

“You’re not Perfect...”

The title of this article illustrates a spirit of unity-in-diversity that is often found among our brethren. Such statements are made when one is challenged on a particular sinful practice or stance. The founding premise of this spirit is the idea that no one can fully understand truth, nor can a multitude of brethren understand truth alike. Let us for a moment examine what the Bible teaches about perfection and perfect knowledge.

Can Christians Know Truth in a “Perfect” Manner?

Yes. Jesus was confident in the disciple’s ability to know truth as He instructed them that they may not only understand the mode of salvation but in the future help others know the way of eternal life (cf. Jn. 8:32; 14:4). The apostles were confident that those they taught would be able to fully understand the truth (cf. I Jn. 2:21). Lastly, note that Jehovah God is relying upon man to understand His instructions of truth (Heb. 6:3).

Clearly those who would harangue that we cannot fully know truth do not meet God’s requirement of those who will receive eternal salvation. The author of Hebrews makes a plea for the spiritually immature Hebrew Christians to grow to perfection. The word “*perfect*” in Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1 means “ripeness of knowledge or practice” (Moulton 401). Such a definition demands effort on the Christian’s part. The author of Hebrews terms it “*diligence*” (Heb. 6:11). Those who opine man’s inability to know truth in a “*perfect*” manner are too lazy to study.

Are Christian’s Perfect?

Yes and no. The Christian will sin from time to time and lose their perfection (I Jn. 1:10). While it is true that in a state of sin we are not perfect, we must also understand that this is not the condition that God would have us remain (cf. I Jn. 3:9). The problem with the Mosaic Law was that it was unable to make any one person “*perfect*” (Heb. 7:18-19). The author of Hebrews goes on to say, “*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second*” (Heb. 8:7). The inference is clear. The Mosaic Law was to be replaced by the Law of Christ because the Mosaic Law could not make anyone perfect, thus necessarily implying that the Law of Christ DOES make one PERFECT. What does this perfection mean? Does it mean that we will never sin?

Clearly, the perfection that is demanded of God is that we have our sins forgiven (something that man could not achieve under the Mosaic Law; cf. Heb. 10:1-4).

God is not the Author of Confusion

The apostle Paul told a confused Corinthian church that “*God is not a God of confusion, but of peace*” (I Cor. 14:33). If man could not fully understand the word of God then surely the Lord is the author of religious confusion. What would determine our unity if such were the case? What would determine our worship? What would determine the work of the church? What would determine the work of the individual Christian? Many brethren’s erroneous answer to these questions is usually, ‘we make the best judgment based on our perception of truth.’ Such groups then demand that no one be judgmental against them for their imperfect judgments. Such groups accept into their fellowship those who share the same dilemma; i.e., an inability to understand truth. Congregational autonomy (self governing aspect of the church) is then used to imply their individuality when it comes to interpreting the scriptures (i.e., what is right for us may not be right for you). This is the idea of unity-in-diversity; let us all be united even though we have differing interpretations of God’s word (so they proclaim). To these unity-in-diversity brethren this is the “*one mind*” that the apostles demanded (Rom. 15:5-6; I Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27).

Confusion over what being perfect is and is not is at the heart of the issue. When these brethren hear the word “perfection,” they cannot fathom anything else than perfect knowledge and perfect living (i.e., having an answer for every Biblical question and never ever sinning one time). They are intimidated by such Biblical demands and thereby come up with their own definitions of said demands (i.e., unity-in-diversity of beliefs). Their arrogance is their demise. They assume that because they cannot know truth fully, no one else may know it. Such a one fails to give diligence in Bible study in such a state of intimidation. Such a one fails to pray, with a spirit of humility, to God for the forgiveness of their sins. Such a one has altogether missed what God has said regarding Bible perfection.

The next time you hear a brother in Christ opine, “you’re not perfect,” know first that he may be trying to justify his own sinful shortcomings. Secondly, understand that such a one has not developed spiritually and is intimidated by your knowledge. Thirdly, know that such a statement is a symptom of a lack of spiritual humility. Pray for such a one and attempt to study with them that they may be enlightened by the word of God.

Remember, Jesus said, “*Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48).