

No.
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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

" P E R F E C T I O N " .

An Address (revised) at

WALHAM GREEN.

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by

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" P E R F E C T I O N " .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

At Walham Green.

Scripture read, 2 Corinthians 13.

Our subject, dear friends, is both a large and a solemn one. I suppose that there are few words in the whole of the English language which awaken thoughts so quickly for a child of God as the word "Perfection". This is partly natural, for, having been born again, we long with our new nature to reach forward to perfection. At the same time, we are painfully conscious that there is no subject about which there has been more false teaching than the subject of perfection, and I think I am right in saying this is a subject about which a goodly number of us would partly hesitate if we heard that someone was ~~going to speak~~ ^{on} it, lest we were going to hear that which was against the word of God, but I trust that by that grace of God which has saved us, we have been gathered, not to merely hear a human voice but to hear what God says through His word on ~~t~~ ^{is} solemn subject. Of course, we shall have to go back to think of the words that God has used, which we have rendered ^e for us by the word "perfection", but as He has been pleased to place us in England, we might first of all consider just the meaning of the English word "perfection". It signifies that which is thoroughly made,

that which is completely made, and finished off, consequently the word "perfection" may be used of that which is good, or that which is bad. It is most commonly used of that which is good, yet we do hear expressions like this at the present time, "perfect misery", and so forth, which are quite correct in themselves, though often they are used with a carelessness ^{with} ~~in~~ which most words are used at the present day, when people express their feelings: but the term "perfect" of itself may be in good or bad. This was strikingly impressed upon me by a passage where we have the word used in Isaiah. In the 47th chapter, verse 9, we read "These two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, loss of children and widowhood: they shall come upon thee IN THEIR PERFECTION for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments." So that the word "perfection" here in English plainly has the meaning of a completeness, "In their perfection". Nor is it unimportant to ponder this use of the word, for it is not only English. Several of the words God uses in the Hebrew, and at least one of the words that God uses in the Greek have this thought of completeness, and may therefore be used in a good sense or a bad sense. ^{thus} It is ~~with~~ the word "sanctify". There is a wicked sanctification, as well as a good sanctification, spoken of in Scripture, for we read, "they that sanctify themselves" in Isaiah 66, of a wicked sanctification - separating themselves to evil. So with the word "perfection" there are two "completenesses", as we shall

come to see later. I have said there are various words used by God that are so rendered in English, and we rejoice that in a company of God's dear people, we need not say that every word is the best word in the place where it comes. God never has misused one word. One likes to realise that there are no such things as mere synonyms in Scripture. God has used the perfect word in each verse and any other word would lose some of God's teaching. With human words one always feels "Oh, I could improve on that", with Divine words one should feel, "I shall only spoil that unless I accept it as it stands". This causes a certain heart dependence that makes us ready to learn all that is in the word, and whereas when the human speaker speaks, he may think of a fraction of the meaning of the word, he cannot possibly think of the whole; when God speaks, He cannot think of a fraction, but must have the whole before Him, therefore every word of Scripture is full of meaning. I shall refer to some of these special words, as we come to the different passages.

Now shall we divide up the subject? Consider first, perfection in relationship to God, perfection in relationship to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfection in relation to Satan, and perfection in relation to the Lord's people. First of all, God in general, then as to the Lord Jesus in His redemptive work, then in connection with Satan, and then in regard to the Lord's redeemed.

First in connection with God. It is well to put

this first, for across everything that is of God, we may write what God has put at the beginning of His word "In the beginning God", and as to our very subject in the meeting surely we should have "In the beginning God". It will help us to understand the further parts of the subject if we ^{are brought} get into a reverential attitude before God. We cannot think too much of the greatness of our God. We are apt, all of us, however long we have known His Name, to think too little of His majesty. Just as the kindness of a human fellow-creature will make the majority take advantage, so the condescension and grace of our God is often misused, and we become familiar with Him, but we want to have that reverent awe with God to think of His perfectness, for in Him all perfections meet. There can be no imperfection in God. There is not with God merely a reaching forward to perfection, but He IS perfection. There is perfection of wisdom in Him, perfection of grace, perfection of righteousness, perfection of power, perfection of everything; and we feel awestruck with the greatness of our God. Scripture particularly refers to God as perfect. You recollect those well known words in 1 Peter 1 quoted from the earlier Scriptures. "I am holy" says God, and we have the parallel words ~~with them~~ in Matthew 5. "Your Father is perfect". Scripture asserts the perfection of God. We read in Deut. 32 ~~and 34~~ concerning our God, not only is He perfect, but that all He does is perfect. This is essential. He would not be perfect if He did anything imperfect. "He is

the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment, a God of Truth and without iniquity, - Just and right is He". In Psalm 18 we read in the 30th verse, that God's way is perfect. "As for God, His way is perfect", "The word of the Lord is tried, He is a Buckler to all those that trust in Him". His work is perfect, His way is perfect. Ps. 19. 7 declares "The law of the Lord is perfect" - in other words "His word is perfect" (for the memory is helped by the same initial), the work, the way, and the word. are all perfect; and in Rom. 12. 2. we read of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God - another word with the same initial. Yes, God's work and way and word and will, perfect, and these four words seem to comprehend such a lot: the will seems within, the word from the mouth, the work of the hand, and the way is the whole character.

God is absolutely perfect in all His arrangements, therefore, we are not surprised that in the breast-plate of the high priest where God revealed Himself, there were the Urim and the Thummim - the lights and the perfection\$, as the words mean. The perfections where God revealed Himself. Ah! dear friends, it is a joy above all joys if we know that this God of all perfections is our God. The heathen described their gods with all kinds of imperfections - imperfections of power, imperfections morally. They described their gods according to what they wanted to be themselves. Did they want to be murderers? they described murderous gods. And so the gods of the heathen were not only powerless but they

were wicked in the way men ~~deceit~~ ^{desires} them. ^{bedness.} But our God is absolutely perfect in the good sense, in the best sense of the word "perfect": there is no incompleteness with God, and no incompleteness with His actions. May I just in this connection call attention to one work of God that might often be brought before us to remind us of how He works perfectly. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth became without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep". The earth was not created without form and void. God in Isaiah 45 distinctly declares He created it NOT without form. It became without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. ~~It~~ was the darkness that had come through some tremendous event of sin, and the only event of sin that we know before Adam's was Satan's. It was evidently linked therewith; but in the beginning God created it not as darkness, not as without form and void - He created it complete and satisfactory. There is a large gap between verses one and two of Genesis 1, so we have ~~just~~ there illustrated, in the first lines of Scripture, that God's work is not without form, and void - that everything is perfect, but that sin comes in to mar whatever it can of the work of God.

And now shall we pass on to consider the perfection of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? In one of the most difficult passages of the Word of God, He is described as the Perfect One in the midst of a ruined world. In Isaiah 42

and the 19th verse, we have this statement, "Who is blind but My Servant, or deaf as My Messenger that I sent? Who is blind as He that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's Servant, seeing many things, but thou~~y~~ observest not, opening the eyes, but he heareth not? The Lord is well-pleased for His Righteousness' sake: He will magnify the law and make it honourable". I need hardly say the word "Servant" should be spelled here with a capital "S", and the word "Righteousness" with a capital "R". Christ is the Righteousness of God. Christ ^{became} ~~is~~ the Servant, and He was perfect not only in what He did, but in what He omitted to do. Perfect in His refusal to ^{see} ~~save~~ that which was against God. Perfect in His refusal to hear many of the things that surrounded Him. The first Adam failed because he heard amiss. The last Adam only heard aright. The last Adam could not only say "Thou hearest Me always" but He heard always, and hearing the Father He heard not the wishes of men. Herein was the Perfect One, our beloved Lord Jesus, during that perfect life when He magnified the Law and made it honourable. But not only was He perfect in connection with His life, but perfect in connection with His death. If we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find there in the second chapter, concerning our beloved Lord Jesus in verse 10, that He, the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, and in verse 9 we read, "Being made perfect He became the Author (or Cause) of an ever-

lasting salvation to all those who are hearing Him with subjection". In both these places the word "to be made perfect" implies the complete work, or rather brought to a complete end or goal. We must not think that our beloved Lord needed a moral perfecting, He was ever perfect, but He was brought to the goal through sufferings. Hence we have clearly the Scriptural statement that His death was the perfection, the climax, the goal of His perfect life. There was no faltering on the way to Calvary, and there was no faltering at Calvary. Perfectness marked everything. He never failed, He never made a mistake - the Lamb of God, without blemish, and without spot - PERFECT.

Before passing on to the perfection of God's dear people, I should like to speak a moment or two about a perfection that is mentioned ^{apparently regarding} of Satan, in Ezekiel 28. Here two words are employed. In the twelfth verse he is described under the title of "King of Tyre", and we read "Thus saith the Lord God, thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of the Lo and so forth, and verse 15 adds "Thou wast perfect in Thy ways from the day that thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee". Here we have a very solemn use of the word "perfect" in connection with Satan. There was a completeness of Satan, a completeness of beauty, and completeness in many ways - in HIS ways, until Satan through choosing independence ^{away from} of God, fell from that height, and dragged many with him, and has

sought to drag mankind as well as the angels. There is no passage that is much more solemn than this, to ^{make us} realise the greatness of the fall of Satan. Here we see that the one who was perfect in beauty, fell. In like manner, God made man upright, but they found out many inventions. Sin always ^{seeks to} come in to mar God's work. God did not create the Devil in his present condition. This is important. We must see that God created one who was prepared wondrously, and who sealed up the sun. One of the chief of the works of God, and yet he fell, yet he rebelled against God. Thus we have at once brought before us that which shows God did not create the tempter as a tempter, and secondly we see that the height of privileges and blessings and advantages will never secure eternal blessedness. Oh, how we feel the need for a sure and finished work of the Lord Jesus on our behalf, for if Satan could fall from heaven, if our salvation were in any angel we might feel there was a danger. But because it is in the perfect One, the Son of God's love, we feel no danger. We are sure of eternal salvation.

And now we come to the special part of our subject, to consider perfection with respect to the Lord's people. There is first what might be characterised as a perfection in the sight of God. In Hebrews 10. 14, we have this statement, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified": this is not merely a perfecting going on, it is not merely a future perfectness, but by one offering He hath

perfected for ever them that are sanctified. In the earlier verse of this chapter we read "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". Not only is that offering once for all, but our sanctification in that sense of the word is once for all, and so here our perfectness is once for all, not merely in Divine intention, but in Divine accomplishment. It was a promised thing before Christ died, but now it is a realised blessing - perfected for ever. ^{obviously} ~~of course~~, there are other aspects of perfection that we are going to consider afterwards, but let us realise this one first. In the sight of God, we are now perfected for ever if we are resting on the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and oh, dear friends, are we resting upon that work? If not, all our imperfectness must bring God's judgment on us and that judgment is very real, but if we are resting upon Christ, "perfected for ever", surely that awakens our praise. Perfected for ever! There is no "may be" about the work of Christ, there is no possibility of a falling from grace that we should lose the salvation secured at such a tremendous cost, the Lord's sheep will never perish, they are perfected for ever, and they cannot be imperfected. The whole body, soul and spirit of the redeemed shall be before Him in that ~~day~~ coming day. There will be no empty seat at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; there will be no incompleteness in that glorious Church that has neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, and will be presented to the Lord Jesus by the Lord Jesus. "Perfected

for ever"; "Whom He (did) foreknew He predestinated: whom He predestinated He called; whom He called He justified; whom He justified He glorified". It is a finished work before God. He before Whom time is as nothing beholds us in Christ. "Our life is hid with Christ in God", "Perfected for ever". This gives a child of God a certain dignity in this world, and gives to a child of God a certain holy carelessness of what the world think and a certain freedom from a desire to sin. Though we do falter and fail there is a certain freedom from a desire to sin as we realise this perfecting for ever, the completeness of salvation in the purpose of God and in the Person of Christ. That completeness of salvation will never make a child of God indifferent, but rather tend to make him obedient, but I do not want on this occasion to deal at length with this perfection but rather with our practical perfection and our realisation of perfection, and our attainment of perfection whether now or in the future. Do not think that I am going against Scripture when, having said that we are perfected for ever, I am also compelled to add that we are often imperfect. Perfected for ever in Christ, we are often imperfect in ourselves. We have been redeemed but we wait for the redemption. We have been saved, yet we are being saved and we shall be saved. There are varied aspects of these different words, and the very chapter that says we have been sanctified says we are being sanctified.. So, while in one sense we have been perfected, in another sense there is a process (may it be a progress) in the work of this

perfecting until that day shall arrive. Now we do well to ask ourselves what is attainable in the way of perfection, and how it is attainable. In connection with what is attainable we shall have to consider ~~know~~ what it is NOT, for there is false teaching as to this to-day.

First, what is attainable now in the way of perfection, and this will bring us to the use of the different words that God has employed. Shall we turn to 1 Chron. 29? In verses 9 and 19 we have brought before us ^{the} word "perfect". In verse 9 we read "Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect hearts they offered willingly to the Lord and David the King also rejoiced with great joy". Now the word "perfect" here used, is the very word from which Jerusalem comes - PEACE. It is rather striking that at the time when the King of Peace (Solomon) is brought before us, we have the words about a "heart of peace" twice over in this chapter. There is a beautiful expression of David in that 19th verse "Give unto Solomon my son (that is, to the man of peace) a heart of peace" (as the word "perfect heart" means). The offerings that were called the "peace offerings" have a word from this same root, and the idea of the peace offerings was a complete friendship, and that is the thought in these verses here, "Israel had a perfect heart". That was an undivided heart, a complete heart, there was friendship with God so that they could give to Him, there was peace with God. Now is not that a beautiful description of practical perfection that we as children of God

seek after, that undividedness, that whole-heartedness, that all-round spirituality, that finds its joy in communion with God? There can be no completeness, no perfectness, unless there is peace, but when there is peace with God in joy, that makes the life complete. The believer feels that any ruffled temper or mind ruins everything when once he has enjoyed peace with God. The entering into the peace of God ruling in the heart is a completeness for Him, and that perfection is scripturally attainable. We might notice in this connection 1 Kings 8. 61. Solomon says to the people "Let your heart be complete with the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to guard His commandments as at this day". Let your heart be complete; let it be at peace; it is the same word. Another rendering gives it the word "entire". Entire, undivided. All these words have a different force. The hearts of Israel were apparently complete at that time. If you look at the beginning of chapter 8 - verse 2, "ALL the of Israel assembled themselves"; verse 3 "ALL the elders came"; and verse 5 "ALL the congregation of Israel". There was a holy unity and a devotedness to the things of the Lord. That completeness which forgets everything for the Lord, is attainable. Chapter 11. 4 tells us that when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect (or complete, or entire, or undivided) with the Lord his God. You see the force of the word in that term "with". His heart was not perfect "with"; he had a divided heart. He

wanted to be partly with the Lord, and partly with his wives and their idols. How striking is this passage when you realise that the word "perfect" is the same root as the word "Solomon"! His heart was not "Solomon" - not what it had been at the first. There was not this peace with God like David his father had. In 1 Kings 15. 3 we read concerning one of the kings of Israel, Abijam, that he walked "in all the sins of his father, that he had done before him", and his heart was not perfect, not entire, not complete "with": you see how often this word is with the word "WITH". Communion is perfection in one sense of the world - "Friendship with God", and the Lord Jesus says "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you". The believer's life is in perfect confusion if he gets out of communion with his God.

Will you now turn to 2 Kings 20? Here in the 1st verse we read that Hezekiah without boasting, said before the Lord. "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember I pray Thee, that I have walked to Thy face in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done what is good". Now Hezekiah had not been absolutely sinless, but there had been an undivided heart. Whatever he did he sought the Lord his God. As soon as he came to the throne his first thought was, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, and the first day it seems, to put right the things for God. So emphatic was he in this that we are told concerning Hezekiah, that in every work that he began in the service of the house of God and in the law, and in the

commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered. Now that is the practical perfection that is attainable, and not only attainable, but which we should seek after, and seek after very intently. This half-heartedness which is so common to-day is a disgrace; we need to be enthusiastic for the Lord.

Shall we now pass on to the later Scriptures and see what they say as to an attainable perfection? Matt. 5. 48 "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". The word "perfect" here signifies "complete" or "belonging to the goal". I might just mention that the word "publicans" in the verse before is from the same root. The publicans were those who had to do with the taxes which were called the goal, or the object of the State, and the Lord to emphasize the teaching uses words from the same root. He says *that* those who have taken up this public work, well, their goal *was* to look after the money; -let your goal be to give, not to get, and the thought is of the perfection of the Lord in giving - "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust". "If ye love those who love you what reward have ye? Do not even those who have their goal in the things of earth, do they not do the same things? If ye greet your friends only, what do ye over and above?" The child of God has got to do something over and above. "Do not even those who have their goal in the things of earth do this?" Ye shall therefore be those who have a goal

as your Father' Who is in heaven. Your object is to be what God has as His object, not what men of this world have as their object. The perfection then here brought before us as attainable ~~is~~ that which is over and above the things of this world, having a goal beyond self and a goal beyond earth, and a goal beyond prosperity, a goal that is linked with life, and linked with glory and linked with God. In Matt. 19. 21 we have a similar thought where the Lord shows the perfection of giving. There is one who has come to Him and said "What am I to do that I may have life everlasting?", and the Lord Jesus Christ ^{explains} ~~says~~ to him that he must do certain commandments, and the young man says, "I have kept all these things from my youth" This is not the Lord pointing out ^{the} way of salvation. He was not asked as to salvation but He was asked how a man could gain glory himself, and the Lord says "By obedience", "It must be perfect and absolute", and the young man claims he has done it and ^{adds} ~~says~~, "What am I yet behind?" (Just the opposite to the word "over and above" that we have in the other place) "What am I yet behind? In what do I fall short". ^{The Lord} ~~Jesus~~ ^{replies to} ~~says~~ unto him, "If thou wilt to be a complete one, go, sell all that thou hast, and give to poor ones, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and hither, follow me". Now here is brought before us first of all what the Lord showed to the man who would seek after salvation by his own works, - but He ^{also} introduces a Divine principle. The attainable perfection of the Lord's people is to be free from setting their minds on the things below - the perfection

of following Christ in the path of rejected carelessness about the things of time and sense. Not the carelessness of the world, but the carelessness that does not set one's mind on that which fades away. In like manner 2 Corinthians brings before us an attainable perfectness. In the 13th chapter that we just read, and the 11th verse, it is written "Finally brethren, rejoice, be perfect", and the word "be perfect" means "be fitted together". An attainable perfection for the Lord's people is a fitting together: that is the goal, not quarrelling, but unity: that is an attainable perfection. Now we see then what is the attainable perfection for the children of God. It is a peace with Himself and a communion with Himself, a getting free from looking at things from the earthly standpoint, looking at the things that are not seen, and a wholly fitting in instead of an exaltation of self.

May I point out now what this is not? This is not a perfection in which there is no sin, for if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, and the height of godliness is to see sin before others see it. Many of God's dear people see the branches of sin when they are in measure walking with the Lord, but we do not get low enough to see the very roots of sin. ^{Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ} ~~the apostle Paul~~ in the epistle to the Romans and the seventh chapter, in the latter part of ~~it~~, using present tenses, emphatically says, "I, I", not ~~it~~. He says "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" in the plural, but the experience of the latter part of Romans ^Y

was too high an experience to apply to the majority of God's dear people. The Holy Spirit inspired him to make it very definitely personal, because there Paul said "I see another law in my members" not merely "I see acts of sin " but "I see the very root of it", then he must have cut down all the fruits and branches to get down to the very root, and that is a height of holiness. Romans 7 is often misunderstood in this connection: it is a wondrous height of holiness that few of the Lord's people have ever reached. Paul, by the grace of God, ^{could} without boasting, ^{write thus} just as he records his personal experience "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" which cannot be lightly and glibly said by God's dear children now. Few have kept the faith or finished the course in that same way now. What these words describe is personal experience without boasting. In like manner does the latter part of Romans 7 show what we see when we are nearest the Lord - that there is another law in our members and that we have something to war against. "The flesh warreth against the Spirit": there is that flesh: we are not in the flesh, but there is the flesh. There is not a freedom from sin, for what is sin? Any falling short of the glory of God. If we were free from this, our position would indeed be a wonderful one. We should make no mistakes of any kind, we should understand all manner of things. Our very ignorance is ^{often very manifestly} sin, and there are sins linked with ignorance. In view of the greatness of God we are compelled to acknowledge

that our perfection, and that perfection which is attainable, is not a perfection without sin until we reach that glory when we shall no longer have the bodies of humiliation. Phil. 3 shows us most clearly that the Lord's people when they are most pressing toward the mark are not perfect in the sense of having reached the full goal, they still fall short. In Phil. 3 the apostle distinctly says in verse 15 "Let us therefore as many as are perfect", but in verse 11 he says "Not that I have already attained, either already have been perfected". He does not claim perfection. In one sense he speaks of the Lord's people as being complete ones at the goal, living in the light of that day; in another sense he says we fall short, we press toward the goal but we fall short, for it is written not merely that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God but "all sinned and are coming short of the glory of God", and that verse should be read with the next one. "All sinned and are coming short of the glory of God being justified freely". It is not dealing with the unsaved in that verse, it is dealing with saved ones. ^{manifestly} ~~Of course~~ the ungodly sinned, and of course the ungodly come short of the glory of God: we all know that, but the passage there is "All sinned and are coming short of the glory of God being justified". ^{It can} ~~That could~~ only be true of the redeemed that they are "being justified freely by His grace". Therefore they are coming short of the glory of God. ^{this} ~~It~~ seems a certain tabernacle picture: the glory of God was the final thing in the tabernacle, and the not reaching up to that was

the coming short, and we are all coming short of the final - the glory of God. Moreover, James, the third chapter, implies that this perfection, ^{or rather completeness} is not a sinless one, for we read there "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body". But you do not need to bridle perfection. The believer who controls his tongue is a complete one, patience is having its complete work. But he needs to bridle the whole body for there is that in him which requires bridling, and though he is not to be before God as the horse and the mule that need to be held in with bit and bridle, he is to bridle himself. If we wander from God, God will bridle us: if we walk with God we shall be bridling ourselves, and God will guide us with His eye. The guiding with the eye is the contact of fellowship and the looking one to the other. The holding in with bit and bridle is the contact of constraint, and the looking away the one from the other, for the horse does not see the one who bridles him.

And now we come to a very important practical point - how is that which is attainable to be reached? How are we to get after this perfection, this completeness, this enjoyment of communion with God, this allroundness of an undivided heart and an undivided life? How are we to attain it? Shall we see if a few Scriptures will decide? We read of some of God's servants that they were complete. How did they reach it? Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written to guide us. We read of Noah in Gen. 6 that he was a perfect man, and

this word is another word which means complete. It is a word from the same root as the word "Thummim". Gen. 6. 9 "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations and Noah walked with God". Before making any comment on this verse we might read two other passages. Gen. 17. 1 "When Abraham was 90 years old and the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect". Job 1. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright and one that feared God and avoided evil". Now I think, dear friends, that these three passages describing three servants of God, give us a little key as to how we can attain to this godly perfection. We read as to two of them there was a walking in communion with God. Evidently the thought seems to be a separatedness from the world in both cases. Noah was in the midst of a crooked world. The earth was corrupt and yet Noah did not walk with the world, he walked with God. Now if you and I are to reach this scriptural perfection of fellowship and friendship with God, we must not try and mix up with the world as well: there must be a putting of the Lord first, ^{*we must thus be led by the Holy Spirit in the way of the Lord's will*} Notice in the case of Job how he rose up early every morning to look after the things of God: look at the concern he had for his children. He said, "Oh, if my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" which is a serious thing. That is the man who is complete, and we shall only get completeness as we are careful about everything

in our home and our daily life. Perfection is made up of tiny things: I mean the attainable perfection of the Lord's redeemed. It is not that we reach it by an impulsive leap into it. It is not that we come to a meeting and get spurred up to excitement, and that we go forth declaring we will be perfect: it is rather a quiet and a continual mortification of sin in the background of the daily life. Do not misunderstand me: I believe that we should have crises, and that the child of God should have holy enthusiasm and devotion, but there is too much tendency to have a jerked spirituality so-called, which is rather worked up than worked in, which is rather an outward form than really the result of communion with God. True spirituality, true attainable perfectness is only by the care over little things, and the care over daily walk that we have in these passages. 2 Chron. 19 might further help us in this context. Some were appointed for office, and Jehoshaphat charges them: he says "Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart". Let us notice each word in its order. "Thus shall ye do". May we not spiritualise that? There must be obedience, exact obedience. "THUS shall ye do IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD". The fear of the Lord is not merely an old dispensation term: it is still the beginning of wisdom, and Paul knew what it was to be in fear and much trembling, and there is no contradiction with the words of John where we are told that perfect love casteth out fear. We only have the true fear as we have cast out the

wrong fear, - "The fear of the Lord", and it adds "IN FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH". There must be a truthfulness if we are to have this perfectness of heart. We must not excuse sin and speak proudly and religiously when all the time our hearts are wandering from the Lord: we must not pretend to be more godly than we are, or put on the airs ~~and~~^{or} appearance of spirituality. If there is this preparation of doing what the Lord has appointed, in the fear of the Lord, with truthfulness and transparency, we shall have this perfectness and completeness. We will take another look at the 6th chapter and the 40th verse. "The disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his teacher", and this word means "fitted together". Now we see here then that the true perfectness is the being with the teacher so as to be like the teacher: to be with Christ so as to be like Christ. Unless we study Christ we cannot reach this perfectness and completeness. But having noticed that passage with you at once take with it, dear fellow saved ones, 2 Tim. 3.16,17? Here this same word is used, or rather a word from the same root with a different prefix, concerning the study of the Word. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable toward teaching, toward reproof, toward setting upright, toward discipline which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, having been perfected unto every good work". If we want this completeness of character we must study and feed on the whole of the word of God: it is a necessity. We must treat the word

of God aright: almost all wandering comes from a neglect of the word of God. It is easy to know these things, but if we know these things, happy are we if we do them. If we are not the Lord's, of course we are one mass of imperfection, one mass of ruin. It is no use trying to make ourselves perfect, for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But if in mercy we have been brought to know the Lord, we must either go out of this meeting more careless, (which may the Lord prevent), or more determined to live this overcoming life of devotedness to Him, ^{in the power of the Holy Spirit} "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon". There must be a wholeness in the life of a real earnest child of God. THE WHOLE HEART in Psalm 119 is a suggestive subject, but we want the whole heart to be not only a subject but an object, and not only our OBJECT but our present EXPERIENCE. God, who has so graciously done the great work of converting us, will surely continue His work of blessing us if only we do not seek to put Him in the background. First of all He saved us apart from our wish, and drew us near to Him when we were far off, but now it is our responsibility, as we read, for example, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you". He drew near to us first without our drawing near, but now it is dependent on our drawing near. In the past it was without our wish to have Christ, but now He goes on with His gracious work, as by grace, we are willing to walk with Him. It is a command to be perfected: it is an object in view. May the Lord grant that we may not let it slip from our sight, that we may seek to be those who are all-round believers, out of love to Him, and for a witness to Him.