

Scriptures and Doctrine :: We All Stumble in Many Things

We All Stumble in Many Things - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/25 3:30

There was a point in my walk with Christ in which I struggled a bit with the teaching known as sinless perfection. Based on my understanding of God's Word and from experience I am convinced that this teaching is very destructive whenever Christians succumb to it. If you fall prey to this teaching you will be deceived into thinking you are perfect(sinless) when in reality you are not. You will be very critical of others without recognizing your own sins before God. You start justifying certain "small" sins and calling them merely mistakes, infirmities, or some other name.

Many under this teaching try to look within themselves for perfection(sinlessness) in order to have peace or assurance of salvation instead of looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. They look at their imperfections and self-righteousness instead of trusting in Christ's perfect righteousness as the foundation and source of assurance.

To be sure, true believers in Christ are set free from the dominion of sin in their lives as Romans 6:14 declares. If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature(2Cor.5:17). God takes our heart of stone and gives us a new heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:25-27). That is the power of God at work in the new birth. There is a radical transformation that takes place at true conversion. And now as a pattern of life we do not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit(Rom.8:1). We no longer willfully and habitually practice sin as we did before we were converted(1Cor.6:9-10; Gal.5:19-21). We delight to obey God and keep His commandments(Jn.14:15; 1Jn.2:3-4; 1Jn.5:3-4). There is indeed a real victory over sin in the life every blood-bought child of God(1Jn.5:4). But to say that we can ever be perfect for even one whole day in this life is something God's Word simply and clearly does not teach.

One of the scriptures, among others, that convinced me that we will not be perfect in this life is James 3:2 which emphatically declares, "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body."(NKJV). The first part of that verse makes it clear that we(Christians) all "stumble"(Greek word means offend, sin) in many things(ways), whether in thought, word, or deed, sins of commission or omission.

There has only been one Person who has ever been completely sinless throughout His entire earthly life and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."(Heb.4:15). It is only He who has ever been able to boldly declare "Which of you convicts Me of sin?"(Jn 8:46).

Not even the great apostle Paul, who had such an awesome, intimate relationship with Christ, who was caught up to the third heaven, whom God used so mightily to spread the gospel and lay such a strong foundation of the church of Jesus Christ in the first century, reached that state of sinless perfection. Paul wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Phil.4:12-14).

Paul also wrote, "18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."(Rom.7:18-25)

Perfectionists try to say that Paul is referring to himself as an unsaved Pharisee in that passage in Rom.7. But That whole passage is clearly in the present tense.

An unbeliever does not "delight in the law of God according to the inward man." Paul also says there that with his mind he serves the law of God. An unsaved person does not serve the law of God with their mind. For Rom.8:5-7 clearly states, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

Romans 7:18-25 is speaking of the war that is going on inside all of us as Christians. Galatians 5:17 says it this way, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

We will always have that struggle within as long as we are in this body. The difference between us and the unsaved is that we have the Spirit of God indwelling us and are led by the Spirit as a pattern of life. The unsaved do not have the Spirit of God and are completely given over to the flesh to fulfill its lusts.

In His model prayer our Lord taught us to pray daily, "forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." (Lk.11:4). How can we pray that daily if we have no sins daily? I don't believe any true believer can go on for a whole day without sinning, whether sins of omission(not doing what we should) or commission(doening what we shouldn't do) in thought, word or deed.

God's Word teaches us that it is only in eternity that we will be completely perfect and sinless, when we receive our new glorified bodies. That glorified body will be the difference. Romans 8:19-25 declares, "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

God knows the end from the beginning and has seen that His children will sin at one point or another in this life. The good news is that our great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, has made provision for our continual forgiveness and cleansing, through His precious blood(1Jn.1:7,9;1Jn.2:1-2).

Some Objections Answered:

Some may say, "the Bible makes it clear that Jesus commands you to sin no more (John 5:14, 8:11). Jesus commands you to repent or perish (Luke 13:3, 5)."

Answer: To repent is to turn from our wicked ways and turn to Christ, to confess and forsake our sins(Prov.28:13). It begins at conversion and continues throughout our Christian life. It is a life of continual brokenness before the Lord as He continues to reveal sins in our heart that we need to confess and forsake(Psalm 139:23).

Some may say, "The whole point of the preaching of Christ, according to Paul, is that we may present every man perfect in Christ"(Colossians 1:27-29).

Answer: We are to strive for perfect holiness in the fear of God(2Cor.7:1). Christians are admonished, "put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."(Eph.4:22-24). That act of putting off the old man and putting on the new man is both instantaneous and continual; instantaneous at conversion and continual throughout our Christian walk.

Biblical sanctification is a continual process of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. It is a continual purging that takes place in our hearts and lives as we continually yield to the Lord.

Some may point out Gal.5:16: "If you walk according to the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh".

Answer: Every time we follow the leading of the Spirit and resist temptation we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Yet as already stated, only Christ Jesus has ever done that perfectly throughout His entire earthly life.

Some may point out Phil.4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Answer: The context of that verse deals with being content in whatever financial circumstances we are in. Paul is saying

he can be content with either poverty or abundance through Christ who strengthens him. He is not saying he can be completely perfect throughout his entire earthly life.

Some prosperity preachers use that verse to teach their false gospel of health, wealth and material prosperity. My point is that we must be careful in how we use that verse of scripture. Even if it can apply to resisting temptation, which I believe it can, it does not prove that any Christian will ever perfectly resist temptation in this life. It only proves that sin can be resisted through the power of Christ as we look to Him for strength to overcome.

Some may point out 1Cor.10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Answer: Again, we can trust the Lord to strengthen us in resisting any temptation that may come our way. If we fall into temptation and sin it is our own fault. Yet again, God has seen and declared that we will still sin as Christians, and it is our own fault. We need to come to the Lord continually with a humble spirit, asking for continual mercy and grace to endure temptation.

Conclusion: brothers and sisters, be very careful with this dangerous deception of the enemy. Don't let this teaching catch you off guard and entrap you.

God's Word is clear that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ and His finished work on the cross, not by our perfect obedience to the demands of God's Law. It is impossible for us to meet those demands in this life.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

"Nothing of my own I bring,
only to the cross I cling."

Re: We All Stumble in Many Things, on: 2012/6/25 4:13

Quote:
-----Biblical sanctification is a continual process of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. It is a continual purging that takes place in our hearts and lives as we continually yield to the Lord.

Conclusion: brothers and sisters, be very careful with this dangerous deception of the enemy. Don't let this teaching catch you off guard and entrap you. It will make you self-righteous, blind you to your own sins before God. (Oracio)

Amen. Every heresy produces the same effect. It makes the individual who believes the lie stumble and it causes them to separate from us as well. The Holiness movement fell into this error. I met such a brother once and whilst the first few minutes of our conversation was a blessing, after a while I realised that something was between us. I could not understand it at the time. Something I had said to this brother suddenly stopped him from seeing me in the light of fellowship. Even his face changed towards me. All heresy has a consequence even when we ourselves don't want to separate ourselves from those who believe certain lies do in fact begin to see themselves as a kind of "elect" possessing a deeper knowledge and thereby setting them apart. In short pride. I suppose all heresy has the same outcome eventually.

Re: We All Stumble in Many Things - posted by Trekker, on: 2012/6/25 7:13

QUOTE: " It will deceive you into thinking you are perfect when in reality you are not."==ORACIO

I don't think that is so much the danger as is the tendency to fall into thinking that if we are not perfect then we must not be saved. That is far more common i think. Then we start beating ourselves up and getting frustrated because we can't be perfect like we are supposed to be and eventually give up in despair and just withdraw from God or His Word or prayer or whathaveyou.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/25 10:00

Amen amrkelly. I know exactly what you're talking about.

Trekker, thanks for pointing that out. I had put that part at the ending of the article but decided to do an edit and place it at the begining instead for clarification.

Re: We All Stumble(Sin) in Many Things - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/6/25 11:10

name one temptation that we are not able to bear or able to escape?

RE: Oracio wrote: /Romans 7 is in the present tense/

No, it is not, it is a first person narrative of a past tense event! It is a sinner bound under the Law!

It is possible to walk after the Spirit moment by moment and not fulfill the Lust of the Flesh! However it is not possible to reach a place where you are incapable of sin

Re: We All Stumble(Sin) in Many Things - posted by PRMatt, on: 2012/6/25 11:33

I believe there is confusion over this because we struggle in how we view sanctification. Is sanctification viewed as the movement of the Christian upon holiness OR is sanctification the movement of the Holy One upon the Christian? The differences between these are huge! Check out the thought on this here:

<http://www.pastormattrichard.com/2012/01/re-examining-idea-of-christian-progress.html>

Re: We All Stumble(Sin) in Many Things - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/6/25 11:43

Hi! Oracio

I'm in absolute agreement with your comment saying, "It is a clever deception that anyone can be completely sinless in this life".

I would like to add the below to your comments:

First we have to have define what we mean by perfection. Is it different from sanctification, and if so, to what extent? Perfection, I tend to think, is the result of the process called sanctification. The more sanctification progresses by Word and Spirit, the more we become perfect, (1Tim 3:16-17). Sanctification means obtaining holiness. Now the word holiness is related to 'whole' and 'healing'. Sanctification therefore would be the process of being separated for God from that which injures and damages in spirit, soul and body, from sin and evil, that is, and the restoration of the injuries already sustained, (1Peter 2:9).

Sanctification is the process of gradual conformation to the image of the Son, (Rom 8:29), or the gradual appropriation by faith of the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit.

When in Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, "You are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect", this is a promise as well as a command.

At the very start of our life as a spiritual being, when we are born again by Word and Spirit into the household of God, we receive from God the gift of holiness and perfection, (1Cor 30:31). When we receive the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we immediately begin to share in His perfection. For us, therefore, this perfection is a free gift of God, absolutely derived from

in our Saviour, yet regarded by God as absolutely belonging to us. Isn't this the case in all achievements of faith?

When a baby is born, its entire existence, humanly speaking, is derived from its parents. In the procreative act of its father and mother the baby found its beginning and origin. This fact, however, does not in the least detract from the baby's perfection in itself, as any mother will tell you. A baby is perfect, with a perfection solely derived from its parents. Yet from the very first moments of its life, the baby begins to work out this initial perfection and to make it its own. A baby is perfect in a derived sense, as a baby. For it to achieve the perfection of a boy or girl, or of a mature adult, a lot of things have to happen.

The spiritual perfection we receive from God when we are born again is like the perfection of a baby, and what a great and precious gift it is! Even though the new-born Christian hardly realizes it, God knows, however, that it will take a lot of education, teaching, instruction and discipline, a lot of bumps and falls and bruises even, before the baby can begin to attain to some of the perfection of a more mature age.

Now there is an important lesson here. Every natural parent knows that his or her baby will have to go through this process of education, etc. including the falls and bruises, and no wise parent would want to keep the baby from these rather painful experiences. They simply form part of human life! Children whose parents do 'protect' them from the bumps and bruises usually grow up unfit for adult life, or they have to go through the process at a much later and therefore more difficult stage.

God is such a wise parent in the spiritual world. He will protect the spiritual baby, but not to the extent of completely shielding it from the bruises. The standard here is the capacity of the child to cope with the hardship. There is great comfort in this, for when falls occur in a young Christian's life, he knows that his Father is there, keeping a watchful eye on things, and that he can run to Him for consolation any time he wants.

The value of this initial perfection cannot be over-estimated, and I mean this literally. It is the perfection of Christ in us, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and for that reason it is absolute and final. Believing this under all circumstances is one of the main things we have to learn when we are young in faith. Without listening to the evil one, even if he (seems to) speak the truth, we have to "consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus", (Rom 6:11).

All the things God has for us in Christ, whatever they may be, we have to appropriate by faith. This being the case, a young Christian does well to fully identify with Christ's perfection by faith. Once he has learned to maintain that position, many other things will become easy. Isn't perfection the highest we can hope to achieve? If by faith we claim the highest at the very beginning, the rest will be 'a piece of cake', as they say. Well, in a way it will! Remaining in this initial perfection of Christ can also be expressed by saying that we persevere in the Kingdom of God, for the Kingdom of God means righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, (Rom 14:17).

The initial holiness or perfection at rebirth and the process of perfection that follows afterwards are very clearly shown in Paul's letters. He calls the believers 'saints', irrespective of their spiritual attainments, but he also tells them to press on for perfection, (Phil 3:12-16). In 1 Corinthians 6:11 he says that the Christians 'were sanctified', yet in 2 Corinthians 7:1 he urges them to perfect their holiness. Paul knew both types or stages of perfection quite well.

The process of perfection is called a renewal of the mind, (Rom 12:2). It is called a renewal of the mind, because the mind hears and adopts the words of God, and the spirit grows accordingly. This growth is expressed in the increasing ability to think, speak and act as Jesus did, not just in a limited, natural sense, but also in a directly spiritual sense in the manifestations and gifts of the Spirit. This renewal of course takes place by Word and Spirit. The Word alone never leads to the desired result; it has to be accompanied by the life-giving Spirit. This means that for a Christian who seeks for perfection the baptism in the Holy Spirit is indispensable. That is why Galatians 5:22-26 expresses perfection in terms of 'fruits of the Spirit'.

In 1 Peter 4:1 the renewal of the mind, as expressed in the words 'arm yourselves with the same thought', is connected with suffering in the flesh. "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passion but by the will of God ". The same connection between victory over sin and physical suffering is made in Hebrews 2:4: "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood".

Perfection is an initial 'positional' free gift of God in Christ to us, but also a process that goes on for as long as we live. Although we sometimes have to judge ourselves and each other, the judgment of the degree of perfection we have reached

d is exclusively the Lord's. In other words, we do not fret about our own perfection or that of the brethren but just 'follow the Lamb' where He leads us by Word and Spirit.

It will not do for us to say that perfection is unattainable in this life, for the bible says otherwise. The Lord simply commands us to be perfect, and when He commands, He also gives the power to achieve. Moreover, if we have experienced perfect deliverance from one sin, there is no logical reason why we could or should not go all the way.

We must not leave this position or trade it in for the run of the mill Christian view that 'in this life we'll never be perfect'. This is just as unbiblical, or even more so, as telling myself and others that I am already perfect.

In Romans 8.19-23 we read this prophecy by Paul: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it; in hope, because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies".

Let me put this in other words: Before our Master's second coming, at a moment to be decided by God, the children of God who were born again by Word and Spirit, who individually and collectively have grown in the spirit and are conformed to the image of the Son of God, will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. This does not mean that they suddenly become perfect, but rather that, having reached inner perfection, they receive spiritual bodies in the likeness of their Lord's.

These sons of God, women and men such as you and I, are the 'precious fruit of the earth' for which the heavenly husbandman is patiently waiting. When they have thus been caught up into the 'air' of the heavenly places (a spiritual rapture), they will meet their Lord there, and under his guidance go on doing the work of perfection they already did while in the natural body. They will set free the entire creation from the reign of terror of Satan and his demons. This is what Revelation calls the Millennium, the reign of peace.

Now we can understand why 'imperfectionism' as well as 'perfectionism' are to be avoided at all cost. Imperfectionism makes it impossible for the Lord to fulfil the promise of sonship. For all things promised will only come about through our faith in Christ working through love. So even when the congregation 'without spot or wrinkle' might attain to the revelation of the sons of God, the individual imperfectionist will still miss out, simply because he just is not up to that level.

Fortunately, as is often the case with these rigorous doctrines, many sincere Christians who officially hold a position of 'imperfectionism' do lead lives of deep faith and holiness, and might be in a much better position in the Lord's eyes than they themselves dare contemplate. When I use the term 'imperfectionism' I should therefore make it clear that I mean those people who consciously or unconsciously use this doctrine as an excuse for their own lack of achievement of faith.

If on the other hand we say we are perfect already, creation has a right to demand that we begin the work of millennial deliverance here and now. Or in other words: If I say I am perfect I should not find it difficult to enter a room through a closed door, as Jesus did. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is the guarantee that we will reach sonship, for the moment the Spirit has reached his full extension in all of us we will be changed, just as the dead body of Jesus was changed into a glorified body by the Holy Spirit.

So before us there is the glorious hope of perfection to be reached in this life, on this earth, the result of a lifetime of pressing on for the prize in faith. No wonder that Paul said: "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Phil. 3.12).

Here I have to qualify what I said a moment ago about the Spirit reaching his full extension in us: this is a possibility of faith in the life of every individual believer, yet the moment of change will be set by the Lord in keeping with the perfection reached by the church as a whole. That is why "we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep". "The dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air". The clouds mean the church of God and the air is the heavenly places.

In view of the above I think we can say that the mistakes of the imperfectionists and the perfectionists are essentially the same. Both make the error of thinking they are, or will be, more perfect than actually is the case. The perfectionist says he is perfect, but fails to produce the signs of perfection. In a way the perfectionist's mistake is less gross than that of his counterpart, the imperfectionist. All the former does is to arrogate to himself the judgment which is the Lord's. If he is a s

ensible man he will also soon be corrected by reality, which all too often simply proves him wrong.

Unfortunately this does not apply to the average Christian imperfectionist. Reality is all on his side, for whoever keeps looking at himself instead of at the Lord will soon see a lot of blemishes. Combined with the pious humility that usually goes with this kind of Christianity, the imperfectionist has built for himself a cage to escape from which is not at all easy. Unless they repent and look upon the Lord in faith, most imperfectionists will therefore have a rude awakening when their true inner selves are revealed on the Day and they do not suddenly grow into oaks of righteousness.

To substantiate all this further, we now have to turn to 2 Corinthians 4:16 & 5:10. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-5:11 we read, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee".

Now there is something peculiar here. In verse 1 Paul says that IF, (not when, for he expected to be 'changed'), the natural body is destroyed in death, we have a solid building, a house from God, a spiritual body in heaven. No wonder he longs to put on that heavenly dwelling that he may not be found naked. For, and this is the seeming contradiction, while we still live our earthly life we are anxious, for we would like to be further clothed rather than unclothed.

Is Paul referring to, a period after death, but before the first resurrection, in which we will not have a body, either natural or spiritual? In verse 1 he clearly says that we HAVE this house or garment or body in heaven; it is there, ready for us the moment we need it. The question is not whether the spiritual body will be there when we die, but whether that body, that house or garment, will clothe us fully or leave us naked.

That is why we sigh and are anxious. We are running a race, and only those who run according to the rules will receive the crown of glory. Many texts in the epistles confirm this. Here in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul also lays a connection between the spiritual body, the judgment seat of Christ, the fear of the Lord, and the atoning death of Jesus, (verses 6-15).

So the picture we have is this: there is a spiritual body ready for us in heaven. Before Christ's judgment seat it will be found out whether the body is a fully grown, mature body, a medium-sized, adolescent body or a weak, dwarflike baby's body. There will be 'the small and the great', and the stature of each will depend, not on a sudden equalizing spurt of perfection, but on what they did while they were in the natural body. To put it in the words of Revelation 19:8: "The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints", and whether that fine linen will cover one's nakedness will depend on the degree of sanctification or perfection he reached in his life of faith on earth.

Now this is a solemn matter, especially for the 'imperfectionists' we were talking about. If they keep insisting they'll never be perfect in their life, if the words of Jesus: "Go; be it done for you as you believed" are applied to them, they may never have another chance to reach the perfection Jesus commanded us to have. They will be found unclothed, naked, a shame for themselves, for their brethren, for the holy angels, and for their Master who bought them with his own blood.

So, let me finish by saying by paraphrasing at length several well-known words from the writings of Paul: Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade all who believe in 'imperfectionism'. The love of Christ constrains us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, the small and the great, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. He who prepared us on this basis for this very thing of perfect spiritual maturity is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Thus we are always of good courage, for we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Having said all this about perfection, and having quoted Paul, these last words: 'for we walk by faith, not by sight', finally indicate that there is a real, tangible difference between the perfection of faith here on earth and the glorious perfection of heaven, where we shall see Him 'who bought us'. This is a difference of quality rather than of size or quantity.

Then this perishable nature will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature will have put on immortality. When the perishable has put on the imperishable, and the mortal has put on immortality, then shall have come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

As for me, I have not yet obtained that final resurrection from the dead, I am not yet perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

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We All Stumble(Sin) in Many Things
by Oracio on 2012/6/25 0:30:03

Over the years I have had to deal with a doctrine which is very dangerous among Christians. It is the clever deception that anyone can be completely sinless in this life; the belief that a Christian can go on a whole day, even days, months or years on end without sinning.

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Re: Blayne - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/6/25 12:11

Hi Blayne, another long but rich and excellent post!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/26 10:10

brethren, does anyone know the rules regarding changing the title of a thread? I would really like to change the title of this one.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/26 11:12

Please nevermind my last post brothers and sisters. I looked up the forum guidelines and learned it is discouraged to do changes in posts except for spelling corrections.

Re: - posted by ArtB (), on: 2012/6/26 11:54

A very good posting Oracio, and many more good posts in following. It was a pleasure to read them. Thanks!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/26 14:38

ArtB, thanks for the comment.

Blayne, thanks for sharing that post. I found it to be very interesting. Overall I do not have many problems with it. But here are a few concerns:

You wrote, "I'm in absolute agreement with your comment saying, "It is a clever deception that anyone can be completely sinless in this life".

But then you also wrote, "It will not do for us to say that perfection is unattainable in this life, for the bible says otherwise. The Lord simply commands us to be perfect, and when He commands, He also gives the power to achieve. Moreover, if we have experienced perfect deliverance from one sin, there is no logical reason why we could or should not go all the way."

Maybe there is a play on semantics here. By "perfection" do you mean "sinlessness" or something else? Because that is what I have been meaning all along.

You wrote, "We must not leave this position or trade it in for the run of the mill Christian view that 'in this life we'll never be perfect'. This is just as unbiblical, or even more so, as telling myself and others that I am already perfect."

So which is it Blayne? Is it possible for a Christian to be perfectly sinless in this life or not?

Another concern with your article and others like it is that it can give Christians the impression that sin is not really an issue to deal with rigorously in their life. Such articles on sanctification seem to leave out the daily battle with sin every Christian experiences. But the Bible is full of exhortations to Christians to be watchful regarding all sorts of sins of the body and mind.

Re: - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/6/26 15:27

Hi! Oracio

I can only blame the contradictions which you correctly noticed on my OLD-Zymers.
I'm also tempted to throw in the pun of "no one is perfect!" . :)

Anyways, what I was hoping to explain was that it would perhaps be better if we were to use the term "spiritual maturity" instead of "perfection". At least maybe the idea would become less offensive to people.

Just minutes ago I posted some comments to a Thread which might better explain what I've been thinking with regards to "perfection". https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=30222&forum=36&45

Oracio, the very last thing I would want to be doing is to (as you say) "give Christians the impression that sin is not really an issue to deal with ... ", and/or, "Leave out the daily battle with sin".

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by Oracio on 2012/6/26 11:38:51

ArtB, thanks for the comment.

Blayne, thanks for sharing that post. I found it to be very interesting. Overall I do not have many problems with it. But here are a few concerns:

You wrote, "I'm in absolute agreement with your comment saying, "It is a clever deception that anyone can be completely sinless in this life".

But then you also wrote, "It will not do for us to say that perfection is unattainable in this life, for the bible says otherwise. The Lord simply commands us to be perfect, and when He commands, He also gives the power to achieve. Moreover, if we have experienced perfect deliverance from one sin, there is no logical reason why we could or should not go all the way."

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So which is it Blayne? Is it possible for a Christian to be perfectly sinless in this life or not?

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=====

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/27 9:13

Blayne, I appreciate your humility. I agree that the term "spiritual maturity" would be much less offensive to many than "perfection". By perfection many mean sinless perfection and that to me is a dangerous heresy. I believe I have good grounds for considering that teaching a serious heresy over which there can be no genuine Christian fellowship. I have seen first hand(not just online) how destructive it is and how it can ruin a fellowship.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2012/6/27 9:52

Quote:

Blayne, I appreciate your humility. I agree that the term "spiritual maturity" would be much less offensive to many than "perfection". By perfection many mean sinless perfection and that to me is a dangerous heresy. I believe I have good grounds for considering that teaching a serious heresy over which there can be no genuine Christian fellowship. I have seen first hand(not just online) how destructive it is and how it can ruin a fellowship.

I am not posting this to argue with you but to know your view on these scriptural truths.
I agree that you might have seen many destructive things in people who believe in sinless perfection. But that does not make God's promise heresy. For example there are many who commit crimes and live a shameless life but believe in Eternal security. So does this mean eternal security is wrong? No not at all. Irrespective of what these men believe, God's promise is always true. My soul is eternally secured in Jesus as long as I abide in him and follow him.

Now regarding Sinless perfection, was Jesus sinless prefect? I believe you will say YES for this, then is the bible not asking us to walk in the ways of Jesus and live like how we lived? This is the point of 1 John 2, that we Christians should live like Jesus, if we say we believe in him.

What helped Jesus to live a sinless perfect life? Holy Spirit who lived in him. This is the same Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us Christians, if Jesus was able to live that life, why should I believe I cannot live this life, when I am equipped with same Holy Spirit? If I believe it is impossible then I am a liar and an unbeliever in God's power.

To be fully Christlike is a journey that will not be accomplished in one day or two. But it has to be taken by all with a hope that we will reach the destination. If we do not have this hope then our life will be stand still and we will never progress. This is what happened to many Christians today.

I hope these truths will encourage you rather than bringing you down.

Re: Being Perfect - posted by ArtB (), on: 2012/6/27 11:12

Greetings Blayne

You wrote: "When in Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, "You are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect", this is a promise as well as a command."

Context, context, context.

Was Jesus speaking to Christians when He said that?

Answer: NO

Was Jesus teaching the New Covenant (i.e. New Contract)?

Answer: No. Jesus and His fellow Jews were under Mosaic Covenant (Covenant = Contract). There was no new Covenant when Jesus spoke these words. The two are mutually exclusive, though both are from God, and, both can not exist at the same time.

Now Blayne, what follows is not about your post. But to everyone who is a Christian, to avoid confusing the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant. The two are mutually exclusive. And Jesus never taught the New Covenant prior to His death on the cross and resurrection. To do so would be a sin, and that would have disqualify Jesus from being our

unblemished Lamb, who died on the cross in our place, that we may be saved by the covering of the blood of Jesus, our paschal Lamb.

Upon His resurrection, Jesus did a lot of Teaching of the New Covenant to His disciples, and He instructed them to carry out the 'Good News' of the New Covenant throughout the world. The Mosaic Covenant had been annihilated by God the father upon Jesus death. Zec 11: 7-13.

I have seen too many Christian preachers and commentators mix The Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. They are not compatible. they have a different set of Laws.

By the Mosaic Covenant, you are saved by keeping all of the 613 commandments. of course, some apply just to men, some to women, to the priesthood, some to the Land, others to the Temple, to strangers, to what to wear, etc.. About 340 apply to all Jews.

As Paul wrote in Hebrews:

Hebrews 7:11 "Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."

13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is attested of Him,

“ You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, for the Law made nothing perfect, and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. 20 And inasmuch as it was not without an oath."

The Mosaic Covenant with all its 613 laws has been annihilated. To everyone, do any of you know what Laws we are told to keep under our Christian Contract with God via the New Covenant?

Re: - posted by ArtB (), on: 2012/6/27 11:19

by Oracio on 2012/6/27 6:13:35

"Blayne I appreciate your humility. I agree that the term "spiritual maturity" would be much less offensive to many than "perfection". By perfection many mean sinless perfection and that to me is a dangerous heresy. I believe I have good grounds for considering that teaching a serious heresy over which there can be no genuine Christian fellowship. I have seen first hand (not just online) how destructive it is and how it can ruin a fellowship."

Nice post Oracio. God calls us just as we are.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/27 12:36

Quote:
-----Now regarding Sinless perfection, was Jesus sinless perfect? I believe you will say YES for this, then is the bible not asking us to walk in the ways of Jesus and live like how we lived? This is the point of 1 John 2, that we Christians should live like Jesus, if we say we believe in him. What helped Jesus to live a sinless perfect life? Holy Spirit who lived in him. This is the same Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us Christians, if Jesus was able to live that life, why should I believe I cannot live this life, when I am equipped with same Holy Spirit? If I believe it is impossible then I am a liar and an unbeliever in God's power.
To be fully Christlike is a journey that will not be accomplished in one day or two. But it has to be taken by all with a hope that we will reach the destination. If we do not have this hope then our life will be stand still and we will never progress. This is what happened to many Christians today.(Sree)

Sree, did you read the opening post? If so, maybe you forgot what I wrote regarding our Lord's sinless life on this earth. If you did not read the OP, I would really encourage you to check it out.

Jesus is our highest standard and example to follow. His image is the goal for us to press on to reach. We are not saying that we shouldn't strive to be Christlike through the power of the Holy Spirit. We will grow more and more into His likeness. That is crystal clear in Scripture.

What we are saying is that we will not reach perfect Christlikeness until we reach glory and receive our new bodies. This mindset does not cause us to be at a standstill but helps us humbly acknowledge our weaknesses in this body, it helps be realistic with God, His Word, ourselves and others. That is what God requires of us, that we be not deceived or deceive others with false notions or teachings.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2012/6/27 13:53

Quote:

What we are saying is that we will not reach perfect Christlikeness until we reach glory and receive our new bodies.

I believe Jesus lived a sinless life in likeness of my flesh and he was tempted in all ways like me. Now that I am born again through the Holy Spirit, I can live the same life now on this earth. Though our belief is different here the problem is not here. I think we both are perfectly fine with our understandings. This I am saying according to the light given to me as of now.

I see the problem in the below quote of you only.

Quote:

This mindset does not cause us to be at a standstill but helps us humbly acknowledge our weaknesses in this body, it helps be realistic with God, His Word, ourselves and others. That is what God requires of us, that we be not deceived or deceive others with false notions or teachings.

I am happy that you believe in acknowledging our weakness and also in following Christ. There are many who do not believe in it. Though what you are saying is truth, it is not complete according to Gospel.

You are missing the vital step that we need after acknowledging our weakness. Things don't just stop here. All the stumble and fall that we have in our Christian life is because we trusted in our strength rather than his strength. Hence we are convicted of our fall, we need to repent and acknowledge our lack of Strength. I am sure you are fine till here.

But the next thing is to ask his Strength and continue fighting the battle with his strength to be an overcomer. You missed this vital point totally. This is what Paul preached when he said, 'when I am weak, I am strong' and 'God's strength is perfected in my weakness'. Paul did not preach that we are all weak and we will continue falling but he preached that when we are weak we will be strengthened by God. This is hope and this is complete Gospel, that is by Strength of God I can live without stumbling.

Paul was able to live this life and that is why he was able to say to Corinthians that his conscience is absolutely clear before God. He still did not judge himself righteous, because it is not our conscience that judges us but God. If Paul was stumbling like us then how can he say that his Conscience was absolutely clear before God? So if Paul is able to live like that why not you and I?

Also if Paul was stumbling all the time on his walk with Christ then how can he ask other believers to Follow His as He follows Christ?

1 Corinthians 4-For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

Re: - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/6/27 15:02

Hi! Sree

THANK YOU for sharing these thoughts with us.

To be honest, there are occasions when I'm tempted with the idea that it's a total waste to participate in this Forum. It often is difficult to get myself past the confusion and pious ranting of some.

But it's comments like yours here that I find so very encouraging for my own Christian journey.

Yesterday, I met a Christian man who also shares the similar thoughts as your own. I was so very much gratified and encouraged. The Lord Jesus continues to speak to His faithful in this very day and hour. Mighty things are being done in the hearts and minds of God's people.

Thank you again for your insight and also for your courage to speak about things that so many are all too eager to dismiss and piously reject.

Re:

by Sree on 2012/6/27 10:53:53

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1 Corinthians 4-For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

Re: - posted by murrclor (), on: 2012/6/27 15:23

Why are we settling for an Mediocre Christian life.

Yes there is a danger of falling into the deception of 'sinless perfection'

But that is no excuse to remain a Mediocre Christian. Mediocre is a word that we use a lot without knowing what it means and mediocre means 'half way up between the valley and the peak. It doesn't mean half-way between earth and Heaven, it means half way between where we used to be and where we ought to be.

Now that's where I would describe the average Christian.

What is the best Christ offers to us? Is the best that Christ offers the Romans 7 life?

Quote: Romans 7:18-25 is speaking of the war that is going on inside all of us as Christians. Galatians 5:17 says it this way, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

The quote above perfectly describes the Mediocre Christian life..

Quote: The difference between the unsaved and us is that we have the Spirit of God indwelling us and are led by the Spirit much more than being led by the flesh.

Mediocre half way up between the valley and the peak

MY BIBLE SAYS "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" Gal 5:24.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/27 15:44

"2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."-1John3:2-3

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/27 16:08

Quote:

-----Why are we settling for an Mediocre Christian life.

Yes there is a danger of falling into the deception of "sinless perfection"

But that is no excuse to remain a Mediocre Christian. Mediocre is a word that we use a lot without knowing what it means and mediocre means "half way up between the valley and the peak. It doesn't mean half-way between earth and Heaven, it means half way between where we used to be and where we ought to be.

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Mediocre half way up between the valley and the peak

MY BIBLE SAYS "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" Gal 5:24.(murrcoir)

It is posts like the above that make things really confusing for me. On the one hand you write, "Yes there is a danger of falling into the deception of "sinless perfection". And then you go and try to discredit my contention against that doctrine.

If you want to call believing the whole counsel of God's Word "Mediocre Christianity" that's up to you. I hope to be balanced and true to the Bible. They say many heresies spring from extremes. Sinless perfectionism is an extreme view of holiness. On the other hand easy believism is an extreme view of grace. I hope we can come to a proper view concerning sanctification in the life of true believers.

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2012/6/27 17:37

Quote: It is posts like the above that make things really confusing for me. On the one hand you write, "Yes there is a danger of falling into the deception of 'sinless perfection'". And then you go and try to discredit my contention against that doctrine.

I agree with you that Sinless perfectionism is an extreme view of holiness I do not discredit your contention against it, however I do disagree with what your holding up as example of the Christian life. For example Romans 7:18-25 or Galatians 5:17.

I am calling what you hold up to be the normal Christian life as mediocre Christianity because to me it is half way between where we used to be and where we ought to be.

There is more for the Christian than that and it's right there in black and white in your Bible.

Heb 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

Heb 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God

1Cor 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Where is this better way, the answer is, Read the 13th chapter of First Corinthians.

Gal 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2012/6/27 18:21

Since the main concern which I meant to address in this thread was the heresy of sinless perfectionism, I did not see fit to address the victorious Spirit-filled Christian life. That is another topic in my estimation.

I briefly touched on the freedom and victory over sin we all have in Christ just so no one may get the impression I am promoting easy believism or cheap grace.

My main point in this thread is that even the most Spirit-filled Christian will still stumble(sin) in their walk daily, whether in thought, word, or deed, sins of omission or commission. To deny that reality in one's life is to be seriously deceived.