

I'm Not Perfect! (Or Am I?)

Joe Slater

Are you perfect? You might think me silly even to ask such a question. "Of course I'm not perfect, Joe – nobody's perfect!"

Scripture certainly teaches us that we "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Only of Jesus can it truly be said that He was "*in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). Our Lord once challenged His critics: "*Which of you convicts Me of sin?*" (John 8:46). If you or I were to ask that question, people would start lining up to accept the challenge! Jesus was perfect in the moral sense of being utterly sinless; you and I are not.

But don't give up on being perfect. In fact, Jesus said, "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5:48). What? Perfect like God? You must be kidding! How can I ever be perfect like God?

Before you rip up this bulletin and throw it away in frustration, realize that perfection in this passage (and many others in Scripture) has nothing whatever to do with being morally flawless. It simply means to be complete, full-grown, or mature. When Jesus said you shall be perfect like the Father, He was speaking about your love for others. Even sinners love their friends who love them in return; but God loves His enemies, too, and shows it by giving them sunshine and rain. It takes spiritual maturity to have such a complete love. But that maturity and love are well within your reach – you don't have to be sinless to be "perfect" in this Biblical sense.

Paul wrote, "*We speak wisdom among those who are mature*" (1 Corinthians 2:6). He used the identical word Matthew wrote in 5:48 (perfect). Paul wasn't

talking about people who are sinless, but who are spiritually mature as opposed to being "babes" in 3:1. You may never be spotlessly pure, but you certainly can grow and mature in Christ.

This contrast between "babes" and "perfect" people appears again in Hebrews 5:13, 14. "*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age*" (same word as perfect or mature). The rest of the sentence explains what the writer means by perfect: "*those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*" Moral flawlessness is not the point; maturity is.

While confessing that we are not sinless, let us nevertheless strive for perfection!

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DON'T SWAT THAT BEE!

I recently read a little quotation from Reader's Digest that said: "It isn't so much how busy you are; but why are you busy. The bee is praised. The mosquito is swatted." That sounds good, but I know of a few bees that got swatted as well.

In the church, we have some bees and some mosquitoes. Some people work at building the church, while others expect the church to work for them. One gives honey, the other sucks the life-blood from the body. One group wants to serve, the other wants to be served.

Let's be careful not to swat a bee! Let's protect that bee. We certainly don't want him to become an endangered species. In fact, while we are at it, let's change mosquitoes into bees. That's something we can do that science can't.

--via Glad Tidings of Good Things (Jacksonville, AL)

Retirement Syndrome In The Church?

It is an accepted norm in America that once you hit 60-65 the average person retires. This period of life is often filled with travel, grandchildren, a serious pursuit of hobbies, and an easier pace.

Is it possible this mentality has poisoned the church? Is it possible that when people retire from "work" that they also retire from church work? As I look out across congregations our expectations of seniors does not look like Paul's life. Paul gave every ounce, preaching and teaching all the way to the end of the race. In many congregations today, instead of the older women teaching the younger, we have women in their thirties teaching the older women. Instead of evangelizing or doing mission work, many seniors settle into a comfortable role of going out to eat with other seniors.

My fear is that our children and grandchildren are watching this, and they may begin to believe that there is a time we work for the Lord, and then there is a time we coast. My prayer this morning is that if you are currently "retired" that you will seek to become actively employed once again for the Lord.

I understand bones and joints ache more at 65 and that energy is not what it used to be. But what better way to demonstrate your love and dedication to God than to be worn out doing His work! Please remember, Will, Reese, Claire, and Luke are watching your example! And I don't want them to ever retire from Kingdom work! Rest? We can rest once we hear "Well done..."

--Brad Harrub (Focus Press)