

8-4-24 How to Be a Perfect Christian

Week 1

Text: Galatians 6:11-18

Book Reference: “Introduction: How to Be a Perfect Christian”

Topic(s): Sanctification, Sin, Perfection

Big Idea of the Message (Satire): “A perfect Christian is one who conforms to the man-made standards of the Christian faith in any given age” (4).

Application Point (Not Satire): Rather than trying to impress people by creating additives to the gospel, we must realize our imperfections and cling to Jesus.

The Babylon Bee is a satirical website that shines a spotlight on modern Christian cultural quirks. In the vein of The Onion, it “pokes fun at all-too-familiar trends and traditions” and “calls each of us to a truer understanding of real biblical faith.” The Babylon Bee frequently steps on toes across the board making their work both funny and probing at the same time. Odds are, most Christians will come across at least one article on the site that will slightly offend them.

In the introduction to How to Be a Perfect Christian, the authors satirically write: “See, to become perfect, you need to be baptized in the glorious waters of Christian culture” (5). Today, like we read about in Paul’s letter, it can be easy to view the gospel not in light of Christ, but through the culture around us.

The believers in Galatians were adding on to the gospel (specifically by requiring the act of circumcision) and were attempting to impress others through their good behavior. Instead of boasting in Christ alone, they were rotating the focus of their faith back to them. How often do we take our cues from the world around us rather than on the person of Jesus?

Notice how Paul says, “**See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! (vs. 11).** Dr. Constable says: “**The ‘large’** letters were probably capitals (ALL CAPS), used for the sake of emphasis, and to distinguish Paul’s handwriting from his secretary’s. Perhaps Paul also intended the boldness of his handwriting to emphasize the force of his convictions” (Thomas Constable, Notes on Galatians [Sonic Light, 2017], 95)

At the end of each chapter in How to Be a Perfect Christian, we’re shown a “Holiness Progress Tracker 5000” that tracks a person’s “sanctification.” While a device like this might seem convenient, sanctification is often messy and not necessarily linear. It’s certainly not a ranking system we can brag about to our friends. Instead, each person should try “to do the Christian life by the grace of God, allowing Him to gradually change you by the power of His Word” (6).

1. **“Perfect” Christians Are More Concerned with Impressing Others than They are About Embracing Jesus (verses 11-12).**

- Paul is dealing with motive, and there is no greater need in our churches today than for an examination of the motives for our ministries. We know what we are doing, but do we know why we are doing it? A good work can and is spoiled by a bad motive.
- Paul calls out individuals who pretend to be righteous, they are only righteous for personal fleshly gain.
- Their main purpose was not to win people to Christ, or even to help the believers grow in grace. Their chief purpose was to win more converts to their way of thinking so they could brag about them. They worried about and wanted to make a good outward impression, even though they were no good inwardly.
- They did all that they did for their personal glory, not for God or the church.
- Not only were the people Paul called out braggadocios, but they were also compromisers and cowards. **“...simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.” (v.12b NASB)**
- The Judaizers tried to make the Christians think that they too were Christians, and they tried to make the followers of the Mosaic Law think that they too obeyed the Law. They were trying to straddle the fence. Stay peaceable and acceptable to everyone at the cost of their true relationship with God.
- We must be careful that we don’t continually do the same thing. If we are not careful, we can be Christian just enough to be palatable, but not enough to affect our surroundings.
- Something I started asking myself, Cecil are you a potato, an egg or a coffee bean?
- When Paul trusted Christ, he identified himself with the cross and took the consequences. To the Jew the cross was a stumbling block, and to the Gentile it was foolishness **(1 Cor. 1:18-31)**.
- The legalists, emphasizing circumcision rather than crucifixion, won many converts. Their view was popular religion because it avoided the shame of the cross.
- My goal is not to impress others for my sake, my mission every day is **to build caring relationships with the hope of gaining permission to share the life changing good news of Jesus Christ.**
- Knowing that being a follower of Jesus can be polarizing and can come across as not very tolerant. It is a balancing act that we all MUST walk.
- We must make it our goal to embrace Jesus over impressing people.

2. **“Perfect” Christians Think Their Obedience Will Earn Them Points with God (verse 13).**

- This group that Paul keeps referring to belonged to the same group as the Pharisees whom Jesus said, **“They say and do not” (Matt. 23:3)**.
- Paul isn’t condemning them for not keeping the law, no one could, he is condemning them for lying to those who were following their bankrupt ways. Their celebration was in the number of individuals they got to follow after them.
- Someone said to me the other day, “Cecil it is so hot out that I am rethinking my actions, I am thinking I need to start doing better because I am not made for the heat. And these temperatures are nothing like hell will be.”

- Living in an age where we celebrate everyone for trying and doing their best, I believe has hampered the message of the cross. Now don't get me wrong, we should give our best and it is perfectly ok if our best isn't enough. That works in all places of life except for our relationship with God.
- In our relationship with God, He did all the work, He provided His best. He gave mankind Jesus! There is nothing we can add. The gift must be accepted.
- Even after we receive God's gift, He doesn't play favorites. He deals with each of us differently, according to our vocation in His plans, but no one is better than the next in God's family.
-

3. **“Perfect” Christians Trust Their Religious Acts (actions) More Than They Trust in Jesus (verses 14-18).**

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. Gal. 2:21 ESV

- The wounds of Calvary certainly make Christ a “marked man,” for those wounds mean liberty to those who will trust Him.
- The Judaizers boasted in circumcision; but Paul boasted in a crucified and risen Savior. He gloried in the miracle's that Jesus performed on that cross.
- Paul knew the Person of the cross. Jesus Christ is mentioned at least forty-five times in the book of Galatians. That means one third of the verses in it contains some reference to Jesus.
- Paul was captivated by Jesus; it was Jesus who made the cross on Calvary glorious to him. When Paul was a Jewish rabbi, he found his glory there, but once he met Jesus, he realized all that he glorified in was a waste and for loss, now that he met King Jesus.
- The legalist Judaizers did not glory in the cross of Christ, because they did not glory in Christ. They found glory and pride in Moses, and themselves; they did not know the Person of the cross.
- For Paul, the cross meant liberty: from self (**Gal. 2:20**), the flesh (**Gal. 5:24**), and the world (**Gal. 6:14**).
- In the death and resurrection of Christ the power of God is released to give believers deliverance and victory. It is no longer we who live; it is Christ who lives in us and through us. As we yield to Him, we have victory over the world and the flesh.

Conclusion

1. **“Perfect” Christians Are More Concerned with Impressing Others than They are About Embracing Jesus (verses 11-12).**
2. **“Perfect” Christians Think Their Obedience Will Earn Them Points with God (verse 13).**
3. **“Perfect” Christians Trust Their Religious Acts (actions) More Than They Trust in Jesus (verses 14-18).**

Are we more concerned with impressing others over embracing Jesus?

Do we live in a way where we think being obedient will earn us favor with God?

Are there times where we place faith and trust in religious actions rather than trust in Jesus?

Sought after (Isa. 62:12) Precious in his sight (Isa. 43:4) A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) Not condemned (Rom. 8:1) Forgiven (Col. 1:14) Loved (1 John 3:1) Accepted (Rom. 15:7) A child of God (John 1:12) Jesus' friend (John 15:14) Free (John 8:36) The temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) God's treasured possession (Deut. 7:6) **Complete in Christ (Col. 2:10 NLT) Chosen (Col. 3:12) Called (2 Tim. 1:9) An ambassador of the Most High God (2 Cor. 5:20) God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10 NLT) Able to do all things through Christ, who gives you strength (Phil. 4:13) More than a conqueror through Jesus, who loves you (Rom. 8:37)**