

“⁸⁹ ¶ LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

⁹⁰ Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

⁹¹ They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

⁹² ¶ Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

⁹³ ¶ I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

⁹⁴ ¶ I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

⁹⁵ ¶ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

⁹⁶ ¶ I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.” (Ps 119:89-96 AV)

Introduction:

1. Who is this sermon to?
2. Beware of over subjectivism; our focus is to be in Christ, not ourselves.
3. Solomon warned: 2Ch 6:30 (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)
4. Beware “how” you hear; not only “what?” but “how?” With a humble and receiving heart.
5. Our measure of all things is to be the word of God: “not measuring ourselves by ourselves and among ourselves” which is not wise, according to the apostle Paul.
6. Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

I. The imagination and perfectionism.

- A. We do not live in a perfect world; hence, our choices reveal our values.
- B. Jeremiah 23:23: Let the false prophet speak his dream, let my servant speak the word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat?
- C. The perfection of the word of God is exalted in this octet of Psalm 119
 1. Forever settled in heaven
 2. To all generations; God is faithful; hence, faithful is His word that established the earth and causes it to abide, 90,91
 3. Salvation to the souls of men: vs. 19 “Law” in vs 92 “Torah” all the scriptures.
 4. The word is life giving: vs. 93
 5. Again, they are saving vs, 94
 6. They are a refuge against all the evils of men. Vs. 95
- D. Hence, The Psalmists has seen the end of all perfection. “End” means the termination, the far end. Perfection cannot be found in any earthly thing, although men can imagine it.
- E. You have the ability to image the perfection of anything, but you will not find that perfect thing upon the earth.
- F. No matter how perfect you imagine an earthly thing to be, the word of God will judge it and find it wanting, for there is an end to human perfection, but the Scripture is very broad.
- G. But there is something more here. The light of God did not shine as brightly in the law and prophets as it does in the face of Jesus Christ. Moses and the prophets only saw dimly, the full glory is in Christ. The book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to show in imperfection of the worship under Moses and Aaron because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins nor cleanse the conscience of guilt. God’s perfection is hidden in the Old Testament, but shines forth in full splendor in Christ, as John wrote, “The

law was given my Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And Paul, though the hearts were veiled that read the Old Testament, "We all behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

- H. How much misery has been brought about in the world by man's vain dreams of perfection and the misery caused by seeking it in this world. Utopian schemes: communism, capitalism, socialism, all madness and empty dreams without God; The perfect husband; the perfect job; the perfect town; the perfect children; the perfect church, the perfect minister, etc., not realizing that in seeking perfection in any of these, they are committing idolatry. Even worse, the perfect person or thing may be dead and gone: the church you used to go to; your mother, your father,

Many years ago in California, there was a dear elderly lady in our church who had been married for many years to a drunk. She was a wonderful Christian woman, filled with love for the people of God and good works of charity and helps. When they were married he had been seen as a fine Christian young man with wonderful Christian parents. But a few years after they were married, his father died and he declined from the faith, abandoned church, and began drinking. She was old school and stuck by him all those years, but it was a was a hard life.

I would see him from time, but he wanted nothing to do with the Gospel or the name of Christ.

One day I got a call from this lady that told me that her husband was in the hospital and was not expected to live. I went to see him to pray with him and speak of the gospel. He was not antagonistic, but kept saying over and over, "I wish my father were here. He would know what to pray."

All summer long, I would visit him three or four times in the morning each week. I would read the Bible and pray. He would say almost nothing, but "I wish my father were here."

One morning, I pressed him as I had done many times before. "You must pray for yourself." The Bible says that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," a passage I had quoted many times before. I urged him to pray, confessing himself to be a sinner, needing the grace of God. I told him that Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

"But that is just the problem," he said. "I do not believe. I wish my father were here."

I stayed quite a while longer, praying and reading gospel passages, urging him to pray for himself in the name of Jesus. It did not avail, to my knowledge.

The next morning when I went for my visit, I found him unconscious, breathing his last breaths, and they came seldom and hard. He passed away later than afternoon.

His father was god to him. Only perfection was in his father. Not the bible, not in God, not in Christ, not the Holy Spirit. I remember that summer with a sadness deep in my heart.

- II. The fruit of perfectionism, when it ripens. There are several heresies that were condemned by the ancient church that involved perfectionism:
- A. Works righteousness of several varieties.
 1. Straining at gnats and swallowing camels. The idea that if we can get this tiny thing under control then everything will be perfect. H.C. 114 only a small beginning.\
 2. Ancient Cathari, Albigensies [maybe], Anabaptists in Europe, Wesley; Finney, Pentecostalism, Norman Shepherd, Rome. There is a work of God in you that will bring moral perfection to you in this life, so that you can win victory over sin and obtain Christ's righteousness, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in you. This is contrary to the Bible, to the confessions, and to the testimony of your own conscience.
 3. These people tend to confuse regeneration with conversion. Translated into the church, it requires the church to be made up of only regenerate people who have the marks of regeneration: these were the Congregationalists of New England that paved the way for the New England Theology or liberal pelagianism.
 - B. This is what I love about the Heidelberg Catechism:
 1. The belonging comes first. We belong to Christ. I am belong to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and when they have finished their work and am heartily willing and ready henceforth to live to him Look at HC 1, 2, 4, 5, 114, 115
 2. Then, what do I have to know: My sin, My salvation, my Thanksgiving. All within the foundation of my eternal election that Paul speak of in Romans 8, the end of the chapter.
 - C. We have then the twin of works righteousness: antinomianism, for works righteousness always runs into antinomianism, which includes rejection of the law of God and the substitution of another law. Anti pope was a false pope. The prefix 'anti' means "in the room of" and antipope took the place of the real people. This is the reason that antinomianism and legalism are joined at the hip. They both substitute something for the law of God. The Pharisee substituted his tradition and opinion; the antinomian substitutes a set of rules for holiness or exercises of perfectionism; but both set aside the law of God which demands that I love the Lord my God with all my heart, which all my soul, with all my soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself..
 - D. The third perfectionistic heresy was Gnosticism.
 1. They taught the perfection for knowledge. Salvation was by knowledge and they claimed to know the fullness of things and despised the weak and the ignorant, as Jesus most assuredly did not. He did not quench the smoldering flax, nor bruise the reed. The fruitless tree he interceded for: "let us did around it and fertilize it, and maybe it will bear next year."

2. He knew that eventually it would have to be cut down, but He was patient. You see, the election does not depend upon our works or our knowledge, but on the decree of God, which we do not know.
3. But God did tell Paul concerning the riot in the city of Corinth: Ac 18:9,10 "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." They belonged to God, even though they didn't know it yet.

- E. There is also the perfectionism of experience. This is very much spread abroad in the world, especially among the Pentecostals and Baptists, both who put experience above the promises of God. They equate "born again" with "conversion" and the latter with at least an implied perfection of happiness and joy and godliness. They become disillusioned when they find that the way of Christ is often covered with obstacles, trials, doubts, fears, and trouble. But like Job's friends, they put this to a defect of faith, not a trial of faith.
- F. The result of all of these forms of perfectionism is the turning away from Christ to the world, and seeking to find perfection in the present evil world. We will let John have the last word on this section: John 1: 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure

III. The Cure for perfectionism: Now I am just going to be able to skip the surface on this next point, but I will address it more after Christmas. What is the cure for perfectionism: As in everything, the cure is found in Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:5-7

- A. Col. 3:1,2. We are to seek the kingdom of God First.
- B. Vs. 3: There is a change of mind. Your natural life is dead with Christ by the Law so that you might appear with Him in glory. Your glory and perfection is not now.
- C. Vs.4-9 Mortify. Why? If it is already dead. It is dead to guilt but not in behavior. You must put off the bad behavior, the bad way of life. Does not mean afflict the body as the ascetics did, but to deny yourself, you become a living sacrifice, as the law requires.
- D. Vs. 10. You have put on; now put on vs. 12. The same pattern. You are dead, therefore mortify your members. Ye have put on, therefore put on as the elect of God.... Etc.
- E. Vs. 14 Love for Christ and for his people is the bond of perfectness: holds all the other virtues together in one.

Application: I will make the application from Galatians 6:

Vs. 1-3. We reject all perfectionism except that in Christ. There are faults to be remedied in both ourselves and in others. We are to bear one another's sins, as Christ bore ours. He was patient and kind to us and we are to be so with others. Our knowledge is imperfect and we do not know the hearts of men. Beware of pride. Do not be puffed up.

Vs. 4,5. Even though we have a community responsibility, yet this does not usurp each man's responsibility for himself and his Christian walk and life. We all must bear our own burdens.

Vs. 6: Pay the preacher. Why is this stuck in there? Because it is God's will that the church have paid ministers who have time to give themselves to the word and prayer, to bear the burdens of the congregation, watch for souls, and seek to restore the wandering and drive off the wolves.

Vs 7-10. Let us do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith. What you sow, you will reap. If you sow to your flesh, to the natural man, to works righteousness, you shall reap corruption, for the flesh only has one kind of fruit.

May God bless you.