

The Essential Element in Christian Perfection

by Samuel Chadwick

The sermon emphasizes that Christian perfection is achieved through perfect love, which reconciles the heart with God and fulfills the law.

Scripture: Matthew 22:37, Romans 8:7, 1 Corinthians 13:1, Philippians 3:12, Hebrews 7:25, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 4:8-18

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about the essential principle of moral evil being the alienation of the heart from God, emphasizing the need for a clean heart as the source of redemption and the work of the gospel to reconcile man to God. He discusses Christian perfection as salvation from all sin and loving God with all the heart, highlighting the importance of perfect love reigning in the heart and life. Chadwick delves into the sanctification of man's nature through the development of love, stating that love sums up the Christian religion and fulfills the whole law, emphasizing that love is the fulfilling of the law, not its substitute.

Transcript

The essential principle of all moral evil is alienation of the heart from God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This enmity is the source of all the streams of evil. There can be no redemption except by the healing of this spring. Whatever relationships need readjustment the heart must be cleansed. There is no substitute for a clean heart. Till this is accomplished, nothing is done; when this is done all things become possible. The putting right of the inward principle and the cleansing of the springs of thought and desire, motive and will, must of necessity rectify the entire character, transform the whole life, and reconstruct all its relationships. This is the work of the gospel. It reconciles man to God, slays the principle of enmity, and sheds abroad the love of God in the heart. In Jesus Christ God's favor is restored to man, and God's love is begotten in his soul. Few people would be found to dissent from Wesley's statement, "Pure love alone, reigning in the heart and life, this is the whole of Christian perfection."

Yet for more than fifty years he was in continual controversy over it, and controversy always leads to definition and testing. Throughout the whole period he never varied. Through all explanations he claved to the same simple statements, and in all defense he held to the same essentials. There is no more remarkable example of consistency in the history of doctrinal discussion. One of his earliest definitions states it to mean, "Salvation from all sin, and loving God with all the heart"; and one of his latest defines it as "a full deliverance from all sin, and a renewal in the whole image of God." Objection was taken to the term "Perfection." He contended that the word is scriptural, and therefore he says, "Neither you nor I can

in conscience object to it, unless we would send the Holy Ghost to school, and teach Him to speak who made the tongue." He would not drop the word, but he took great pains to explain it. "By 'perfection' I mean perfect love, or the loving of God with all our heart, so as to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks."

What is the objection to this teaching? Is it not scriptural? Is it not stated in the very language of scripture? He himself says, "This perfection cannot be a delusion unless the Bible be a delusion too." Was he mistaken, and a preacher of a false doctrine? Or have we forsaken the Word of the Lord?

The sanctification of man's nature is a work of love. Its progress is in the development of the principle of love, and entire sanctification consists in the perfection of love in the heart and life.

THE WHOLE LAW

Love sums up the whole of the Christian religion. Without love nothing counts. Knowledge, beneficence, and faith are nothing without love. The greatest gifts, including prophecy and miraculous powers, are nothing without love. It comprehends all God's revelation of Himself, for God is love. It sums up all man's duty. All the Commandments are comprehended in this, "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; and thy neighbour as thyself." There has never been any other commandment. Love is, and always has been, the fulfilling of the law. Mechanical obedience of the letter never could have satisfied God. There are two covenants, but they declare one kind of righteousness, and that righteousness is the perfect love of God and our neighbor. These two great demands of the Divine Law are universal and eternal, equally binding in all worlds and in all ages. Just as in tracing back existence we come to the necessity of God's being, so, in tracing back principles, we come to the necessity of God's character. The Law is not a principle of Nature, nor a matter of creation for the government of the world; it is inherent in the divine character, coexistent and coeternal with the divine nature. The obligation to be holy is in the fact of His holiness, and the demand for love is inherent in the fact that God is love. "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." Love is the fulfilling of the law; not its substitute. It keeps the commandments and sinneth not. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It saves from the power and pollution of sin. This is its one grand result: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Into the cleansed soul there comes to abide the Spirit of God, the fruit of whose presence is the love of God permeating every part of heart and life. Love reigns supreme. Christian perfection is this gift of love made perfect in the soul.

LOVE MADE PERFECT

Whether a man's love is perfect is a question that must rest with his own consciousness and his God. The heart is known to no one else. The most palpable failure to attain to a high standard may not be inconsistent with the most ardent devotion, and on the other hand one who is "as touching the law blameless" may be destitute of love. The question of fact can be settled only by testimony, but the proof of the testimony is the "fruit unto holiness" by which it is sustained. There are many artificial tests which tend to neutralize the testimony. The only authorized test of love is obedience. Love that runs to license is of the flesh, and not of God. There have been many intelligent witnesses to the gift of perfecting grace. Thousands of sane and saintly people have borne witness to a definite experience in which they have received an assurance of love perfected in the soul, and a gift of power that has lifted life into a new plane of fellowship and power. Their lives have triumphed over evil, and overflowed in love and joy. There are thousands, on the other hand, who are equally sure their hearts are not clean, neither is their love perfect.

They are conscious not only of failure, but of guilt. They know that their hearts ought to be pure, and their love ought to be perfect, and what ought to be can be God never commands what He cannot enable. He makes possible whatever He demands.

LOVE NOT YET PERFECT

In what sense may the love of God be imperfect in the soul? A thing may be perfect in quality and defective in quantity. An article may be up to standard and of short measure. Again, a thing may be perfect, though not yet perfected. There is a difference between initial and final perfection. The two "perfects" in Philippians 3 are a good example of this distinction. Perfect love is not an end, but a beginning. It is love without corruption, without flaw, without deficiency. It has to do with quantity rather than quality. God's love is something more than a gift out of His treasury; it is the gift of Himself. Love and God are one. "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us." That is the secret of it all. Love is made perfect by the abiding fullness of the Divine Presence. Self dies in the soul filled with God. Love reigns where He abides. The capacity for love expands with the exercise of love, but perfect love always fills to the utmost limit. A teacup may be as full as a bucket, and God fills the surrendered soul to the full.

WHEN?

On the testimony of many witnesses this experience may come suddenly upon the simple exercise of faith. And why not? There is nothing inconceivable or inconsistent in the statement that the Lord may come suddenly to His Temple, and fill it with His glory. The cleansing of the heart is by faith, and there is nothing to hinder faith from operating suddenly and immediately. God's promise waits our claim. His power has no conditions but our consent. His presence stays for nothing but the open door. He waits to save to the uttermost even now.

O Jesus, at Thy feet we wait,

Till Thou shalt bid us rise,

Restor'd to our unsinning state,

To love's sweet paradise.

Saviour from sin, we Thee receive;

From all indwelling sin,

Thy blood, we steadfastly believe,

Shall make us thoroughly clean.

Since Thou wouldst have us free from sin,

And pure as those above,

Make haste to bring Thy nature in,

And perfect us in love.

The counsel of Thy love fulfill;
Come quickly, gracious Lord!
Be it according to Thy will,
According to Thy word!
According to our faith in Thee
Let it to us be done;
O that we all Thy face might see,
And know as we are known!
O that the perfect grace were given,
The love diffused abroad!
O that our hearts were all a heaven,
For ever filled with God!

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