

Growing through Imperfections

Philippians 3:12-14

Intro:

A. **In one of our recent lessons** we were reading together from Philippians chapter 3. In that particular context, Paul is speaking to his brethren about all that he has gained in Christ, and how he has let go of the past in order to press on for future goals: He speaks about this in verses **12-14**

i. Lets look for a moment at this word perfect as mentioned in v 12 for just a moment:

a. **Often the Bible** speaks of it in **relative terms, or in degrees** of perfection

b. *Acts 18:26*: Aquilla and Priscilla explained to Apollos more perfectly

c. *Acts 24:22*: Felix had a more perfect knowledge of Christianity (KJV)

d. **Sometimes** “Perfect” is limited to a particular context

i) In **Matthew 19:21** Jesus told the rich man to sell all he had to be perfect or complete

ii. **In these examples** as well as in many others, a common way in which perfection is defined is as when something is mature or complete; or the sense that something has been made whole;

a. Paul will use it in that sense in v 15 urging all who are complete or perfect to have unity in the same attitude;

iii. **In verses 12 however**, it is being used in a somewhat different sense; This verses calls back to Paul’s reference in the previous verses about the resurrection from the dead; and that there is a perfection that can only be attained when having finished our time here on this Earth; we will go on to be with the Lord;

a. We can strive to be complete and mature in our faith; and Paul certainly expected that the early Christians he wrote to:

i) *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.- Colossians 1:28*

ii) ... all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:13

- iv. And so while we work to be complete, and strive after that maturity-- we must also acknowledge that until we attain that perfection possible only at the resurrection; we will still make **mistakes**; we will still have our **flaws**; we will still have our **imperfections**.
- v. **And so** I am impressed by Paul's admission in verse 12-- brethren-- I have not already become perfect-- I'm still pressing on;
- a. I'm impressed because it is an admission that is difficult to make; Not many people today are willing to admit it--**at least with any real degree of sincerity**--
 - b. Sometimes it is almost as though some are afraid to admit it! That they will somehow be thought less of; or perhaps it will make them weak to admit it;
 - c. But admitting that I have a long way to go shouldn't be a cause for despair;
 - d. in fact, there is much to be gained in spiritual strength and maturity from coming to terms with this simple fact
 - e. If I can have enough humility to come to grips with my imperfections, there are some powerful changes that God can work in my life and in the lives of others.

The first change that should result is we should now have a tremendous amount of...

I. Humility Before God

A. *The more we accept imperfections, the more humble* we become before God.

1. (**ref. the garden**) When we realize that we were brought into this world perfect in all senses of the word, by a perfect Creator, and that this *perfect picture* wasn't messed up until we decided to mess it up with our *imperfections*... We should begin to truly gain a sense of how unworthy we are to be blessed as we are, and *that* is truly humbling.

2. One way that we will exhibit that humility is that we will always give credit where it is due; In everything that God accomplishes among His people, **our first inclination will be to give God the glory 1 Cor. 1:29-31; 4:7).**
 - a. If we harbor feelings that we are perfect, there might be true temptation to boast in ourselves.
 - b. There would *definitely* be a struggle not to boast in ourselves over our brothers and sisters.
 - i. But truly accepting our imperfections should completely remove that danger!
3. We are saved by and stand in the power of God, not own perfection

This increase in humility not only allows us to properly see where we are in God's scheme, but it will also make it easier to submit to God's will and not our own: after all, He is perfect, and we are NOT!

**B. *The more we accept imperfections, the more submissive* we become to God's will
(James. 4:6,7)**

- a. Notice how important humility is before God:
 - It is tied to receiving grace
 - It is the opposite of pride, which God will resist
 - It is tied to submitting to God's will
 - All of this culminates in drawing nearer to God, which enables us to resist the devil
- b. It is easy to see from this, that humility and submissiveness plays both a part in salvation, and in keeping us saved!

**C. *The more we accept imperfections, the more successful* we become in correcting others.
Gal. 6:1-3**

- a. We've already spoken about the dangers "perfection" would pose to us in boasting over our brethren,

- b. But in addition to that, when we accept our imperfections, we become that much more relatable to others when confronting them about changes they need to make in their own lives.

The Second change that should result from accepting our imperfections is an increased...

II. Trust in God

A. We must trust in God for completeness, not ourselves (Col. 2:9, 10).

A. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

- It is much more comforting to me to know that at divine being with complete rule and authority is seeing to my perfection and not me

B. Trust in God is what will make me able to stand in “that day” 2 Tim. 1:8-12

A. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

C. We must trust in God for help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

- The point we are making is not a reminder that we need to trust in God, but a statement that when we realize we cannot place trust in ourselves, it is easier and comes more naturally to put our trust in the proper place

A third change in our lives should be

III. **A Desire to Improve our Lives**

(You won't know what and how to be a better Christian, until you realize you need to *be a better Christian...* If we didn't have any imperfections, than why work to get better?)

- A. Recognition of imperfections should spur a greater effort toward perfection
- B. God will not condemn us for not achieving absolute sinless perfection in this life
- C. However, He *will hold it against* us if we fail to try and live like his Son (**Heb. 6:1-6**)
- D. Recognition of imperfections makes the command to grow ever-relevant (2 Pet. 3:18).

And finally it should produce a....

IV. **Determination to Overcome**

- A. "Nobody is perfect" is no license for permissiveness (Rom. 6:1, 16; 1 John 2:1)
- B. "Nobody is perfect" is not reason to drop our guard against sin.
 - 1. Paul recognized this (1 Cor. 9:27).
 - 2. We either struggle to overcome, our sin will overcome us. (Heb. 3:13)
- C. Coming to terms with imperfections can be a very powerful motivator for growth. We might not be perfect people, but we serve a God who Is. and that should be very humbling. That humility can push us to serve Him even better than before, and stir us up to try to be more and more like Him