
A Perfect Heart

By David Wilkerson

October 2, 1989 It is possible to walk before the Lord with a perfect heart! God said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

God also said to the children of Israel, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 18:13). David determined in his heart to obey this command. He said, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" (Psalm 101:2).

Scripture also points out that Solomon fell short of God's command to be perfect: "His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father... [He] went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father" (1 Kings 11:4-6).

We see the Lord's command to be perfect in the New Testament as well. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Paul wrote, "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28); and, in the same letter, "...that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (4:12).

And Peter said, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

Perfection does not mean a sinless, flawless heart. Man judges by outward appearances, by what he sees. But God judges the heart, the unseen motives (1 Samuel 16:7). David was said to have had a perfect heart toward God "all the days of his life," yet he failed the Lord often. His life was marked forever by adultery and a notorious murder.

The basic definition of perfect is: completeness, maturity. In the Hebrew and Greek, the definition includes: uprightness, being without spot, without blemish, totally obedient. It means to finish what was started; a complete performance. Wesley called it "constant obedience."

A perfect heart is a responsive heart. It quickly and totally answers the Lord's wooings, whisperings and warnings. This heart says at all times, "Speak, Lord, for your servant heareth. Show me the path and I will walk in it."

Once, during a long drive from the Teen Challenge farm in Pennsylvania to New York City, the Lord spoke to my inner man: "There is such a thing as a perfect heart. I want to show you what it is so you can seek after it!"

At that time God revealed to my spirit that Christ commits Himself to those who walk before Him with a perfect, responsive heart - and that three things distinguish such a heart.

A Perfect Heart is Searchable "The Lord searcheth all hearts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). The perfect heart cries out with David, "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24).

God also said to Jeremiah, "I the Lord search the heart" (Jeremiah 17:10). The Hebrew meaning for this phrase is, "I penetrate; I examine deeply." Scripture says, "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Jesus, in Revelation 2:24, speaks about "the depths of Satan," of going down into the profound deepness of sin. He was saying that evil goes down deep into the soul - that it has roots that go down into hell. David said of the wicked ones: "The inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep" (Psalm 64:6). "For a whore is a deep ditch" (Proverbs 23:27).

These passages all are holy warnings: "You don't realize how deeply this association with evil affects you. It takes you down into the depths of Satan himself, depths that are mysterious, bottomless, profound. This path leads to hell."

In these final days sin has become complicated, subtle, sensuous and more sophisticated. It comes disguised as art, culture and education. I believe there are new depths to sin now. It has taken on stronger, deeper roots. Our children are confronted with depths of sin that we never did or never will know! "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark" (Isaiah 29:15).

The perfect heart wants the Holy Spirit to come and search out the depths of the innermost man, to shine into all hidden parts, to investigate and dig out and expose all that is unlike Christ. Shallow sermons will not dig deeply enough to do this. And those who hide a secret sin do not want to be convicted, searched or probed.

A brother came to me weeping during a prayer meeting. He had left Times Square Church a few months before because he felt that the Word coming forth in the messages was too piercing. All the while he had been going on with the Lord and growing in spite of himself. But finally he left and went to a church where a smooth word is preached.

Soon this brother backslid into his old sins. he went through all the motions at church and was told by others that all was well with him - but he knew better! He was going down deeper into his old sins! Now, at the prayer meeting, he had come back for the pure Word of God.

That same night, right next to this man, a man was sitting in a wheelchair. His wife was with him. They had come many miles simply because they wanted to hear a convicting word! This man had hungered to have his innermost being shaken by God. He said, "It's been so long since I've heard a message that convicted me!"

Multitudes of Christians today want a Blood covering - but not a cleansing! The ritual of the Old Testament tent tabernacle provides a clear example of the kind of walk with God the Church should have.

The tabernacle had an outer court where the sacrificial animal was slain. This provided the blood covering for sin. But outside, too, was a laver where cleansing took place.

No priest could enter the Holy of Holies and commune with God face to face without being cleansed and making the commitment of the holy place.

The gospel as we hear it today goes something like this: "Just go to the altar and, by faith, trust in the Blood shed there. Then go boldly into the Holy of Holies. The veil is rent, your Daddy loves you, He is waiting. He sees only Jesus in you."

Christians who embrace this thinking believe they can bypass the laver - which, for us stands for the

washing by the water of the Word. They believe they can push past the commitment of the holy place with sin caked all over them and sinful habits deeply imbedded in their hearts, walk right in and boast, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ."

The perfect heart is after more than security or a covering for sin! It seeks to be in His presence to have communion! Communion is talking with the Lord, sharing sweet fellowship, seeking His face. And that is what you get in the Holy of Holies! It comes in this order: covering, cleansing, commitment, communion.

Many believers, however, want nothing more than to be covered - a quick ticket to glory! No pain, no cross, no cleansing! They go about crying, "I'm under the Blood, under the Blood! I'm safe!"

Yet they quote only one-half of the verse: "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Read all of it: "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7). Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

We hear preaching that says, "You don't need to be searched. All your sin is under the Blood anyway! All this digging and searching out of sin brings only condemnation and guilt."

But Scripture says David had a perfect heart - yet he cried out, "Search me, O God!"

In Revelation 2:23, Jesus says, "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins [minds] and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Beloved, He was addressing the Church!

The Lord's searchings are not vindictive but redemptive. His purpose is not to catch us in sin or condemn us - but rather to prepare us to come into His holy presence as clean, pure vessels. "Who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart... he shall receive the blessing from the Lord" (Psalm 24:3-5).

A Perfect Heart is A Trusting Heart God has been showing me something recently about trusting Him that I've never seen before! The psalmist wrote, "Our Fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee and were not confounded" (Psalm 22:4-5).

Over and over David testified, "In the Lord put I my trust... " (Psalm 11:1), "O my God, I trust in thee" (Psalm 25:2). The Hebrew root-word for trust suggests, "to fling oneself off a precipice" - that is, to be like a child who hears his father say, "Jump!" and who trustingly obeys, throwing himself off the edge and into his father's arms.

That is one aspect of trust. Some of you are in that place even now. You are on the edge, teetering, and you have no other option but to fling yourself off the edge and into the arms of Jesus! Some have simply resigned themselves to their situation - which in reality is no more than fatalism. They call this trust. It is not trust, though - it's numbness. Trust is much more than passive resignation! It is active belief!

Some of you have made our Lord out to be some kind of cosmic fire-and-rescue company. It is as if

Satan sets your house on fire and you are stranded on the roof yelling, "Lord, help! Save me!" So along comes the Lord, with His angels holding a big net, and He says, "Jump!" You do jump, the house burns down, and you say, "Thank you, Lord, for getting me out!"

Many of us limit our trust to these rescue operations. It is as if we say to the Lord, "I trust you to come and put out all my fires, save me from all my troubles, and deliver me out of all my trials. I know You'll be there, Lord, when I need You."

In doing this we think our faith is stretched and pleasing to God. But we don't realize that we merely have credited the devil with being the causer and the Lord as the reactor. We see Satan as causing and planning all our tests, chastenings and hard times. We say emphatically, "The devil is causing it!"

This viewpoint makes God look like He simply reacts to all the devil's well-laid plans. But our God never reacts - He initiates!

If you have a true walk with Christ you are not the devil's punching bag! He has no free access to harass or touch you. What kind of father would I be if I allowed a child molester, pusher or bully to have free access to any of my children? Yet we go about saying, "The devil did this to me... he shut this door... he put this or that on me!"

Believer, where is your Father? Sleeping? Doesn't He care about you? You mean to tell me He lets you be open prey to rapists and killers? Never!

Satan could not touch Job without God's permission. God had to lower the wall around Job in order for Satan to kill him! Jesus was "led up of the Spirit... to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1).

God is always in control. Not for one moment was - or is - Satan outside the power of God's word!

Christ revealed Himself to Paul as He who "open(s) their eyes to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). A messenger of Satan came to buffet Paul, but only because God allowed it. He would not allow His servant to be lifted up in pride because of the great revelation he had received. God was in control.

At least twice Paul tried to go to Thessalonica, "but Satan hindered" (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Yet the devil could not stop God's work. The believers in Thessalonica later became Paul's "crown of rejoicing."

The trust heart says, "All my steps are ordered by the Lord! He is my loving Father. He permits suffering, temptation and trial - but never more than I can bear, for He always makes a way of escape! He has an eternal plan and purpose for me. He has numbered every hair on my head. He numbered every cell and formed all my parts when I was in my mother's womb. He knows when I sit, stand or lie down. I am the apple of His eye. He is Lord - not only of my life, but over every event and situation touching my life!"

God has everything under control!

A Perfect Heart Is A Broken Heart! I once thought I knew what a broken heart was. I thought I had experienced much brokenness - until the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to a deeper meaning of the word.

David said, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite [crushed] spirit" (Psalm 34:18). He also said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Brokenness is more than weeping, more than sorrow, more than a crushed spirit, more than humility. Indeed, many who weep are not brokenhearted. Many who lie before God and groan are not broken in spirit. True brokenness releases in the heart the greatest power God can entrust to man - greater than power to raise the dead, greater than power over sickness and disease!

The Spirit said to my heart, "I will show you what God sees as brokenheartedness - so that I can release in you the kind of power needed in a time of ruin." It is a power to restore ruins - a power that brings a special kind of glory and honor to our Lord in troubled times!

Brokenness has to do with walls: broken-down, crumbling, ruined walls. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart... Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psalm 51:17-18). God associated the walls of Jerusalem with brokenheartedness.

Let me show you an example of a truly brokenhearted man: "And I went out by night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast I rode upon... Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned" (Nehemiah 2:13, 15).

Nehemiah in the dark of night "viewed the walls." The Hebrew word shabar is used here. It is the same word used in Psalm 51:17 for "broken heart."

Some would think Nehemiah became so broken when he "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4). Yet his weeping and confessing was only the beginning of the breaking. Nehemiah's heart was not fully broken until he came to Jerusalem, saw the ruin - and set himself to do something about it!

Nehemiah could have stayed in the king's court at Shushan palace, having weeping spells and times of mourning, fasting for days, confessing and praying - and still he would not have had a broken heart!

Word spread far and near that "there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:20). Nehemiah said, "I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem."

He rode a donkey around the outside and "viewed the ruin." In Hebrew the meaning of this is, "his heart was breaking in two ways." It broke first with anguish for the ruin - and second with a hope for rebuilding ("bursting with hope")!

This is a truly broken heart - one that sees the church and families in ruin and feels the Lord's anguish. Such a heart grieves over the reproach cast on the Lord's name. It looks deep inside and sees, as David did, its own shame and failure, and cries out, "Lord, I've made a breach in the wall! I've disregarded your holy testimony. I am crushed by my sins. This cannot go on!"

But there is one other element to brokenness: hope. The truly broken heart has heard from God, "I will heal, restore and build. Get rid of the rubbish and get to work rebuilding the breaches!"

Three years ago I walked through Times Square, weeping and mourning because of all the sin. I went back to my home in Texas, and for more than a year I wept and mourned. Then God said, "Go and do something about all the ruin."

I had come and seen the destruction, but I was not fully broken until I was moved with hope to begin to rebuild the wall!

Have you been "viewing the ruin" in your own life? Like David, have you sinned and brought reproach on His name? Is there a breach in your wall, something that is not repaired?

Beloved, it is good to fall on the Rock (Jesus) and be shattered - to be broken into little pieces. when you see Christ in all His glory, the sight of Him will indeed shatter you. Even the good things in you - the talent, efficiency, all your abilities - will be shattered when you stand or lie before Him, helpless and drained!

Daniel said, "There remained no strength in me... for my comeliness [strength] was turned in me into corruption [ruin], and I retained no strength" (Daniel 10:8). Brokenness is the total shattering of all human strength and ability. It is recognizing the full reality of sin and the reproach it brings on Christ's name!

However, it is also recognizing this: "Stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent" (Daniel 10:11). It is the absolute assurance that things are going to change - that healing and rebuilding are going to come. Your ruins are going to be reclaimed for God!

It is a holy faith that says, "God is at work in me! Satan cannot hold me. I am not going to deteriorate or fall. My sin has grieved me, but I have repented. Now it's time to rise and rebuild!"

Until you take hold of that hope, zeal and determination, you will not get past your tears. Your life may still appear to be a rubble heap, with mounds of dust piles and broken-down places that need repair. But remember - you have His sword and tools in hand. And above you there is a big sign, posted by the Lord's own hand, that says:

God at work. Enemies, beware!