

# What Christian Perfection Implies

by Samuel Chadwick

---

*Samuel Chadwick's sermon explores the complexities of Christian perfection, emphasizing its progressive nature and the importance of grace in achieving spiritual maturity.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23, Matthew 5:48, Romans 8:3, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 3:12, Philippians 3:15, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 13:21, 1 John 4:18

**Topics:** "Christian Perfection", "Spiritual Maturity"

---

## Description

Samuel Chadwick delves into the concept of Christian Perfection, emphasizing the ambiguity surrounding the term 'perfect' and its various meanings in Scripture and common speech. He highlights that absolute perfection is only found in God, while human perfection is relative, with stages of initial, progressive, and final perfection. Chadwick explores the paradox of Apostle Paul claiming imperfection yet also being perfect, illustrating that truth is often expressed in apparent contradictions that reveal a fundamental unity.

---

## Transcript

Much of the difficulty in the subject of Christian Perfection lies in the ambiguity which clings to the word "perfect." It is used with various meanings, both in the Scriptures and in common speech. In everyday talk, common sense is allowed to interpret the significance of the word. When we speak of a child as perfect, we are not foolish enough to quibble over the finality of its perfection. Unfortunately, common sense seldom gets a chance in theology. We quarrel over terms and tenses, abstract definitions and speculative hypotheses, till we cannot see the wood for trees. There is no absolute perfection but in God. All other perfection is relative. There is a perfection that is initial, a perfection that is progressive, and a perfection that is final. The Apostle Paul was perfect, even when he had not yet attained to perfection. There is neither contradiction nor confusion in the two statements, except to the man who is himself confused.

Paul declared emphatically in Philippians 3:12 that he was not perfect. Perfection was a goal he was striving to attain, but he did not expect to reach it in this life. That is the perfection that appeals. The fact is overlooked that in verse 15 he includes himself among the perfect. Here is a paradox that cannot be relegated to the number of Wesley's unspittable hairs. St. Paul, in the same paragraph, repudiates perfection, and claims to be perfect. Those who reason by the rule-of-thumb method argue that both statements cannot be true, and that the emphatic personal word is conclusive. The Apostle made no claim to the perfect, and the second statement must be ruled by the first. Truth is generally expressed in a paradox, and in a paradox two statements apparently contradict each other, but the contradiction is only

apparent. There is a fundamental unity of which the statements are the complimentary expression. It is true, for instance, that no man hath seen God at any time, but it is also true that the pure in heart see God. Both are true. So it is with perfection. It is obviously true that there is a perfection to which no one has attained, or can attain, either in this life or the next. Perfection belongs to God. For man there is a perfection for which he is apprehended in Christ, to which he cannot come until grace is consummated in glory. That is the perfection St. Paul had not attained. On the other hand there is a perfection that is both commanded and promised.

It is many years since I set myself to a scientific and earnest study of the New Testament on this subject. I had entered into an experience that I could neither define nor defend. I had to find reasons for the assurance of which I had no doubt. Books did not help me. I had no skill in Bible study, but with patient humility and much prayer I was led gradually into the light. I found in the Scriptures more than one angle of presentation for the same experience. The legal aspect expressed it in terms of law. The Temple had a different vocabulary from the Law Court. Neither was complete without the other. The family completed both the Court and the Temple. Perfection in the Court was acquittal without condemnation. Perfection in the Temple was purity without defect, cleanness without stain. Perfection in the family was the perfection of love.

There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: THE LAW.

The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin: THE TEMPLE.

Herein is our love made perfect ... There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: THE HOME.

No interpretation of Perfection is complete that ignores any one of these three angles of interpretation.

#### FINALITY OR FITNESS

I shall never forget the excitement with which I discovered another word for Perfection. The word for the Perfection that is final is teleios. That is the big word for Perfection. It is used of Christ and His redeeming work which is all Perfect. It is used also of the ultimate consummation of Grace, and of perfect development. The word I discovered was katartizo, which does not mean the finality of a thing, but its fitness. The uses of the word are illuminating. It is used of mending nets (Matt. 4:21); to set in order as in music (Matt. 21:16); to fit into perfect relationship (1 Cor. 1:10); to adjust that which is dislocated (Gal. 6:1); to complete that which is lacking (1 Thess. 3:10); to frame together various parts of a machine (Heb. 11:3). There is nothing very difficult to understand in this kind of perfection. Mending is done to repair damage and make fit again for use. Perfecting music is so arranging it that all discords are lost in the perfection of harmony. Limbs fitly joined work together in the unity of the body. No one objects to perfection in the joints of arms, legs, and necks. Putting into joint a dislocated limb is making it perfect. The various parts of creation are perfectly fitted and framed together. When that which is lacking is supplied, the defective is made perfect. Three pence added to nine pence make a perfect shilling. That is what is meant by perfection. It is complete deliverance from everything that makes the soul unfit for, and unequal to, the will of God; the adjustment of life to perfect harmony, and the adaptation of all its powers to the purpose of God; and the supply of all grace, wisdom, power, and whatever else is lacking for efficient obedience to every demand in the fellowship of God in Christ. It is life 80 completely saved that there is no defect, no disorder, no discord.

#### WHAT MAN LOST IN ADAM

Nothing is more obvious than the anxiety of exponents of Christian Perfection to keep down the standard of attainment. It is the rebound from all kinds of fanaticism, ignorance, and immortality. The doctrine needs to be safeguarded, but its best defense is in the heights. Negations are not strongholds. Enthusiasm cannot be kindled by contemplation of its limitations. We need the affirmations of truth and the confirmation of testimony. We are told that Christian Perfection is not angelic, and yet we pray, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

Neither is it Adamic, and yet, it is putting on "the new man" which is "after the image of Him that created him." There is evidently some confusion in these statements, for the salvation procured by Jesus Christ cannot be less than a complete restoration to man's original state of perfection. Indeed:

In Him the sons of Adam boast

More blessings than their father lost.

Redemption implies a restoration. Something forfeited is bought back; something lost is restored. What is the something that constituted man's original perfection, and which was lost through sin? The Scriptures make it plain that God made man upright. He came from the hands of his Maker a being of distinguished excellence and perfection. God made man in His own image, and after His own likeness. So far all evangelical believers agree, but when it is asked in what this image and perfection consist there is an end to agreement. The first chapters of Genesis are the paradise of all speculation. In the dim light truth takes shape according to every man's fancy. By many the perfection of man in his original state has been greatly exaggerated. It cannot have been his physical nature that was made in the image of God; for "God is a Spirit." He had physical limitations and appetites that are still common to the race. Neither was his perfection in knowledge absolute. The woman sinned because she was deceived -- a fact that indicates a lack of intellectual penetration combined with moral perversity. So it was not in knowledge perfection lay. His nature was endowed with such powers as made intercourse with spirits possible. He had fellowship with God, and was accessible to Satan. His perfection was spiritual and moral, held on condition of obedience, and exposed to moral and spiritual assault. When man sinned he forfeited his inheritance. He lost God. The sense of the Divine presence and approval vanished. Losing God, he lost life. The soul that sinneth dies. The death of the soul does not mean extinction. It is the loss of that spiritual consciousness in which all right direction and control of man's various faculties and powers have their source. In spiritual death no part of man's nature is destroyed, but every part becomes disordered and deranged. In the life of sin God is dethroned, and the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life hold sway over the soul.

#### THE EXTENT OF RECOVERY IN CHRIST

The essential elements in man's loss through sin are the sense of divine fellowship and moral power to live in harmony with the divine will. Other results followed, but they stand to these as effect to cause, and will be remedied as man is restored. The curse upon the world will be lifted as man is redeemed. God's concern is with men. One of the things frequently forgotten is that man's sin made no difference in the requirements of the moral law. There was no lowering of the standard. The laws of the moral realm are inherent in the divine character, and as unalterable as the laws of Nature. Obedience can never be vicarious, in the sense that it releases another from obligation to obey. "Justification by faith is not a legal fiction, but a moral anticipation." The end of grace is to make sinful men holy. Grace comes to condemn sin in the flesh "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but

after the spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4). Man's duty is not changed. God asked of Adam no more than that he should love Him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and of us He demands nothing less. The moral law is not repealed in grace. It is not the condition of salvation, but it is the rule and standard of life. Love is not a substitute for righteousness; it is the filling of the law. Salvation restores the soul to peace and fellowship with God, and so renews the nature and sustains the heart, as to enable man to live according to the divine will.

#### MADE PERFECT

It does not lift man above the possibility of temptation, for both Adam and Jesus suffered being tempted. Neither can it bring immunity from frailty, limitation, and ignorance, for humanity is sanctified without being absorbed. It cannot be final for it is still probationary. The writer to the Hebrews prayed that they might be made "perfect in every good thing to do His will." The prayer is the best definition. It is a restoration of relationship, a renewal of nature, a sufficiency of grace that makes it possible to live in all things according to the will of God. It is a prayer for restored fitness and power, in which His purpose shall be fulfilled. Christian Perfection is a question of Christian efficiency. We are the workmanship of a Perfect Worker, and it would be strange if perfection were impossible to us in Him.

He wills that I should holy be,  
That holiness I long to feel;  
That full divine conformity  
To all my Saviour's righteous will.  
See, Lord, the travail of Thy soul  
Accomplished in the change of mine,  
And plunge me, every whit made whole,  
In all the depths of love divine.  
On Thee, O God, my soul is stayed,  
And waits to prove Thine utmost will;  
The promise, by Thy mercy made,  
Thou canst, Thou wilt, in me fulfill.  
Now let Thy Spirit bring me in,  
And give Thy servant to possess  
The land of rest from inbred sin,  
The land of perfect holiness.  
Lord, I believe Thy power the same,

The same Thy truth and grace endure;  
And in Thy blessed hands I am,  
And trust Thee for a perfect cure.  
Come, Saviour, come, and make me whole!  
Entirely all my sins remove;  
To perfect health restore my soul,  
To perfect holiness and love.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-chadwick/what-christian-perfection-implies/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**