

THE ELEMENTS OF PERFECTION

By Larry DeLong

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:48, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" Hebrews 6:1 says, "*go on unto perfection.*" What does this mean and how are we to achieve it?

To understand the word "perfect" as used in these texts, and many others, it is needful to go to the Greek word from which it is translated. Since the English language is constantly changing, some words do not carry the same meaning today as they did when the Bible was translated, for example gay, wine, meat, etc. This is also true with the word "perfect." This particular word is translated from the Greek word *teleios*. This Greek word does not mean perfect in the sense of being sinless or without fault or flaw, but it carries the meaning of "full-grown adult; of full age; mature" (Thayers Greek Lexicon). The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 13:10 and James 1:25 when it refers to the completed law of God. Jesus and the author of the Hebrew letter are encouraging, even demanding, that we work toward the spiritual maturity which is a must for our salvation and that we do not remain as babes in Christ. This spiritual maturity advances as we grow older in the kingdom of God. There are several elements needed to obtain this perfection.

The first element required for perfection, or completeness in Christ, is a **GOOD HEART**. A good heart requires that we put aside our own desires and submit fully to the will of God. God must be your one and only Master. In the Parable of the Soils, Jesus spoke of four different soils that the human heart may consist of. Only those that consisted of the good soil were pleasing to God and brought forth much fruit in the kingdom (Matthew 13:9). On the other hand, a dishonest heart seeks to please itself and disregards the full authority of Christ. All the unauthorized innovations in worship today have resulted from men seeking to please themselves through dishonest hearts.

The second element required for perfection is **STUDY**. There must be a burning desire within each of us to know more of God and His word. Christianity is a learned religion. Thankfully, God has "*given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue,*" 2 Peter 1:3. He has given us the completed law (James 1:15); nothing is lacking. However, it requires diligent study on our part in order to "*rightly divide the word,*" 2 Tim 2:15. It is easy to take things out of context and draw the wrong conclusions, but with a good understanding of the Bible, the truth can be known. God does not lie (Titus 1:2), and He is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

The third element required for perfection is **GROWTH**. With a good heart and diligent study, growth is the natural conclusion. We must "*go on unto perfection.*" It is a law of nature that things that are stunted and do not grow will die in a short time. It is no different in the spiritual realm. Jesus reprimanded the church at Laodicea because their works had become lukewarm and there was no growth (Revelation 3:15-16). There comes a time when a baby should graduate from the bottle and diapers to a steady diet of solid food and maturity. Those who fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) are still "on the bottle and wearing diapers," so to speak, and they will face a quick spiritual death.

If we want Heaven to be our home, we must have a compelling desire to do God's will, a constant diet of God's word and continual development in the kingdom. Let us go on unto perfection!