



The Life of Jesus (22)

Christian Perfection

Matthew 5:43-38



#1 Christian Perfection

This subject is vital in Christian life because it tells us what we should ultimately seek as Christians as well as what kind of relationship we should have with others.

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”
(Mt 5:48)

This verse may make us feel uncomfortable because we empirically know that we can't be perfect as human beings. What's more, God is the standard of perfection in this teaching. How can we be perfect like our heavenly Father?

It doesn't mean that we become sinless or faultless. We're still weak and vulnerable to temptations. We overcome sin through Jesus Christ, but we still live under the influence of sin. we're righteous, but at the same time, we're sinners. In that sense, only God is perfect. We'll never reach that point of perfection as human beings.

Then, in what sense are Christians told to be perfect?

#2 Christian and the Law

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mt 5:17)

Even though we don't have to obey every single law in the Old Testament since some of them actually lost their effect after Jesus fulfilled them, we still need to keep the spirit of the law, that is, to love God and to love others.

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:20)

The righteousness Jesus is talking about doesn't only refer to our outward actions. What Jesus takes more seriously is our minds and attitudes behind our actions.

We can actually be more righteous than the Pharisees, not because we know about the law better than them, but because Jesus now remains in us and moves us to obey the law with his love and mercy.

#3 About Murder

After that Jesus teaches about the law in regard to murder.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘**You shall not murder**, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that **anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment...**”
(Mt 5:21-22)

The sixth command, ‘You shall not murder,’ seems easy to keep this command because most people don’t want to murder others. But, Jesus goes deeper than that. Jesus traces the root of murder in our hearts. It’s hatred. According to Jesus, **if we hate someone in our hearts for whatever reason, that’s the same as killing the person**, even though we never express it outwardly.

What Jesus is really opposed to is just following the written word in the law, ignoring its spirit. By interpreting the real meaning of the sixth command, ‘do not murder’ Jesus allows us to know the fundamental spirit of it.

#4 About Revenge

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also” (Mt 5:38–39)

The ‘eye for an eye’ law was made to be applied to those who injured others, not to victims. It tells what those people should pay for their crimes, not how victims should take revenge for their damage.

Slapping someone on the right cheek is more than just slapping. You have to use the back of your hand, and that is a really insulting action that would humiliate the person.

But, still, we’re told not to take revenge, but to turn the other cheek. It seems impossible because it’s against our human nature. But, we see the greatest example in Jesus.

Jesus was mocked, humiliated, and spat on, but he loved everyone on earth to the end—even those who persecuted him. By silently being crucified and enduring the insult and suffering, Jesus showed his great, unconditional, and unending love.

#5 Christian Perfection: Love

In each case, what's continually implied is love. What's important in Christian life is to love others as Jesus loves us. Love is the core of all the laws in the Bible.

“**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” (Mt 22:37-40)

“Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**” (Rm 13:10)

What really matters in keeping the law is not our actions themselves, but our motivations behind them. Actions without love mean nothing. They are like hypocrisy to God. True obedience and righteousness require us to obey the law out of true love for God and for others.

#6 Christian Perfection: Love

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:43-45, 48)

The Jews knew that it was God’s will for them to love their neighbors. The problem was that they limited the range of their neighbors.

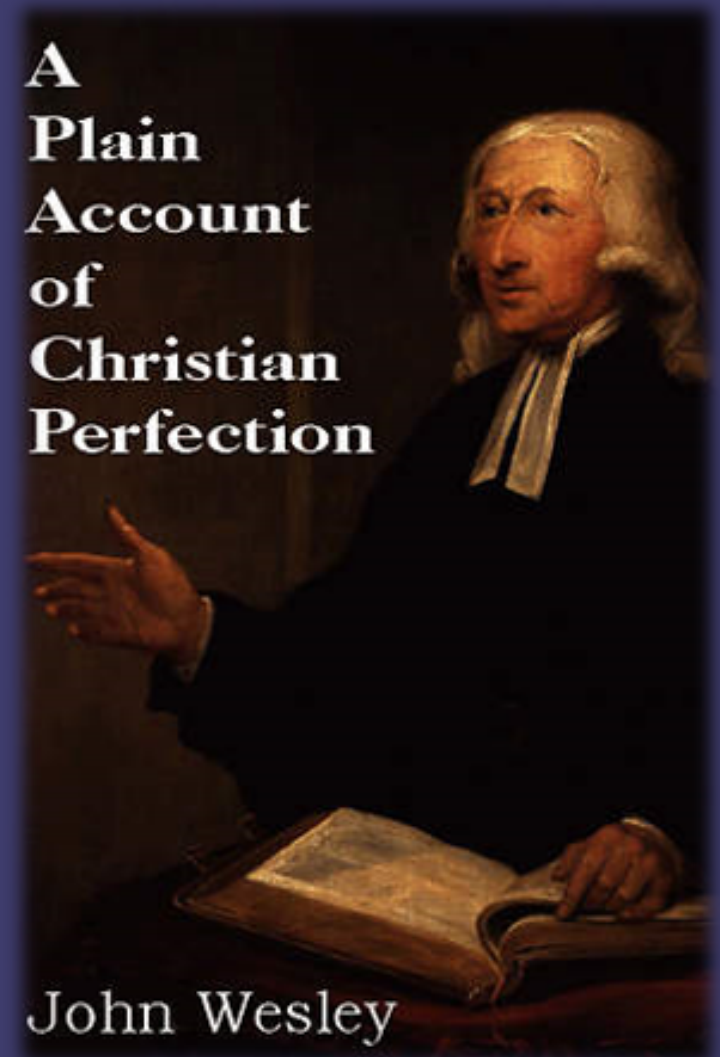
But Jesus says that we should love everyone, even our enemies, as children of God. Just as God sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous and loves both of them without discrimination, we’re to try to love everyone around us.

Beyond the boundary of who we think is our neighbor, we are to be able to see everyone as God’s beloved ones. The love Jesus is talking about here is not limited, but unlimited. It’s not for a specific group of people, but for everyone.

#7 Christian Perfection: Love

This is the meaning of perfection in verse 48. To be perfect like our heavenly father is for us to keep the law of love in our relationships with others with God's perfect love.

“The essence of perfection is love. The soul of the perfected Christian is so filled with love for God that there is no room for evil... In this perfected state the Christian is truly obedient to the command to love God with all heart, mind, and soul.”



Memory Verses

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”
(Mt 5:48) (1)

“For I tell you that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees** and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:20) (1)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘**Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.**’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, **turn to them the other cheek also**” (Mt 5:38–39) (2)

Questions

1) What is the meaning of Christian perfection. In what sense, Jesus requires us to be perfect like heavenly Father? How can our righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees? How do you think you can be perfect like God in your relationships with others?