

Being Perfected by God

Fred R. Coulter—June 4, 2016

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Sabbath services!

As human beings, we need repetition. The reason is that's how we learn. As I mentioned here some time not too long ago, the very alphabet we learned in kindergarten is the same alphabet we use today—repeatedly. We still learn more. Because we're physical and we need the repetition, God gave us the Sabbath Day. If we keep in mind what the Sabbath Day is for, it's really not a burden.

Leviticus 23:1: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, "Concerning the appointed Feasts of the LORD..." That could also be *appointed times*. God has made the appointment. God has made the time. This is for us so that we can learn of Him.

"...which you shall proclaim *to be* Holy convocations... [we gather together] ...even these are My appointed Feasts. Six days shall work be done..." (vs 2-3). That seven-day week is God-ordained; everything fits into that: all history relating to the earth and so forth, human beings, the way God calculates time, etc. It all fits into the seven days.

"...but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of rest..." (v 3).

I had a person come up with a brilliant idea concerning the Sabbath. He says, 'Reading the Old Testament—I guess he got as far as Ex. 16 where they were to stay in their tents on the Sabbath—he says, 'You read they're not to do any work, not go anyplace, so, here's how we solve the problem: we all stay home and rest on the Sabbath and go to church on Sunday.' How's that for tricky thinking?

"...You shall not do any work. It *is* a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings" (v 3). We know today we are to gather together and that's why there were synagogues back there at that time, etc.

Let's see what happens to human beings, because of being cutoff from God and not obeying Him. Every time I read or study Jeremiah I feel sorry for Jeremiah. If you think you have a burden to bear, read his burden. He was alone and everybody was against him. After seeing all that they did, all the customs of the people, all the way that the people did, he says:

Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; *it is* not in man who walks to direct his steps."

Yesterday I was channel surfing and this verse came to mind. Everything I turned to on all the channels was the same. Nobody knows what they're doing, and yet, the strange fact is everyone thinks they are right. Isn't that an amazing thing?

How is God going to take us in that condition and make us His children and make us spirit beings? That's really a tremendous mystery of God. That's why we need the Sabbath every week.

Verse 24: "O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. Pour out Your fury on the nations..." (vs 24-25).

All the laws of God function all the time for all people everywhere in the world, just like the law of gravity, etc.

Remember the covenant that God gave to Israel—which was to give them physical blessings, live in the land, etc.—for obeying in the letter of the Law. Look at what it is today with all the lawlessness. We're living in a time when Jesus said lawlessness would be multiplied. Look at it! Nobody knows how to live; nobody knows what to do! Especially when we have a whole generation of 'mush-heads' that were never taught anything in school. Everyone in the world needs the laws of God, even if they're not in covenant with God as the children of Israel were.

Jeremiah 11:3: "...Thus says the LORD God of Israel, '**Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant.**'"

The curses work automatically. If you sin, things are going to happen. Let's understand something between the Old Covenant and New Covenant: All the laws of God, Old Covenant and New Covenant. Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God man shall live.' You have all of the civil laws of executing penalties against those who sin, as you find in the Old Testament.

Since the Church is a spiritual organism, it cannot carry out the administration of death. God gave that to the nations to do. The laws of the administration of death are still in effect and He's given it to all the civil governments of the world. That's why I mention, *you can't have two sovereigns within one geographical territory*. You can't have the set of laws of the United States, and then within it have a separate sovereign under Sharia Law and run things differently. But that's the way of man.

So those laws, when people say they're done away, no they're not done away. They have been transferred, and God did the transferring. He started with Noah and said, 'I one who kills a man will be killed by man' (Gen. 9). That's the administration of death given to the sovereign nations. Then when they were spread around the world, they took various laws that were originally some of God's laws, had their own and had their own governments. That's the world has been minus God's intervention with Israel and the Church.

"...Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant." Think of that *spiritually* (note Heb. 10). If you think someone who is accused of something died under the hand of two or three witnesses, think of how much sore punishment will be the one who troddens underfoot the Son of God. Same thing! That's why there is unity of Scripture, a little different application.

You can go there and you read all the priest laws. What about the priest laws? *Those have been superseded by the priesthood of Christ!* So, there are still priestly laws.

Verse 4: "Which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice and do according to all that I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God.'" Then He says He would fulfill the oath and bless them with everything.

Let's see the same principle apply in Luke 6:46: "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but *you* do not practice what I say?" That's just a little different than '*obey My voice,*' but it's saying the same thing.

Verse 47: "Everyone who comes to Me..." That's what we have to do. We have to come to God and that's why we have the Sabbath Day.

"...and hears My words and practices them, I will show you what he is like; He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid *the* foundation on the rock; and a flood came, and the torrent beat against that house, but could not shake it, because it was founded on the rock" (vs 47-48).

If you've been watching the news lately with all the floods in Texas, isn't that true? *Yes!* There are some houses that stand, others don't.

Verse 49: "But the one who has heard *My words* and has not practiced *them* is like a man who built a house on *top of* the ground, without a foundation; and *when* the torrent beat against it, it fell at once, and the ruin of that house was great."

Literally you see it on television with what is happening. Figuratively you see it concerning

people's lives for the same reason. They don't obey God. How is God going to take human nature from this condition, so that we become spirit beings? That's the whole purpose of the Holy Days. Let's see what Jesus said. Matt. 5:48 is an excellent example of where God tells us what the goal is.

- What is the purpose of human life?
- What is the goal of what we are doing?
- How is it that we are accomplishing it?

That fits in with the Sabbath and the Holy Days and all the laws of God.

Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect..." That means *shall become* perfect. We have to come all the way from being sinful: evil thoughts, murders, adulterers, everything like Jesus said that comes from within, *to being perfect*. That's a real task and that's a real mystery.

Here's the standard, "...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect" (v 48).

That's quite a thing. As we come to Pentecost, let's see how God works His perfection. Let's see what He requires. In Gen. 17 God told Abraham that he was to become perfect before Him. Some people might say that's blameless, but that actually means perfect.

Let's see how God is going to do that. What does it start with, with us? *It starts with Christ!* I want you to think about this when we read it, as it applies to Christ and as it applies to us. God's plan is so important that God became a human being. That's why He made us in Him image in the first place to do this.

Speaking of Christ, Who is now our High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, Hebrews 5:7: "Who, in the days of His flesh..." He took upon Himself human nature, 'law of sin and death,' lived a life just like any other human being, except that He had God's Spirit from conception.

"...offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He feared God*" (v 7). He:

- lived by every word of God
- had direct connection with God
- had the Spirit of God

but in the flesh!

Verse 8: "Although He was a Son, *yet*, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered."

Hebrews 4:14: "Having, therefore, a great High Priest, *Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession *of our faith*. For we do not have a High Priest Who

cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to *the likeness of our own temptations...*” (vs 14-15). He was tempted by Satan the devil. He was tempted by the pull of the flesh.

“...yet, **He was without sin**” (v 15). That’s quite a thing to understand!

God is not requiring from us something that is not attainable. It is attainable, but it has to be through God, **His** way. There’s one quirk in human nature: men and women want to tell God what *they think* that’s better than what God has said that He thinks. Just like the man said: Let’s all stay at home and rest up on the Sabbath Day and go to church on Sunday. Very good example: to some people that sound like an intelligent thing.

Hebrews 5:8: “...He learned obedience from the things that He suffered.” Everything. If you think you suffer, think what Jesus suffered.

Verse 9: “And having been perfected...” That’s quite a statement. How was He perfected? Let’s see what Jesus had to do.

Revelation 3:21: “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame...”

- He had to overcome Satan the devil
- He had to overcome human nature
- He had to overcome all of things that people did to Him
- He had to overcome and endure through the crucifixion

“...even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne” (v 21). The suffering must have been far more intense, because the consequences were a great deal higher than what we go through.

Let’s see how we are perfected. Christ was perfected, now He’s going to perfect us. He knows everything that we go through. He understands everything that we are.

Here’s why the Word of God is so important for us. Especially today when we have the whole Word of God. Think of all the human beings who have lived and died that didn’t have the Word of God available to them. Then think how great God’s love is that He’s going to resurrect them and give them the second physical life so they can understand.

Speaking of the Sabbath, Hebrews 4:11: “We should be diligent, therefore, to enter into that rest... [every seventh day, Sabbath-keeping for the people of God] ...lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.”

- How long do you think you would be keeping the other commandments of God if you forsook the Sabbath Day? *Look at the Protestants and Catholics!*
- How much do they know of the Word of God? *Very little!*
- How much do they understand of the plan of God? *Nothing!*

That’s why we have to be ‘diligent to enter into this rest.’

Verse 12: “For the Word of God *is* living and powerful... [always active, always working] ...and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart.”

That’s pretty powerful. God does it because His laws are spiritual and He understands how we function.

Verse 13: “And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but all things *are* naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.”

Let’s understand that God wants our full participation. That’s why He wants us to love Him, to obey Him, to keep His commandments. We have two parables—

1. parable of the pounds
2. parable of the talents

—where we are to be actively participating in changing, growing and overcoming through the Word of God. This gives us some good insight here. Psa. 101 is a perfect example of how God perfects us:

Psalm 101:1: “I will sing of mercy and justice... [we have forgiveness, mercy and justice. That’s how He perfects us.] ...I will behave myself wisely in a blameless way. O when will You come unto me?... [we go to God every day in prayer] ...**I will walk within my house with a perfect heart**” (vs 1-2).

Think about what we started with, ‘The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things.’ A perfect heart comes:

- from God’s Spirit
- from God’s way
- through God’s mercy
- through God’s love

Verse 3: “I will set no wicked thing before my eyes. I have hated the work of those who turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know no evil thing” (vs 3-4).

Look at how he set his mind, because all of those things are available to all people, especially today everywhere. ***‘I will walk with a perfect heart.’***

Let’s look at another Psalm that’s very important with that. We can see how a lot of these tie in with the New Testament. I think we’re all going to be surprised at the resurrection. I guess the older we get, the more we look to that.

In the Church of God—the greater Church of God as a whole—we’re coming to what you would say is a demographic cliff. That is, there will be experienced more and more people passing, dying, and *God will be perfecting them for the resurrection.*

Like one man told me, he said when he first came into the Church he was attending weddings; now he’s attending funerals. I told him to think on this: God has perfected that individual if that man or woman has been faithful.

Psalm 138:8: “The LORD will perfect His work in me...” How is God going to do that? *That’s through conversion, within our hearts and minds.* It’s the secret work of God that only the individual and God knows. No one can read anybody else’s mind.

“...Your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever... [so it’s through the love of God for us and our love back to God] ...do not forsake the work of Your own hands” (v 8).

Now let’s put this together with the New Testament. Eph. 2 is a perfect description of how God does this. It is a spiritual work through God’s Spirit in bringing us to understanding of His Word.

Ephesians 2:1: “Now, you were dead in trespasses and sins.” Someone made quite an accurate statement: ***without the love of God you only exist!*** That was quite a statement.

Notice how it’s expressed: “Now you were dead in trespasses and sins.” The walking dead. As Jesus told the young man who wanted to bury his father instead of following Him, Jesus said, ‘Let the dead bury their dead.’

Verse 2: “In which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience.” We can see it actively every day on television.

Verse 3: “Among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were by nature *the children of wrath, even as the rest of the world.*”

Then God decided to do something in our lives, whatever it was. Whatever the first thought on our part for God to begin working with us, here’s what He did:

Verse 4: “But God, Who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For you have been saved by grace.*)” (vs 4-5).

We’ve got three sermon series on grace to cover that:

- *God’s Grace and Commandment-Keeping*
- *Grace of God*
- *Grace Upon Grace*

We have to be saved from:

- self
- sin
- Satan the devil

This is all included there. Then he gives a prophecy from that condition to this condition:

Verse 6: “And He has raised *us* up together and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.... [we’re not there, yet, *but we will be*] ...so that in the ages that *are* coming He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (vs 6-7).

That’s going to be something! I’ll have to repeat it again: I can’t help but think after doing the book *From a Speck of Dust to a Son of God: Why Were You Born?* here a baby comes into the world, knows absolutely nothing and when we enter into the Kingdom of God, we’re going to know very little really what it’s going to be like as a spirit being.

So, Paul describes it as “...the exceeding riches...” of His grace.

Verse 8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves... [it must be from God] ...*it is* the gift of God, not of works... [your own works] ...so that no one may boast” (vs 8-9). Remember where we read: ‘God will complete His work in us.’

Verse 10: “For we are His workmanship, being created in Christ Jesus...” God is working with us with His Spirit. That is to perfect us, to take us:

- from sin to *perfection*
- from transgression to *Holiness*
- from evil to *righteousness*

That’s quite a thing, a full-time job. How does God do that? *He works with us with our full participation!* We know that He puts His laws and commandments

in our hearts and minds and inward parts (Heb. 10). What does this do to our thinking?

- it *changes our thinking*
- it *converts the mind*
- it *changes our behavior*

“...unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them” (v 10). Before we were converted, what did we do in the way of keeping the commandments of God? We may have been good people, we may have been nice neighbors, but what were our minds like? *Carnal and evil!*

Here is the work that God the Father is doing! Think about that for just a minute. God says He will complete the work that He started in us. How?

Romans 12:1: “I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy *and* well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but **be transformed...** [conversion; conversion is a process that leads to perfection] **...by the renewing of your mind...**” (vs 1-2).

Isn't this interesting how this ties in with the Sabbath, the Word of God, the commandments of God? If we quit our part and we don't let God finish His part, *we're incomplete*. We have to be complete in Christ.

If you are thinking this way, “...in order that you may prove what *is* well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God” (v 2). If your mind is on the things of God, and Truth and righteousness... On your job, even there, you can even improve in what you're doing by becoming better in what you're doing, because God is perfect.

Jonathan does plans for buildings. He knows that the main things have to be perfect. If it isn't perfect—that's why they have inspectors, they come along and inspect it—it's not going to hold up. He has to draw it, visualizing in mind how it's going to be.

That's the same way that God works with us. How are we going to be as He works with us—we are His workmanship—and what is it that we do? Consider this, everything that we do in living is part of God working with us to help us:

- think
- choose
- do what is right
- love Him (first commandment)
- love our neighbors
- love the brethren
- love our enemies

All that of that is tied in with it.

If you're watching television and you see something, you can spot that there is evil going on. If you weren't converted you wouldn't be able to do it or if you didn't know the laws of God. Here's how God will do it here. Very interesting how God does this. He expects us to put forth every effort.

- He will bless us
- He will inspire us
- He will add His Spirit to us

Psalm 18:30: “**As for God, His way is perfect...**” So therefore, man or woman cannot add to what God has done because God is perfect. ***He wants to perfect us!***

“...the Word of the LORD is tried. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him, for who is God besides the LORD? Or, who is a Rock except our God? The God who girds me with strength and makes my way perfect” (vs 30-32)—through His way. That is quite an amazing process!

When we go shopping and we were in the store, people when they see us they don't say, ‘O there goes someone with God's Spirit.’ They don't know anything about that. They can't tell *because it is a spiritual work, called the mystery of God*, which He is doing to build the character in us. So we can at the resurrection have the final perfection.

(go to the next track)

Let's see that God expects our full participation. Matt. 25 is the parable of the talents. The greatest treasure that we have in this life is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is made so that it works in us as we work with God. God works with us. It's always an ongoing thing. God expects us to produce. There will be different levels of producing.

Matthew 25:14: “For *the Kingdom of Heaven is* like a man leaving the country, who called his own servants and delivered to them his property.” These servants are stewards. Stewards are to take someone else's property and make it profitable for the owner.

God is the owner! He gives us His Spirit, which is likened unto the riches here. We'll also see ***we are His property!*** As we yield to God and grow, change and overcome, God blesses us and strengthens us and gives us understanding. We go through trials and difficulties.

Verse 15: “Now, to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one; he *gave* to each one according to his own ability, and immediately left the country.”

God expects us to take the initiative personally. This is why God doesn't like a hierarchy where everything has to run through the minister. We are all to be responsible directly to God. When we come together, forming the Church, then we love God, love each other, and we benefit from the Sabbath because we learn, change, grow and overcome.

Verse 16: "Then the one who had received five talents went and traded with them, and made an additional five talents." God expects us to work, to grow. All of this is based on loving God, because it is His Spirit and His love that perfects us.

Verse 17: "In the same way also, the one who had *received* two *talents* also gained two others. But the one who had received the single *talent* went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money" (vs 17-18). This is worse than a false conversion.

Steve was telling me about a man who he knew that believed 'once saved, always saved.' But he fathered so many children with different women. When Steve asked him, 'What do you think about that?' He said, 'I'm saved.' ***That's total deception!*** That's out there in the world with Satan the devil. That has nothing to do with God.

But here is someone who received from God one talent. So even the one with fewer abilities is still expected to produce. Then you know the rest of it.

Verse 19: "Now, after a long time, the lord of those servants came to take account with them." They were stewards and the lord wants an accounting.

Verse 20: "Then the one who had received five talents came to *him and* brought an additional five talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered five talents to me; see, I have gained five other talents besides them.' And his lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant!....'" (vs 20-21).

This doesn't mean that he didn't have trials and problems in producing it. This doesn't mean that everything just went smooth as could be. It means that he endured, because it says 'the one who endures to the end, the same shall be saved.'

We are to receive rewards based upon our work. Those are the works that God expects us to do. And here it's all defined for us.

Verse 21: "And his lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" That's the resurrection, over many things.

We find in the parable of the pounds in Luke 19 that the one who gained ten talents was put over the cities. So that's showing what we will be doing.

Verse 22: "And the one who had received two talents also came to him *and* said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; see, I have gained two other talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then the one who had received the single talent also came to *him and* said, 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And *because* I was afraid, I went and hid your talent in the earth. *Now* look, you have your own.' His lord answered *and* said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant!....'" (vs 22-26).

I don't know how that fellow ever read the Bible, if he read the Bible, but this is pretty strong right here.

"...You knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather what I did not scatter. Because *you knew* this, you were duty-bound to take my talent to the money exchangers, *so that* when I came, I could have received my own with interest'" (vs 26-27).

God expects a minimum amount. Each person will be perfected according to how they yield to God with what they have been given. God is the one Who determines all of that.

Let's see another example of this. After we receive the Holy Spirit, we become the property of Jesus Christ.

1-Corinthians 3:11: "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ.... [that's why He had to be perfected] ...Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation... [here again, our degrees of ability, our degrees of quality of production]: ...gold, silver, precious stones..." (vs 11-12). *All of these are perfected with fire!*

Precious stones are made with fire. That's how they make synthetic diamonds. They take carbon and they heat it to 3,000 degrees and they have diamonds. Those are industrial diamonds.

"...wood, hay *or* stubble, the work of each one shall be manifested... [God is going to try us and test us] ...for the day *of trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is" (vs 12-13).

Fire is a type of trials. All of us have gone through various trials, in varying degrees. Some more than others. Look at what the Apostle Paul had to go through, everything he had to. But God told Paul 'through your weakness I will strengthen you and I will glorify you through the weakness, through

My strength' (2-Cor.12). That's how God will work with each one of us. So this reveals the part we have to do.

Verse 14: "If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward." This means:

- Are you faithful?
- Do you love God?
- Do you keep His commandments?
- Even in spite of the trial?
 - ✓ though it may be difficult?
 - ✓ though it may be very trying?
- What are you going to do?

Verse 15: "If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss... [exactly how God is going to do that, I don't know] ...but *he* himself shall be saved, yet, as through fire." This shows:

- we have to be responsible
- we have to work
- we have to participate

Here's what's the important thing with God's Spirit in us, v 16: "Don't you understand **that you are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?**" That's why we have Rom. 12, renewing of your mind every day with prayer, study, living, going through the difficulties of life.

Verse 17: "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are."

Knowing how God respects repentance, if there is repentance then God will forgive. There comes a point where there is no repentance with some people. So there can be no perfection if this takes place.

Hebrews 10:26: "For if we willfully go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the Truth..." That's why we have the Sabbath. Every week we go over the Truth of God. Every time we study the Bible we're going over the Truth of God. 'Knowledge of the Truth,' that's the knowledge of salvation, God's Spirit, and all those things.

"...there is no longer any sacrifice for sins" (v 26). There comes a point, which God has to determine, that He cannot perfect it. We also have this back in Jer. 18 with the clay, the potter, making the vessel, reshaping it, redoing it, and so forth.

- as long as there is hope
- as long as there is life
- as long as there is repentance

then God will deal with us. But if not, He can't perfect us.

Verse 27: "But a terrifying expectation of inevitable judgment and of fierce fire, which will

devour the adversaries of God. Consider this: anyone who rejects *the* Law of Moses dies without mercy under *the* testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, *as* an unholy thing, and has scorned the Spirit of grace?" (vs 27-29). That goes right back to where we started in Jer. 11. Then he urges them to repent, don't go on in that way.

Let's see some more about perfection, rather than the lack thereof. We will see that this is to be a progressive thing through our lives. It is true, the older we get, the faster time goes. The faster time goes, you look back and think where did it go?

Proverbs 4:18: "But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day." We need to keep that in mind.

Let's see how this works. Let's see how the love of God is what is the important thing that keeps all of this going. We have seen what we need to do in getting rid of sin and overcoming. Let's see how Paul emphasizes this so that we can be perfected.

Here's what Paul says, Colossians 3:1: "Therefore, if you have been raised together with Christ... [out of the watery grave of baptism] ...seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at *the* right hand of God." How do we do this?

- prayer every day
- study every day
- yielding to God
- thinking how we live our lives
- what we do

All of that is tied in together on a continuous way of the renewing and transforming of our minds.

Verse 2: "Set your affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are on the earth. you have died, and your life has been hid together with Christ in God. When Christ, *Who* is our life, is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory" (vs 2-4).

That's what we're going to cover on the Day of Pentecost, the resurrection. Therefore, here is the personal work we need to do on building character.

Verse 5: "Therefore, put to death your members which *are* on earth... [we still have to fight human nature] ...sexual immorality, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry." I don't think that man that we discussed earlier, with his attitude even understands that this verse is here in the Bible and he needs to be following it.

Verse 6: “Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.” How bad is it going to get for us? *The worst in history!*

Verse 7: “Among whom you also once walked, when you were living in these things.” Now then, he shows us what we need to live in, what also we need to get rid of, how we need to overcome. *This is all part of perfecting!*

Verse 8: “But now, you should also put off all *these* things: wrath, indignation, malice, blasphemy, *and* foul language from your mouth.... [there’s always human nature right there] ...Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have put off the old man together with his deeds, and have put on the new man, who *is* being renewed in knowledge...” (vs 8-10). ***Perfection is being accomplished by renewing!*** The knowledge of God replacing our sins and things like that in our mind.

“...according to *the* image of Him Who created him” (v 10). Then Paul shows that there is no respect of persons with God with this.

Verse 11: “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian *nor* Scythian, slave *nor* free; but Christ *is* all things, and in all.” Here’s what we need to do. This is our active participation spiritually:

Verse 12: “Put on then, **as *the elect of God...***” That means you were *selected* by God! You go through a trial and you’re discouraged and you’re all down, you think, ‘Woe is me; the whole world is against me. Everything is against me; everything is stacked against me.’ Remember: ***you were selected by God!***

“...Holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* long-suffering” (v 12). Overcoming human nature, overcoming these things that come along.

Verse 13: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should forgive.*” Forgiveness goes a long way in healing and repairing.

Verse 14: “And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection”—that love of God. ***Loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being!*** That is what *perfects* us.

Have you ever wondered where it says that ‘the Law has no power’? The Law states what needs to be done, but we need to provide the obedience. It is the Spirit of God and the love of God for us, and our love of God to Him, that gives us the action to carry out what the Law says.

So, here are the spiritual laws. Verse 14: “And above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Let’s look at some more of that. That is very profound. Let’s see why we have preaching and teaching and the Word of God. This verse has been abused so much down through the years:

Ephesians 4:11: “And He gave some as apostles...” You’re not an apostle unless you’ve seen Christ. Those who self-appoint themselves as apostles always have trouble and difficulties. It’s a sad thing when they do that. Like someone asked, who do I think I am? I’m just a teacher, I’ll teach. Let God take care of all the rest.

“...and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers **for the perfecting of the saints...**” (vs 11-12).

How many times have we come to Sabbath services and what you hear is exactly what we need because of the week that just passed. We experienced all the difficulties and problems. Many times.

“...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ” (v 12). Edifying means *to build up*; to build up *to perfection!* Getting rid of sin is getting rid of those things that keep us from being perfected.

Verse 13: “Until... [not just once] ... we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man... [or woman, ‘anthropos,’ can mean *man or woman*] ...unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ.” That’s quite a goal!

Today we have all the things available for us so that can be accomplished. This helps us to understand all the difficulties and things we go through. All of those are a part of our being perfected.

1-Peter 5:6: “Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time.” The exaltation is going to be for everyone at the set time of Pentecost.

Here’s what to do, v 7: “Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.” Satan is there to send messages to take us away from God, so that’s why we have to always turn to God.

Sometimes you just have to go to God, get on your knees and say, ‘God, I don’t know; help me to understand.’ You might start a lot of your prayers that way.

Verse 8: “Be sober! Be vigilant!.... [in the times of weakness:] ...For your adversary *the* devil

is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour.”

Satan always comes along with a benefit. I tell you, every commercial, even though if it's a medicine and they tell you to be careful you may die, they're all smiling and happy and it's a great benefit for you. Satan will come along with his solution, which looks like a benefit for you, but it's not.

Here's the solution, v 9: “Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in *the* world. Now, may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, Himself... [this is the key important thing. God Himself through Christ] ...**perfect you, establish, strengthen, and settle you**” (vs 9-10).

Many times that's accomplished when we come to Sabbath services, in addition to personal prayer and Bible study during the week.

Verse 11: “To Him *be* the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen.”

Some of these basic Scriptures are good for us to go over. We know that it talks about that our fellowship is with God the Father and Jesus Christ (1-John 1:3). Think about that! The greatest verses in the world are that Christ and the Father dwell in us.

This is how we are to react to God, 1-John 2:1: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin....”

- we're all confronted with sin
- we're all confronted with temptation
- we're all confronted with doing things that go against the perfection of God temporarily

But if we put those things aside, if we overcome them, then we will be blessed.

“...And *yet*, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ *the* Righteous” (v 1).

If we sin, then Christ is waiting for us to come and repent and He will forgive us and He will help us. He will raise us up. Sometimes it's hard to really admit that you have sinned and done wrong. When you get on your knees and confess it to God, He will forgive you.

Verse 2: “And He is *the* propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for *the* sins of the whole world.” We're part of a great and fantastic plan of God.

Verse 3: “And **by this standard we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments**. The one who says, ‘I know Him’ and does not keep His commandments, **is a liar, and the Truth is not in him**” (vs 3-4). That applies to the circumstances of the man who goes around and fathers children by many different women claiming he is ‘born again.’ He doesn't know Him.

Verse 5: “On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected... [that's why God made us imperfect so we can be perfected] ... By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (vs 5-6). That's how it's going to be.

John talks about the love of God is that which perfects us; 1-John 4:6: “We are of God; the one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not of God does not listen to us. By this *means* we know the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the deception.” That's why it's so important that we stay close to God in this world, the way it is today.

Verse 7: “Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.... [and be perfected through Him] ...In this *act* is the love—not that we loved God... [because that would be our work going to God] ... rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be the* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another” (vs 7-11).

That's the thing that you can use to help bring you back whenever you have trouble and difficulty.

- the love of God heals
- the love of God strengthens
- the love of God perfects

Verse 16: “And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. By this *spiritual indwelling*, the love *of* God is perfected within us... [that's how we are perfected] ...so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment... [resurrection/Pentecost] ...because even as He is, so also are we in this world. **There is no fear in the love of God; rather, perfect love...**” (vs 16-18). God is the only One Who has perfect love. It needs to be perfected in us.

“...perfect love casts out fear because fear has torment. And the one who fears has not been

made perfect in the love of God. We love Him because He loved us first” (vs 18-19).

John 17 is Jesus’ prayer. Let’s see what He said concerning what He was going to do. No other book is like the Bible. You can go through the Bible, you can read it and re-read it, and study it and re-study it, and learn all the time and with greater depth and understanding. God is there

- with His Spirit
- with His love
- with His forgiveness
- with Christ at His right hand, Who is our High Priest

He gave His life, not only for us, but for the world. But for us, and **God applies it individually to each one of us** whenever we repent. But especially when we are baptized and receive the Spirit of God. We saw where He was perfected.

John 17:4: “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do”—the work of preaching the Gospel. But that’s not all the work.

Verse 5: “And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.” Think about the greatness and the fantastic things that God has for us.

Verse 6: “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have **kept Your Word**”—because we love God. Tie all of these Scriptures together and see how it fits into the whole plan and purpose of God’s perfecting us.

Verse 9: “I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them” (vs 9-10).

In us God is glorified, because of His love and what He is doing. Even though we’re still physical, even though we’re still overcoming, God loves us, as long as we are yielding to God and responding back to Him. *We have been made imperfect, so we can be perfected!*

Verse 14: “I have given them Your words...” Everything here in what Jesus said are the words of God the Father. How important is that?

“...and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one” (vs 14-15). That’s something we really need today.

Verse 16: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your Truth; Your Word is the Truth” (vs 16-17). **That’s how we’re perfected!** Sanctify means make Holy. The more Truth we put in, the more error we get rid of.

Verse 18: “Even as You did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they also may be sanctified in Your Truth. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word... [that’s us] ...that they all may be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, in order that the world may believe that You did send Me. And I have given them the glory that You gave to Me... [receiving of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God] ... in order that they may be one, in the same way that We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected... [as the workmanship of God] ...into one...” (vs 18-23). That’s something!

- look at the hope that God has given us.
- look at the promises that God has given us.
- look at everything that God has provided for us

and what a wonderful thing it is, brethren, that this can be so.

As we look forward to Pentecost, which is the day of our perfecting, let’s realize that this an ongoing thing with God and we are being perfected day-by-day.

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- 1) Leviticus 23:1-3
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- 3) Jeremiah 11:3-4
- 4) Luke 6:46-49
- 5) Matthew 5:48
- 6) Hebrews 5:7-8
- 7) Hebrews 4:14-15
- 8) Hebrews 5:8-9
- 9) Revelation 3:21
- 10) Hebrews 4:11-13
- 11) Psalm 101:1-4
- 12) Psalm 138:8
- 13) Ephesians 2:1-10
- 14) Romans 12:1-2
- 15) Psalm 18:30-32
- 16) Matthew 25:14-27
- 17) 1-Corinthians 3:11-17
- 18) Hebrews 10:26-29
- 19) Proverbs 4:18
- 20) Colossians 3:1-14
- 21) Ephesians 4:11-13
- 22) 1-Peter 5:6-11
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- 24) 1-John 4:6-11, 16-19
- 25) John 17:4-6, 9-10, 14-23

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- Genesis 9; 17
- Luke 19
- 2-Corinthians 12
- Jeremiah 18
- 1-John 1:3

Also referenced:

Sermon Series:

- *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*
- *Grace of God*
- *Grace Upon Grace*

Book: *From a Speck of Dust to a Son of God: Why Were You Born?* by Fred R. Coulter

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