

COMPLETE IN HIM

Scripture Reading: Colossians 2:9-13

God is all-sufficient. Only He can identify with true perfection. Nothing is perfect if it is incomplete. Ergo, only through the operation of God can any creature attain perfection, for no earthly being is complete in itself. Only the believer can claim the condition described by the Apostle Paul; his statement is to the saints of God in Christ only. "For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And *ye are complete in Him*, which is the head of all principality and power. And you...hath He quickened together with Him, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES."

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER" (Romans 12:5). What a responsibility! Our position is that we have been fully reconciled in God's sight; ("First He sees Jesus; then He sees me.") but we must *reflect* our completeness with our behavior. Our apostle admonishes us, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption...And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS GOD FOR CHRIST'S SAKE HATH FORGIVEN YOU" (Ephesians 4:30, 32). "For we are His workmanship, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

We cannot contribute perfection; we can only respond to God's perfection by dedicating our lives to His service. "Put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:14b-15).

REH

Notes:

GATEWAY OF GRACE

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..." There is only one pathway to glory. Man may work and strain to the limit of his endurance, but he may as well tilt at windmills as to attempt attainment of acceptability to God by his good works and moral behavior. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5).

God plainly draws our road map by the pen of our apostle. "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...that being *justified by His grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-5a, 7). But what of the law? Millions today are attempting to travel to glory by the keeping of the law. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16b). "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). The Apostle Paul firmly declares, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ [suffered death] in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

Grace must be untainted and undiluted. If we are to know unity with God, it must be on His terms. "By GRACE are ye saved through faith...NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8a, 9).

REH

Notes:

DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:1-6

"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. SO THEN THEY THAT ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD" (Romans 8:6-8). So many warnings throughout God's Word; so few who properly heed them! The believer has been sufficiently enabled to resist the temptations of the worldly elements. His problem is that he neglects to maintain his focus upon the Person of Jesus Christ, thus lowering himself to the plane of the carnal creature of whom the psalmist says, "[He] will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalms 10:4).

Rather, the believer should follow the example expressed by David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psalms 139:23). "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is ENMITY WITH GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). These are strong words, but they deal with a strong issue! The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ performed a redemptive work the magnitude of which is inconceivable to our meager capacity of understanding. But the significance is made perfectly plain to us through holy writ. "[Christ] His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...being made a curse for us" (I Peter 2:24, Galatians 3:13).

REH

Notes:

PRIDE & PUNISHMENT

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 14:12-15

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

So spoke the Lord Jesus Christ to those who exhibited self-righteousness. And thus wrote our Apostle Paul in warning to those who would do likewise: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth....For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (II Corinthians 10:17-18). To God, human pride is the most despicable of all traits. The severity with which He deals with the prince of pride himself leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of this offense.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell."

REH

Notes:

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE*Scripture Reading: Revelation 20:11-15*

As members of the Body of Christ, we are one with Him. No closer relationship exists; we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). Our identification with Christ is so complete, so absolute, that we are unconditionally assured of our entrance into eternal glory to dwell forever in His presence. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

Those of us whose position is described above are going to experience what surely will be the most beautiful event in all the days of creation. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds of the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

This event includes all in Christ, for "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (verse 14). "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51). So much for those of us rejoicing in the assurance of our salvation but what of the UNSAVED? There will come *another event*: "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life..."

*REH**Notes:***FRACTIOUS FELLOWSHIP***Scripture Reading: Romans 12:9-10*

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1)! What a beautiful statement of policy is this for those who are the elect of God! Nothing grieves Him more than dissension among His children. One of the seven specifically declared objects of God's stern disapproval is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19).

The keynote of perfect relationship within the Body of Christ is love. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11). Our apostle wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (I Thessalonians 4:9). This has always been our Lord's plea to His own, that we love God first and our neighbor second.

The Lord Jesus' own words when questioned by the Pharisee lawyer are timeless and transcendent of all dispensational boundaries. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Only through the Apostle Paul does the Lord Jesus Christ speak specifically to us as members of His Body, but the theme does not change. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10b).

*REH**Notes:*

DISOBEDIENCE DEPLORED*Scripture Reading: Isaiah 65:2-3*

To the spiritually minded, it seems inconceivable that there would be any question of choice between peace and frustration; but this seems to be a timeless characteristic of humankind. God offers freedom, and man rejects in favor of bondage. Israel, God's chosen people, were the recipients of countless entreaties to become obedient to His requirements and partake in the blessings of promise. God was prompted to give vent to His displeasure. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face."

Seven hundred years later, following Israel's rejection of their promised Messiah, Stephen delivered a scorching indictment as he spoke before the Jewish council. "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53).

More of His infinite patience was graciously displayed by God before He set aside the obstinate nation Israel, but the time finally came: "Seeing ye put [the Word of God] from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46)...Enter, the Dispensation of Grace!

REH

*Notes:***FORMULA FOR THE FAITHFUL***Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-9*

As members of the Church which is the Body of Christ, we are amply apprised of our spiritual responsibilities. Paul prays for the saints, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). He wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (I Thessalonians 2:11-12).

The apostle does not leave us doubting as to *how* we are to comply with these admonitions. He offers his own personal testimony as the infallible answer. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME" (Galatians 2:20). He entreats us, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me..." (Philippians 3:16b-17a).

Paul provides us with a flawless means to a glorious end. "Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Then, following a plea for us to live virtuously, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

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