like the captive daughter of Zion, and confess that the crown of perfection is gone from your head, and departed from your heart. Guilty you must lie before God, for perfection is not in you.

But, then, while speaking of the doctrine of perfection, we must remember that, according to the sacred oracles, perfection is absolutely necessary for all who hope to enter heaven. We may have lost perfection, but that does not alter God's demand for it. It may be impossible that we should ever be perfect in ourselves, but God demands that we should be perfect. The holy law was given by God; and if we wish to be saved by it, we must keep it perfectly: no man who is not perfect can ever hope to enter heaven. Unless he can find perfection somewhere—in another, if not in himself—He must be irretrievably ruined, and driven from God's presence. No man under the sun can ever walk the starry plains of heaven, or tread the golden streets of bliss, until he gets perfection somehow or somewhere. Let me tell you why.

First of all, it would be unjust of God if He did not punish man if he is not perfect. God required of all men, originally, that they should keep His law entirely. Now, if a man is not perfect, it stands to reason that he must have broken God's law, otherwise he would be perfect. Having broken it, God has said, "I will punish sin; 'the soul that sins, it shall die.'" And—with reverence to the Most High God, we say it—if He does not punish every sin, He is not a just God; if He does not exact the punishment for every transgression, there is a blot upon His escutcheon, the whiteness of His throne is tinged with stains, and He is no longer that awfully, severely just God we have considered Him to be. I tell you, man, the very nature of God demands that you should be punished if you are not perfect. If but one sin has been committed by you, you have broken the tablets of God's commandments, and you are guilty of all. Ah! But it is not merely one sin that you have committed, but ten thousand times ten thousand; you are far from perfection, and unless you can get perfection somewhere—in Christ, or in yourself—you are lost beyond all hope of remedy, for perfection God must have, as a just God, or else He must punish you for your sin.

Moreover, remember that we must be perfect, or else we shall never be fit companions for those who are perfect in spirit, and stand before the throne of God. Are not the angels perfect? Has sin ever stained their purity? Once, it is true, "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven;" but now the spirits before God's throne are spotless and pure even as God is. Has God any stain on Him? Will any dare to say there is imperfection in Him? No, God and the angels are perfect; and would men be fit companions for angels and God if they had imperfections? If men should have sin when they come to die, would they be fit to live with those spirits who know no sin, and in whose breasts there has been no guile? Could I hold acquaintance and familiar converse with the man whose lips are always guilty of profane swearing? Could I live in peace with the man whose character is not akin to my own conduct? And, surely, there is not so much difference between me and my fellow creatures here, as between the sinner and his God. No, my friend, unless you get perfection somewhere—in Christ, or somewhere else—you cannot go to heaven. You must have perfection, for God has declared that nothing that defiles shall in any way enter the gates of Paradise—

*"Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame."*

None but those washed whiter than snow, and as pure as the Almighty, can hope to be companions of the Deity, and co-heirs with the celestial spirits. You must have perfection, if you would enter heaven; this is evident not only from the nature of God, but from the holiness of heaven itself; otherwise you would be unfit to enter it, and you would not be happy if you were there.

"Where, then, is perfection to be found?" again cries the poor sinner. We find a multitude of persons ready to tell us, "Here is perfection," or "There is perfection." *The ceremonialist* says, "I will give you perfection; here it is. You shall in your infancy have sacred drops fall upon your forehead, and hallowed words shall be pronounced over you, and you shall be regenerated. In your later years, you shall kneel

before the sacred table, and the bishop's hands shall be solemnly laid upon your head, and you shall take the sacramental bread and wine. And when you come to die, the priest shall sit by your side, and he shall give you, in your last expiring moment, some drops of goodly cheer called wine, and a piece of bread, and these shall be your passport to heaven; and so you shall be perfect." Ah, poor ceremonialist, you will find yourself mightily mistaken and much deceived! Like a dream when one awakes, God will scatter all the baseless fabric of your hand; all that you have done, and all those pretty garments you have woven, shall be torn sunder, and cast into the fire, and you shall stand naked before Him.

Then comes *the speculative perfectionist*, and he tells you that you must believe in Jesus Christ, and then, by a rigid system of devotion, and constantly observing religious duties, you will attain to three or four stages. You will get, in the first place, to justification, then to sanctification, and go on by degrees until you will be perfectly sanctified, and come to the highest degree men can have in the body. I have met with some of these "perfectly sanctified" gentlemen, but I could have spoiled their perfection simply by treading on their corns; and I believe I have done so, for they have seemed to be immensely cross when I have denied their proud boast. I have heard of a particularly perfect man who came to John Bertridg, one morning. The quaint and honest minister treated him very rudely, whereupon the man turned round at once, and began to speak all manner of evil words. John said to him, "Pretty perfection was yours that I could spoil in so easy a manner!" You will always find those so-called "perfection" gentlemen far from perfect. I would not trust the man who called himself "perfect" in anything whatever, for he that says he has no sin is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He that says he is perfect, mistakes God's Word, and knows not himself.

Where, then, is perfection to be found? The text tells us that all Christians are perfect in Christ Jesus, that the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty are perfect in Christ Jesus. Let me try to explain the meaning of this perfection in Christ.

I. First, consider HOW GOD'S PEOPLE ARE "IN CHRIST."

I remark, first, *they are all of them in Christ in the covenant of election*. When God chose His people, He did not choose them one by one, separately; but He chose Christ, and all His people were chosen in Him. Just as when I select an acorn, I select all the unborn forests slumbering in that acorn cup, so, when God chose Jesus, He chose all the people that were in Him, all whom Christ had taken to Himself by an eternal union, and had made one with His own person.

Secondly, *the chosen ones are all in Christ also by redemption*. When Jesus died, each one of us who believe in Jesus died in Him; and when He suffered, we suffered in Christ. Our sins were laid on Christ's head; and now, Christ's merits are laid on us. Christ made an atonement for the sins of all His elect through the shedding of His blood upon the cross. We were in Him when He died, we were in Him when they laid Him in the grave, we were in Him when He rose and led captivity captive, and we are in Him now.

Thirdly, *we are in the Lord Jesus Christ actually, positively, and to our own knowledge, when we believe in Him*. It is then, when faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, that we become consciously in Christ. We were in Christ before, but we did not know it; we were made secure in Jesus from before the foundation of the world; but we did not know it, we had no evidence of it whatever. We were like a man who is underage; the possessions his father will give him when he is twenty-one, or which have been left to him, are positively his, but he cannot touch them until he comes of age; so, all the possessions of the covenant belong to the elect, even before they believe, but they cannot touch them until the appointed time comes, when by sovereign grace they believe. A man who has not attained his majority cannot get much comfort from what he is to have when he comes to full age; he cannot live on it, he cannot be supported by it. So, the Christian cannot feed on what he has not received. When we have faith, then we come into our inheritance; the moment we believe, we have attained full age; we are no longer under tutors, and governors, and schoolmasters, but we are brought to Christ; we are of perfect age, and then we are said to be "in Christ." The moment a sinner believes, then he is "in Christ;" and no man whatever has any right to make any pretense that he is in Christ until he believes, until he has surrendered himself to Christ, until he has given himself to Jesus to be saved by Him, to serve Him, to live for Him, and at last to die in Him, and live with Him forever.

II. The doctrine of our text is THAT EVERY MAN WHO IS "IN CHRIST" IS PERFECT.

Does not this startle us? The majesty of our text demands someone who could discourse with eloquence; yes, it needs an angel to proclaim its glorious meaning. Believers are, in Christ, perfect—every

one of them. There is a new-born child of God! It may be only ten minutes since he put his faith in Jesus Christ. Before that time, he had been a drunk, a swearer, a blasphemer; but yet I tell you, if that man has really believed and is in Christ, he is perfect in Christ. There is another man who has been a backslider! Once he walked in God's ways, but he has been suffered to wander from the faith. Now God is bringing him back; He is laying hold on him, and the man is weeping, and repenting, and crying out; his bones are broken through the fall, his soul is sore and sick even unto death; see him as he stands with tears of penitence coursing down his cheeks! I tell you, that man, backslider though he may have been, though he has sinned even as David did, is perfect in the person of Christ. There is another, a grey-headed old man. Long has he fought his Master's battles—he has received many a wound and scar, and the troubles and trials of this mortal life have greatly weakened him. If you ask him whether he is perfect, he tells you, "No, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, by nature I feel diseased. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." He disclaims all righteousness of his own, all trust in himself, all hope out of Christ. I tell you, that old man is perfect in Christ. I care not what may be his frailties, what may be his weaknesses, he is perfect in Christ. And then, O Christian, what though your sins are many, what though infirmities beset you, though you have a hasty temper, and perhaps the lusts of the flesh sometimes rise, and only preventing grace saves you from going astray; what though evil thoughts cross your mind, and today you are bemoaning your sad case, and crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I tell you, Christian, you are complete in Him, you are perfect in Christ Jesus; having been washed in His blood, clothed with His righteousness, united to His person, you are this moment perfect in Him. There is one passage in Solomon's Song, which once flashed on my mind with great brilliancy when I was reading that blessed Canticle. It says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." That is Jesus Christ talking to His Church. She says, "I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." She acknowledges her own imperfections, and her lack of beauty; but Jesus Christ says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." Looking at His Church, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, He sees not a blemish, because she is in Him. She does not stand in herself. Her divisions and the sins of her members and of her ministers are sore blemishes if you look at her with the eye of the world, or with the eyes of Christians; but if you look at her in Christ, all her blemishes are gone; she is covered with a robe that makes her shine like a queen. Though her old garments may have been those of beggary and ruin, she has now the garments of majesty and light. "You are complete in Him," yes, you are "perfect in Christ Jesus."

I think it would be very hard to make some who are the Lord's people believe this. Some of you are drudging on in bondage, because you do not understand justification by faith completely; and I believe that the great fault of the ministry of our day is, that complete justification in the person of Jesus Christ is not preached in all its length and breadth. Because there are some ministers who, while preaching it, say things which have a tendency to lead men to licentiousness, therefore we are forbidden to say anything at all about it. But, beloved, I am sure that all I can say to you about our perfection in Christ will never lead a Christian to licentiousness; for, because he is "perfect in Christ," he will long to be more like Him himself, and he will seek more and more, day by day, to have the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit exerted upon him to keep him from sin. Many go to Arminians and semi-Calvinists to hear this, that, and the other; they have all kinds of divinity conglomerated into one; little bits of Pelagianism tacked on to small scraps of Arminianism, these hooked on to Calvinism, and that again joined to Socinianism, all sorts of strange combinations mixed up into one curious medley for them to drink; whereas they need, instead of that, the pure unadulterated milk of God's Word in the shape of the doctrinal preaching of justification by faith.

How are we justified? That is the question for us to answer. Are we justified by works, or by grace? Every true Christian says, "We are justified by faith; by grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Well then, if we are saved by faith in Christ, can we be said to be saved by works? If I had no good works at this moment, and if I have faith, am I not as completely justified as though I had ten thousand good works? I know, if I am justified by faith, good works will always follow; but good works will never merit justification. They are the handmaidens, not the mistress. Faith in Christ is the foundation, the cornerstone, and top stone of justification. Good works are evidences of justification; they have nothing to do with procuring it. The poor thief who died, having been hardly able to do a good work, went to heaven just as surely as the man shall who lives eighty years in the service of his Master. It is not anything in myself that saves me; it is Christ alone. If I feel myself the most loath-

some of all creatures, even though I hate and abhor myself, yet if I know I have faith in Christ, if I have cast myself on His atoning sacrifice, He has not altered though I have, He is as perfect as ever, in Him there is no sin, and therefore I, standing in Him, am perfect this moment notwithstanding all my corruptions and frailties.

III. Now I come very briefly to consider THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE of perfection in Christ when it is realized in the heart.

I know that at the outset, some will say that this doctrine, stated so broadly, must necessarily lead persons to imagine that good works are of little service. I ask them, if they ever read any of Luther's writings; whether they have noticed how broadly he speaks concerning good works and the righteousness of the flesh? If they have read his writings, they will find that, as a Protestant and a follower of Luther, I have not overstepped the mark. And if they will turn to the Epistle to the Romans, they will see how Paul declares, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." If they will read the other Epistles, they will see that I might have said even more upon this theme. I deny that this doctrine has any tendency to lead men to sin. I can speak for myself; so far as my own life is concerned, I always find myself most holy when I know myself to be most unholy; I can live most like Jesus when I live most on Jesus and most out of myself. When I say, "I must live on Christ alone, I must rest solely on Him for salvation, and believe that, however unworthy, I am saved in Jesus;" then there rises up, as a motive for gratitude, this thought, "Will I not live wholly to Christ; will I not love Him and serve Him, seeing that I am saved by His merits?" That is the strongest tie to virtue, and the greatest bond to a holy life.

Then let me tell you the next effect of this doctrine. *It gives a Christian the greatest calm, quiet, ease, and peace.* How often are the saints of God downcast and sad! They ought not to be so; I do not think they would be, if they could always see their perfection in Christ. I know you have your "corruption men" who always preach corruption and nothing else, telling you about the depravity of the heart, and the innate evil of the soul. I like to read their works and to hear them; but I like to go a little further, and to remember that I am "perfect in Christ Jesus." I do not wonder that those men who always dwell upon corruption should look so sad and seem so miserable; but I think, if a man could always see his perfection in Christ, he would be happy. What if distresses afflict me? I am perfect in Christ. Though Satan assaults me, I am perfect in Christ Jesus; though there are many things to be done before I get to heaven; those are done for me in the covenant of divine grace. There is nothing lacking; Christ has done it all."—

"It is finished!"

Hear the dying Savior cry."

And if it is finished, then am I complete in Him, and can "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Poor Christian, you are perfect in Christ! Tried Christian, you are perfect in Jesus! If the Holy Spirit does but apply this truth to your soul, if you were in the very caverns of the ocean, it would be enough to carry you up to the stars for joy to think that you are perfect in Christ. There are some who are conscious that they have no perfection, but are covered with sin from head to foot. There is a poor wretch who has crept into this chapel tonight, and has felt that he would crawl down a mouse hole or stay in any corner of the building, if he might but hear the sermon. He felt it was too hallowed a place for him to sit down in; he was almost ashamed to stand in the company of the saints; he believed himself to be such an unworthy sinner. I tell you, friend, if you are a poor, stripped, law-condemned sinner, you shall yet be able to see yourself "perfect in Christ Jesus." Man! Does not this make your ears tingle? Does not your heart leap for joy at the very thought of it? Black as you are, you shall be white one day; filthy as you are, you shall yet be cleansed; evil as you are, you shall be made good. Yes, however enormous your transgressions, however black your crimes, you may even have been a murderer, but Christ's blood can wash the blood off your hands; you may have been a thief, but Jesus Christ restored that which He took not away, and He will forgive even your sin. You may be the vilest one that ever disgraced this earth, you may be a walking nuisance in the very streets, yet I tell you, if you believe in Jesus Christ this night, you shall go away perfectly clean. Oh, it is marvelous, this salvation! Christ takes a worm, and transforms it into an angel; Christ takes a filthy thing, and makes it into a cherub; Christ takes a black and deformed thing, and makes it clean and matchless in its glory, peerless in its beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphs.

O my soul, stand and admire this blessed doctrine of perfection in Christ Jesus! Though you should become more pure and pure every day, yet perfection would still be beyond you. The heights say perfection is not in them; the depths say, "Perfection is not here;" the caverns in the heart of the earth tell us, "Perfection is not in us." Perfection is in the person of Jesus Christ alone. O Christian, think of this! The robes of Jesus are put on you; the royal crown Christ Jesus wore is now, in God's eyes, on your head; the robe of azure which once He had upon His shoulders is now on yours; His silver sandals are yours; the golden zone His belt of glory, is yours; the matchless purity of His sinless life is yours; everything that Christ has is yours; you are perfect in Him; there is nothing you can want which He cannot give you! If you go to His storehouse with a large list of your needs, saying, "I want this," or, "I want that," it is all there; and more than you will ever need is there. Do you want sanctification? It is there. Do you want redemption? It is there. Do you want strengthening grace? It is there. Do you want preservation? It is there. Man, are you standing tonight poor, naked, blind, miserable, desponding? I say—Be not so foolish as to remain in all your poverty and wretchedness, when you may be rich. Why, Christian, are you now poor, ragged, stripped? Do you see the hole in that wall? It has a mark upon it, the shape of a cross. I will lend you the key called "Promise." Go, insert it in the keyhole, and when you open it, whatever you need you shall find. First, there is a bath of gold; in it you shall be washed and become white. Further on there hangs a robe, and though you are now naked, you shall put it on. There is a crown for you to wear, and there is everything else you can want. If you want bread, you shall find it, for it is said, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." If you need comfort, it is there; for Christ is "the consolation of Israel." If you need forgiveness, it is there. All things are wrapped up in Christ.

This morning my eyes were dazzled when I saw the Queen's plate. I am not much of a believer in the Queen's plate, or anybody else's plate; but when I saw things of so much value—the precious jewels that sparkled here and there—I wondered at their amazing costliness, and could not guess how much they would come to if they were all sold, and the money given to the poor—which I rather felt inclined to wish they might be. But if I were once to get to see all the riches of Christ, could I tell you how large His riches are, I would have to hold up my hands in astonishment, and say, as I took up one mercy after another, "This is a golden mercy; how much is it worth?" I would be unable to tell you the value of any one of them. "Ah!" the angels would say, "Do not try to estimate these precious things, for they had to be bought with Christ's blood; and until you know the price of blood divine, you cannot tell the value of these mercies."

Now, to wind up my discourse, let me inquire who of you can take to yourselves this blessed doctrine? How many of you are "perfect in Christ Jesus?" Some man says, "I think I am perfect in myself; I am as respectable a gentleman as anybody living, and I am not going to be insulted by any of your nonsense. I am at least as good as other people, and perhaps rather better. And I do think, if heaven does not go by favor, I most certainly shall get in, for I feel myself to be very good and righteous." Then hear the voice of Jesus: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Another says, "Perfect in Christ Jesus? No, sir, that I am not; I know I have no interest in the blood of Christ; and if I were to say I had, it would be a barefaced falsehood, and my conscience would cry out against me; there is something in my heart which would forbid my lips to say it." Then, pray do not say it, dear heart, for I would not have you speak what is not true. If you feel that you have not any interest in Christ, say so to your own souls. It is best for you to look the matter in the face. You say you do not know that Christ died for you; you say you are sure that you will sink into eternal torments if you die tonight. Well, take that thought home to your heart and for half-an-hour think it over—"I am out of Christ; I am a condemned sinner; and if I were to die, I feel I should sink into hell." Do not be afraid of the thought; do not be like the man who says, "I will not have that thought anymore;" but be honest with yourselves. What is the good of cheating yourselves? Do deal fairly with your own souls. It never does a man any hurt to examine his books, and see if his accounts are all right. If he is a bankrupt, he will not lose anything by knowing it; if he is insolvent, he will get no richer by hiding it from himself. You may say, "It is true, I am a lost and condemned sinner." Well, the thought will bring you to your knees, and

you will cry, “O God, give me an interest in Jesus Christ!” And that mighty God, who always hears prayer, will save you and you shall go on your way rejoicing and triumphing in Christ.

Then there is one who, when I ask the question, “Are you perfect in Christ Jesus?” will reply, “Ah, I trust I am! By humble faith, I lay my hand on the head of Jesus, and I know that I stand perfect in Him.” Then, my brother, give me your heart, let us shake hearts tonight! Oh, it is a sweet brotherhood, the brotherhood of the perfect in Christ Jesus! You are perfect in Him; then, my brethren, just wipe those tears away; you are perfect in Christ. Do you know what yon poor sinner says? He says, “O Lord, if I could say that, I would not care about health, I would not care whether I was in poverty, or whether I was rich.” He thinks, if he only knew himself to be “perfect in Christ,” he never would be miserable as long as he lived. Then why, beloved, are you down in your spirits, while you are “perfect in Christ?” Why do you lie on the ground? It is time for you to take your harp from the willows; if you are “perfect in Christ.” I can see no room for sadness. Suppose that you are going to a poor house where you have not a bit of fire; never mind, you can say, “I am perfect in Jesus.” Perhaps you will scarcely know where the next meal will come from—let this thought cheer you, “Perfect in Jesus.” Though the wind may come and blow between the rags that cover you, if you can say, “I am perfect in Jesus,” you can be content with poverty. Though you are in pain, and tossing about in your bed, if you can say, “I am perfect in Jesus,” it will be like medicine to soothe your spirits; and when grim death appears, you only need look him in the face and say, “Perfect in Jesus,” and in that moment death will change into an angel, pain will be turned into bliss, and sorrow into immortal glory. God give all of you to realize that you are perfect in Jesus, in Jesus only, in Jesus forever! Bless His precious name! Hallelujah to His person, glory to His grace! Seraphs, sing out His praises! Cherubs, take up the note! You rocks, you hills, burst forth into song! All you Christians, sing praises to Him who loved us with an everlasting love, and who will carry us safe home to glory to be with Him forever and ever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ISAIAH 55*

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

Let no one ask whether he *may* come to Christ for salvation; he is bidden to come. Whoever wills to come is welcome. “Ho!” says God, as men cry when they have goods to sell, and would attract the passerby; and not merely to one does He speak, but to everyone: “Ho, everyone who thirsts”—whatever is the age he lives in, and to whatever age he may himself have attained: “Ho, everyone who thirsts.” But is there anything to be had by those who come? There is in God exactly that which every soul needs; first, “waters” for the thirsty. There is even more than absolute necessities: “wine and milk,” God has an abundance of grace, yes, a superabundance. He can give us all we need, and even more than we desire. Oh, turn not away when God the Father cries, “Ho!”

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently to Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

Apart from God, there is nothing for us but destruction. We may spend our money, and our labor, too, but happiness is not to be found by the creature apart from the Creator, or by a sinner apart from the Savior. God has so constituted the human mind that it cannot be perfect without Him.

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live;—*

It seems a very little thing to do, does it not? Simply to hear—to incline the ear; yet that is the way of salvation: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Alas! Nowadays the mass of men will not hear God’s message of mercy; they pass it by as if it were an old worn-out tale of which they knew quite enough. Hear, then, what God says to His poor forgetful creature: “Hear, and your soul shall live;”—

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Will God make a covenant with man? Can it be that He will strike hands with sinful man, and enter into league and compact with him? Yes, so He says; if men will but incline their ear, and come to Him, He will enter into covenant with them: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “But David is dead,” says someone. Yes, I know he is; but *the* David here meant always lives, it is Jesus, the Son of God.

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

Jesus Christ is the people's Witness and Leader; born among them, living among them, dying for them, living still to save them; and God declares that He gives this Christ to such as hear Him, to such as incline their ear, and come unto Him.

5. *Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew not shall run unto you because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.*

Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ did not die in vain. He died to redeem His chosen people, and those whom He redeemed He will certainly have. Even though some reject Him, others will not. God has power over human hearts; and where Christ's gospel is faithfully preached, and attended by the Holy Spirit's power, sinners must come to Christ. They will shall sweetly yield to the supremacy of love. Even though they set themselves against Christ, yet they shall come when the Lord draws them; and glory shall be gotten to His holy name by the salvation of those who never even thought of being saved.

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near:*

"Seek you the Lord while He may be found;" that is, *now*. "Call you upon Him while He is near;" He is near now. Wherever Christ is lifted up, and His gospel is proclaimed, there He is according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

What a grand word that is! "He will abundantly pardon." However abundant sin may be, God's pardon is still more abundant. As Paul puts it, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Sin may be like the great mountains, but the mercy of God is like Noah's flood, that rose above the tops of the highest hills: "He will abundantly pardon."

8. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD.*

Oh, what a mercy it is to be taught to think God's thoughts, and to be led in God's ways! It is the entrance into a new life; it is something infinitely beyond the greatest elevation to which any ordinary life can ever reach by its own unaided power.

9-12. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth good and bad, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

"For you"—that is, you who have heard God's Word, and believed it—"you shall go out with joy." Happy hearts help to make a happy world. He who has found his Savior, received God's pardon, and learned God's thoughts, shall find the whole world full of music to him, wherever he may be.

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

Wherever God's grace begins to work, it cuts up thorns and thistles, and plants in place of them fir trees and myrtle trees. Oh, that His grace might renew each one of us! And, then, when that blessed work has been done, may we never cease to glorify that dear name by the power of which we have been changed!

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