

THE PERFECT WALK

TEXT: PHIL. 3:15-21

Introduction:

1. There are two important words found often in the Bible and they are both found here in our text: “perfect” (3:15) and “walk” (3:16, 17, 18).
2. The word “perfect” has confused people. How can we be perfect? Some churches teach what they call “sinless perfection.” But how does this line up with the Bible (cf. I John 1:8-10)?
3. “Perfect” in the Bible can mean mature, not sinless. Job 1:1 says Job “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”
4. First Kings 15:14 says, “Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.”
5. Our Lord said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48; cf. Scofield’s note, bottom of p. 1001).
6. Ephesians 4:11, 12 says, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
7. Here “perfecting” refers to Christian growth and maturity (cf. Scofield’s note, p. 1001).
8. In the Bible, perfection is a goal (remember last week’s message – 3:12-14). And if perfection is a goal, then it is not an attainment (in this life).
9. Hebrews 6:1 says, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection...”
10. A.J. Gordon said: “I would rather aim at perfection and fall short of it, than aim at imperfection and fully attain it.”
11. A.J. Gordon also said, “Divine truth as revealed in Scripture seems often to lie between two extremes. If we regard the doctrine of sinless perfection as a heresy, we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy. And we gravely fear that many Christians make the apostle’s words, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,’ the unconscious justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness, than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. Certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldling throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist.”
12. You may recall last week that Paul said he was not “already perfect” (3:12). But here in 3:15 he says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect...” I think Paul is giving both sides to the doctrine of perfection – we do not achieve sinless perfection, but we can reach a perfection of maturity.

13. Therefore, Christian perfection is not the perfection of the **final** state, but the perfection of the **possible** state.
14. The other important word is “walk” (3:16, 17, 18). Tonight I want to speak on the subject of the Christian’s perfect walk. It is an orderly walk. It is a separated walk. And it is a heavenly walk.

I. IT IS AN ORDERLY WALK (3:15, 16).

1. Paul says we are to “walk by the same rule” and we are to “mind the same thing” (3:16). Ours is to be an orderly walk.
2. This does not mean that all Christians have to agree on everything. There can be diversity within the local church. However, we are to agree on the “rules” which God has set forth in His word. There must be unity based on doctrine.
3. A church without this kind of unity cannot go forward. Whenever anyone tells me they are interested in joining our church, I always ask them if they agree with our doctrine.
4. Some Christians do not seem to understand this. Paul says that “God shall reveal even this” unto them (3:15). Our Lord said in John 7:17, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.”
5. This is an important Bible principle.
6. H.A. Ironside wrote: “There are truths and principles so plainly put in God’s Word, that any Spirit-taught believer may readily see them.”

II. IT IS A SEPARATED WALK (3:17-19).

1. Paul maintained a separated walk and we are to “be followers” of him (3:17; cf. I Cor. 11:1). We are to “mark” (observe) those who maintain a separated walk and follow them (3:17).
2. As Bible-believing, born-again children of God, we must maintain a separated walk. We must be separated from worldliness. We must be separated from doctrinal error. And we must be separated from those worldly false teachers who teach error (3:18, 19).
3. Many Christians are ignorant when it comes to Bible separation. This doctrine has been cast aside by many churches. But the Bible is clear about it and we must stay true to the Bible.
4. Why does Paul weep over these wolves in sheep’s clothing (3:18)? Because he saw all the damage they have caused and all of the lives they have ruined.
5. This reminds me of the time Elisha the prophet went to Damascus, and King Benhadad sent Hazael, one of his officers, to enquire of the LORD by him, and ask him, “Shall I recover of this disease?”

6. So Hazael went out to greet Elisha the prophet, but as they were talking Elisha started weeping. So Hazael asked him, “Why weepeth my lord?”
7. Elisha answered him, “Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child” (II Kings 8:12).
8. False prophets are just as dangerous! And we ought to weep like Elisha, and weep like Paul when we think of all the ruined lives, and ruined homes, and the multitudes of lost sinners led to hell by false teachers.
9. False teachers are “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:18). They lead people astray. Like the false priests of Malachi’s day, they are “cursed, corrupt, and contemptible.”
10. Peter says they “privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2:1).
11. All through the Bible, God uses stern language to describe false teachers. It is a warning for us to heed.
12. These enemies of the cross are headed for hell – their “end is destruction” (3:19). Our Lord said, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matt. 7:13).
13. Their God is their “belly” (3:19), i.e. they are led by their appetites, they only care about feeding themselves. F.B. Meyer said: “There is no chapel in their life. It is all kitchen.”
14. “And whose glory is in their shame” (3:19). They bragged about the very things that should have made them ashamed – their selfishness and their immoral behaviour.
15. They were preoccupied with “earthly (worldly) things” (3:19b). For them all that mattered was food, comfort, worldly pleasures, money, prestige, and so on. The things of God did not really interest them at all. They had no interest in heaven or hell, the Bible, salvation, etc. (cf. Col. 3:2).
16. It is sad when those who start out preaching the Gospel associate with the enemies of the cross. Billy Graham is a notable example of this. We must separate from all of these false teachers and even true believers if they associate with them.

III. IT IS A HEAVENLY WALK (3:20, 21).

1. The word translated “conversation” (3:20) could be literally translated “citizenship.” At the time Paul wrote this epistle, Philippi was a colony of

- Rome (Acts 16:12). Therefore, the citizens of Philippi were citizens of Rome. Paul is here reminding us, “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven.”
2. This doesn't mean that we are not also citizens of earthly countries such as America. It doesn't mean we are not to be patriotic.
 3. Elsewhere in the Bible we are told to be subject to earthly governments because they were established by God.
 4. Romans 13:1 says, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”
 5. The Bible teaches we have a dual citizenship and our first allegiance is to God. Our first loyalty is to God and His church because the most important thing is that we are citizens of heaven.
 6. Ephesians 2:19 says, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”
 7. As citizens of heaven we are to “look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:20b). The rapture is imminent.
 8. And when we are raptured, God will “change our vile” bodies (3:21).
 9. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:51-53).
 10. And our “vile body” shall “be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). First John 3:2 says, “but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Our walk is to be an orderly walk, a separated walk, and a heavenly walk.
2. It is not always easy to maintain this kind of orderly walk in this very disorderly world. It takes discipline.
3. Soon the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back. And when He does, He will “subdue all things unto Himself” (3:21). That means He is going to straighten everything out.

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