

Presenting Men Perfect

by J.R. Miller

We are responsible to present others perfect in Christ by developing their full potential and character, and by seeking to help them in every way possible.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Colossians 1:28

Topics: "Spiritual Responsibility", "Christian Perfection"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound responsibility Christians have to help one another achieve perfection in Christ, as Paul aimed to do. He illustrates that we are each other's keepers, tasked with nurturing and guiding those around us towards spiritual maturity and beauty. Miller warns against neglecting this duty, highlighting the consequences of failing to influence others positively, whether through words or actions. He stresses that perfection involves both the removal of blemishes and the full development of one's potential, urging believers to actively engage in the lives of others. Ultimately, he calls for a partnership with Christ in this mission, recognizing that while God is the source of transformation, our involvement is crucial.

Transcript

"That we may present everyone perfect in Christ." Colossians 1:28

We are each others' keeper, in a more serious sense than we think. When a new friend is given to us--we come under very sacred obligation to do him good, not evil, to guard his interests, to seek to be a blessing to him in every way. Paul said his aim was to present every man perfect in Christ. He was looking on to the end of his ministry. He saw in every person he met or knew--one for whom he must give account, whom he must bring to Christ at last in spotless beauty. Every Christian must likewise present spotless and perfect before Christ--those who are committed to his keeping.

We are responsible for our failures in duty to each other. A man rushed into his pastor's study one morning, in great distress, and said, "Oh, sir, my daughter is dead, and she must tell God that she never heard a prayer in her father's house!" He was startled to remember that he had done nothing to prepare his own child for appearing before God. Are there not many people who fail in this duty? The same responsibility rests on each one of us in his own measure, regarding every life that comes within our reach or influence, in his own home and without.

Paul wished to see certain people in Rome, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift. He also exhorts us to speak to others in our conversation, only words that will minister grace to them, start in their minds and hearts thoughts of good, of purity, of love, inspiring them to better things. Even amid the idle, playful talk of our lighter conversation, we should say some earnest word that may be remembered, and that may do good. All our influence upon others, upon every other person whom our life touches, should be such as will put upon them touches of beauty and help in some way, to fit them for coming at last perfect into God's presence.

Perfection must be thought of in two phases--negative and positive. It should be unspotted, without blemish--but it must also fill up the measure of its capacity. We are not to be unkind--but we are also to be kind. It is not enough to wash a flower-bulb and to make it clean; the bulb must also be developed, until its hidden beauty is brought out. Perfection is not merely making a life white; it means also the bringing out of all the life's powers and capacities until they reach their best.

The one-talented man in the parable, brought back his talent perfect--unwasted, full weight, bright and shining--but he was condemned as wicked and slothful, because he had kept it hidden--and had not used it. The capacity was not squandered, not a particle of it--but it had gained nothing. The men who were commended that day, were those who had traded with their talents, making the two become four, and the five multiply to ten.

We do not know how many strings there are in our harp, which have never yet given out a musical note or a bar of song, which might be made to give forth most sweet and inspiring melody.

We do not dream what capacities of ours are lying undeveloped, useless, unawaked, like music in a sleeping harp. It is said that there are millions of dollars in this country hoarded up, hidden in chinks of walls, wrapped in bags, secreted in cellars, or buried in old kettles--not doing any good, not increasing by being traded with. Think, too, of the gifts, talents, and powers of life, lying hidden in people's brains, hands, tongues, and hearts--not being used in any way to enrich the world, to add to its beauty, to give joy and comfort. Think of yourself, of the splendid capacities in you, which are not being developed. You are responsible not merely for being a respectable sort of person; you are called and required to be perfect, to have all your gifts and capacities developed to their best and highest degree.

Paul thought much of this matter of responsibility for others. When we begin to understand what life means--we see that we have a responsibility for helping to make everyone perfect in Christ. That is the central meaning of the lesson of missions. Jesus, before he went away, bade his followers to go and make disciples of all the nations. We have a duty to every human being under heaven. We are to love him and do everything we can to bring him to Christ. If we find our neighbor fallen by the wayside, hurt--we are to stop, no matter how busy we are, how hurried, nor how many other duties we have in hand--and relieve him. If he is hungry--we are to feed him. If he is thirsty--we are to give him drink. If we come upon him sick and do not minister unto him, if he comes to our door as a stranger, and we turn him away--we have failed in our duty of love to him.

But our responsibility does not end with our ministries to men's physical needs. We are our brother's keeper in every sense. We are to seek to make every man perfect in his life and character. We are never to do anything to hurt another, taking this also in its broadest sense: referring to bodily injury, to the marring of the mind, or to spiritual harm.

A careless nurse seventy years ago let the baby fall--and for all the years since, a man with a crippled body has been going about the streets, a mere wreck of what he might have been. From an incompetent and inexperienced teacher a number of years ago--a boy received defective and false teaching, and his career has been spoiled, his usefulness diminished, his standing among his fellows hurt. Those who know him best, say that the warping and hurting of his life by his teacher--are responsible in a large measure for his failure.

Some fifteen or twenty years ago, a beautiful girl, who had been brought up in a Christian home, had given herself to Christ and was beginning a consecrated Christian life--fell under the influence, for a single summer, of a relative who called himself an agnostic. She was in this man's home and listened to his insinuating words. He laughed at her mother's teachings about God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and prayer. He professed to pity the girl's delusions, and spoke to her in a skeptical way until her mind became filled with skeptical thoughts. When she returned to her home, at the end of the summer, her childhood's simple faith--had become full of doubts and questions. Was there really any one to hear her when she prayed? Was there a Father anywhere who cared for her or would help her? Was the Bible really the Word of God? Her old simple trust was gone, her peace and joy were gone.

These are illustrations of the ways in which lives are continually hurt by others, in body, in mind, in spirit. Instead of harming others in any way, it is our duty to seek in all ways the highest good of every other. Jesus speaks of the causing of one of his little ones to stumble--as the worst of crimes. This puts a great burden of responsibility upon mothers and fathers to whose hands God entrusts little children to be sheltered and guarded, to be trained and taught, to be influenced and brought up. Suppose they mar their lives and teach them mistaken things about the meaning of life! Think of the sin of him who leaves a blot on a fair young life! Think of the crime of him who becomes a tempter of innocence, who leaves ruin in the temple of an immortal soul!

We sometimes try to evade our responsibility for this guarding and training of others' lives. We say this is Christ's work, not ours. It is Christ's--he only can keep any one from injury, from hurtful things in the world. But we are co-workers with Christ. He uses our hands, our hearts, and our words--in putting upon other lives, the touches of immortal beauty that he would have them wear. We may not leave Christ out in anything we would do for any other. "We might just as well leave out the sun in the making of a garden--as leave out Christ in the making of a life." Education, moral influences, refinement, ethical teachings, all are pitifully inadequate alone. There must be the impact of divine grace and love upon our lives in and through whatever any human touch and influence may do. "What the sun is to the rose-bush," said the poet, "Jesus Christ is to my life."

Yet the fact that Christ himself is the real power in all the keeping and perfecting of lives, is only half the truth. He works through the mother, the teacher, the friend. Someone was trying to impress a boy with the fact that God gave him all his blessings, and did for him all the good things that meant so much to his life. The boy answered hesitatingly and thoughtfully, "Yes--but mothers help a lot!" He was right--mothers help a lot. God largely does his work for the boys through mothers. They are his co-workers. All who love Christ are called to be his helpers. The work is Christ's--but the responsibility is ours. Our hands must do the duty. Our lips must speak the word. We are our brother's keeper--though only Christ can really keep him. Ours must be the watching, the praying, the counsel.

One of the common mistakes in Christian life, is in putting upon God responsibility which belongs to us. Many people fail to realize the truth of the necessary cooperation of the human with the divine. Christ

made the redemption--no human power could have done this--and then sent out his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. Many good people are deeply and compassionately interested in the saving and helping of others--but fail to understand that they have anything themselves to do in the matter. So they take it to God in prayer, asking him to bring back this wandering one, to incline this careless one to thoughtfulness, to interest this indolent one in Christian service, to keep this heedless one from stumbling. It is right to pray--but if we do nothing else--the prayer will not avail. Only God can do the things we long to have done--yet not God alone--God and we.

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