

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 24 of 32

THE MAKING OF A MAN OF GOD I

"Go then, and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:29, Amplified Bible).

"For we are God's own handiwork, his workmanship, recreated in Christ Jesus, born anew, that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us, taking paths which He prepared ahead of time, that we should walk in them, living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live" (Ephesians 2:10, Amplified Bible).

". . . that we might arrive at really mature manhood--the completeness of person-ality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection--the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him. So then, we may no longer be children, tossed like ships to and fro . . . let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him, Who is the Head, even Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One" (Ephesians 4:13-15, Amplified Bible).

What does it mean to be "perfect"? If one is sinless, is he then perfect? Was Jesus born sinless? Was He born perfect? These are the questions we will now take a look at.

The Bible teaches us that we should strive to be perfect: *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).*

"Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man" (Ephesians 4:13). ". . . that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

". . . labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossian 4:12).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect: throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

The word that was translated "perfect" in our King James Bible came from the Greek word "telelotes," which means "complete in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, completeness, of full age, mature, perfect."

JESUS WAS BORN SINLESS, BUT NOT PERFECT

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" (Hebrews 5:8-9).



"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

From the preceding verses of Scripture, we can see that:

1. Jesus Christ was not born perfect. He was made perfect. That is, Jesus Christ, though sinless, was not complete and perfected in every area of His character. In fact, He could not even become the author of our salvation until He learned obedience and submission. (The word "obedience" comes from the Greek word "hupakoe" and means compliance or submission).
2. He became the author of salvation after He was perfected.
3. He is able to help to those who are tempted because He was tempted in all points like as we are.
4. He has the ability to feel compassion for us as we combat our weaknesses because of His own personal temptations that He faced.

HOW DO WE BECOME A PERFECTED OR MATURE CHRISTIAN?

1. God has given the five-fold ministry (pastors, evangelists, prophets, apostles, teachers) for "the perfecting and full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), that they should do the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body the church . . . that we might arrive at really mature manhood--the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection . . . the completeness found in Him" (Ephesians 4:11-13, Amplified Bible). In these verses of Scripture we see the importance of our spiritual leaders and the Word of God in bringing us to spiritual maturity.

2. Our fellowship with the saints of God, and our ministering to one another is also important: *"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying (building up)" (I Corinthians 14:26).*

3. Nevertheless, the spiritual blessings we receive from God, and the beautiful fellowship we have with one another are not enough to mature us. In many areas of our lives, we could never fully develop the Christ-like character without those beautiful things called trials, tribulations, temptations, persecutions, etc., in other words--life's experiences. This is also a part of God's plan. When you are going through some particular kind of struggle, don't fight it. It is God's plan for you for the present: *"For it is God who is all the while effectually at work in you, energizing and creating in you the power and desire, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13, Amplified Bible). We are God's handiwork, His creation. God is at work in our lives, perfecting and completing us, so that we ought to accept all that comes our way as a part of His divine will and His work (Romans 8:28-29; II Corinthians 3:18).*

What, then, should be our attitude towards these things we consider negative factors (persecutions, tribulations, temptations)? *"Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character--that is, approved faith and tried integrity. And character of this sort produces the habit of joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation" (Romans 5:3-4, Amplified Bible). "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10). "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting (lacking) nothing" (James 1:2-4). ds*