

What Saith the Scripture?

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An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection

An Exposition of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection

by Tom Stewart

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; For I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

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Preface

The things which we both have seen and known from the beginning about the LORD Jesus Christ are the things which I must share with you. Even as we "have tasted that the LORD is gracious" (1Peter 2:3) and "our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1John 1:1), even so these things that I am writing, I write because I desire to have fellowship with you: "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1John 1:3).

Why am I writing to you about the doctrine of Christian perfection?

First, because I desire to be like the Master. I do not wish to be superior to my Master, but I want to be like Him. "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master" (Luke 6:40).

Second, because Christ prayed for our unity. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in One" (John 17:23).

Third, because if you are reading this, you have, most likely, demonstrated faith in Christ. I write to you, not as though you have not demonstrated saving faith, but "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (1Corinthians 2:6).

Fourth, because I desire to promote the unity of our faith unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Likewise, with whatever degree of gift that I can minister, I am writing this "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Fifth, because I desire to present you perfect in Christ Jesus. Unapologetically, I must preach to you Christ, The Hope of Glory, "warning every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

Sixth, because I desire that you may know the Word of God more perfectly, that you may do all the will of God. I encourage you to search the Scriptures to see whether the things I write to you are so (Acts 17:11), because "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God... That the man of God may be perfect" (2Timothy 3:16,17). Not only may he be perfect, but he will be perfect. The place of his perfection is not simply in Heaven, but on earth where Christ prayed for it: "Thy will be done **in earth**, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

And finally, I write this because Christ insists upon our perfection here and now. After all, the only reason why we ought to insist upon any doctrine is because our LORD and Teacher insists upon it. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father

which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

I am well aware that our beloved brother Paul plainly warns us as he did Timothy: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our LORD Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:3-5). I, too, desire to consent to wholesome words and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

For this reason, I am writing to you to set forth the doctrine of Christian perfection (or, entire sanctification). Simply put, Christian perfection is to appropriate Christ by faith in all of His offices, capacities, and relations to meet our every need in life... "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:20, Who "shall supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19), Who is our "Jehovah Jireh" (Genesis 22:14) (literally, the LORD will provide).

I. Unrealistic Idea of Perfection? or, Are We Compassed About With So Great a Cloud of Witnesses?

A. Andrew Murray: *Be Perfect: A Devotional Study of Christ's Command* (1893)

In 1893, Andrew Murray wrote a devotional study of Christ's command for Christian perfection. Appropriately, he entitled it *Be Perfect*. Listen to the heart of this man of God (p.8):

"Jesus said, 'If any will do [His will]... he shall know' [John 7:17]. The same principle holds good in all human attainment. It is only he who has accepted in adoring submission and obedience the command 'Be perfect' [Matthew 5:48] who can hope to know what the perfection is that God asks and gives. Until the Church is prostrate before God, seeking this blessing as her highest good, it will be no wonder if the very Word, instead of being an attraction and a joy, is a cause of apprehension and anxiety, of division and offense."

B. John Wesley: *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767)

You can see that nothing we discuss about Christian perfection is "done in a corner" (Acts 26:26) when we can reach back into church history and find so eminent a testimony as that of John Wesley. Truly we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) who affirm the doctrine of Christian perfection. Read Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (p.106):

"There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture... It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone... It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body... Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin'... It is 'perfect love' (1 John 4:18). This is the essence of it: its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16, etc.)... It is improvable. It is far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase... It is amissible, capable of being lost."

C. Charles G. Finney: *Finney's Systematic Theology* (1846)

Another man of God, Charles G. Finney, recorded in his book (1846), *Finney's Systematic Theology* (pp.355-356):

"It has been common for Christians to suppose, that a state of entire consecration is attainable; but while they believe in the sinfulness of their natures, they would not of course call even entire sanctification, entire sanctification... Call it what you please, Christian perfection, heavenly mindedness, the full assurance of faith or hope, or a state of entire consecration; by all these I understand the same thing. And it is certain, that by whatever name it is called, the thing must be aimed at to be attained. The practicability of its attainment must be admitted, or it cannot be aimed at. And now I humbly inquire, whether to preach any thing short of this is not to give countenance to sin?"

As I read Brother Finney's statement above, I noticed a passage directly preceding it (p.355) where he quotes *Barnes' Notes* on 2 Corinthians 8:1. Brother Finney begins:

"It has long been maintained by orthodox divines, that a person is not a Christian who does not aim at living without sin- that unless he aims at perfection, he manifestly consents to live in sin; and is therefore impenitent. It has been said, and I think truly, that if a man does not, in the fixed purpose of his heart, aim at total abstinence from sin, and at being wholly conformed to the will of God, he is not yet regenerated, and does not so much as mean to cease from abusing God. *Barnes' Notes* upon 2Corinthians viii.1, we have the following: 'The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection- perfection in all things- in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with men; perfection in his prayer, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has **no true religion.**'"

Thus far we have only the testimony of men- "so great a cloud of witnesses"- concerning the doctrine of Christian perfection. They are... "being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). We, however, as those who are "of full age" (literally, perfect) (Hebrews 5:14) require the testimony of the "strong meat" of the Word of God, because only then can we by "reason of use have [our] senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Beware what you believe! Take care to build your doctrine ONLY upon "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

II. "Be Perfect": What Saith the Scripture?

A. It is commanded.

The LORD Jesus Christ commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Because the Father and the Son are one... "he that hath seen Me [Christ] hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)... Christ is our model for Christian perfection. He is both our motivation, as well as example, that we "should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21). The goal: "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

B. We are able to obey the command.

Just the fact that Christ commands us to be perfect is reason enough for us to believe that we can, and ought, to be perfect. Why?

First, the just nature of our LORD **secures** for us the attainability of our perfection on the ground that it is a fair, just, and equitable command. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

Second, the LORD completely understands the capabilities and limitations of each of us. "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Third, our LORD Jesus Christ is completely sympathetic to our circumstances, "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).

Finally, our claim to love God necessitates our obedience to His command to be perfect because His commands are never "grievous" (or, burdensome). Grievous commands are impossible and unbearable. Not so with His command that we should be perfect. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are **not** grievous" (1John 5:3).

C. Christians are perfect.

Perfect describes not only our heavenly Father, but also His earthly children. "Because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). Christians are Scripturally represented as presently perfect, not awaiting future heavenly fulfillment. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Christians are Scripturally represented as actually perfect, not just in theory. "Let us therefore, as be perfect, be thus minded: if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:15).

D. Perfect means sanctified.

Christians are those who are perfect. Those who are perfect are sanctified... "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Christian sanctification is a fact:

(1) "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that **are sanctified** in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1Corinthians 1:2) and

(2) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?... fornicators... idolaters... adulterers... effeminate... abusers of themselves with mankind... thieves... covetous... drunkards... revilers... extortioners... And such **were** some of you: but ye are washed, but **ye are sanctified**" (1Corinthians 6:9-11).

E. Sanctification is fact.

Christian sanctification is a fact. How?

First, via the Word. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). "That He [Christ] might sanctify and cleanse it [the Church] with the washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26).

Second, via faith. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18).

Third, via the Father. "To them that are sanctified by God the Father" (Jude 1).

Fourth, via Christ. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

Finally, via the Holy Ghost. "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16).

F. Sanctification is entire.

Not only did the LORD Jesus Christ command us to be perfect, but the Apostle Paul prayed for the complete sanctification of the Thessalonians. Whether you call it entire sanctification or Christian perfection, it describes the same thing. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). Notice the following:

(1) God sanctifies completely, not simply enough to get us into Heaven, and

(2) Sanctification must take place NOW for it to be preserved until a future event, i.e., "the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ".

G. Perfect means perfect heart.

What is the nature of Christian perfection? Perfection implies a perfect heart. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2Chronicles 16:9). A perfect heart demonstrates a wholehearted seeking of God. "With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:10). Anyone who wholeheartedly seeks after God does no iniquity. "Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways" (Psalm 119:2-3). Therefore, sin in the saints must be contrary to abiding in Christ. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1John 3:6).

H. Perfect means sinless.

In the book of Job, the question is posed, "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of woman, that he should be righteous" (Job 15:14). King David faced the same question after he had committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. "Have mercy upon me, O God... Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:1,2,7). David implored God for mercy. He asked God to cleanse him from sin. He concluded that if God would purge and wash him, he would "be clean... whiter than snow". No telltale residue of sin remains when the LORD, the Creator of Clean Hearts (Psalm 51:10) has purged and washed a sinner.

III. Back to the Basics: The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ

A. "Laying again the foundation"

Whenever problems occur in Christian endeavor, we would do well to check the foundational "principles of the doctrine of Christ" (Hebrews 6:1). The confidence of Paul writing to the Hebrews was his certainty that they would "go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" (Hebrew 6:1).

B. Existence of God

The existence of God is the foundational assumption of true religion. Scripture assumes the existence of God at the outset. "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:10). Everything Scripture reveals to us about who God is and what He does, constitutes the foundation of why we are obliged to obey God. Man stands before God without excuses because God has already made Himself known to man. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). No man can come to God if he does not believe in the existence of God. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

C. Faith in God

Faith in God is a voluntary act of the human will turning toward God. Again, "he that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6). **Faith is the action of the human heart reaching up to God, while grace is God reaching down to man. When they embrace, a man is saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith"** (Ephesians 2:8). You must believe God for yourself, because no one else can do it for you. Even God will not do it for you. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). He who believes is saved.

D. Repentance of sin

Repentance of sin is a voluntary act of the human will turning from sin. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Either a man will turn away from his sin or he will perish from it. The LORD Jesus warns all unregenerate mankind of impending doom if they do not choose to turn away from their sin. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). To repent is to turn your back on sin and turn toward God. To sin is to turn your back on God and embrace sin. **No man can be both sinful and holy.** For this reason Christ makes clear the only alternatives to unregenerate man: repent or perish!

E. Sin

Sin, like faith, is a voluntary act of the human will. Sin is the human will entrenched against God.

1. Scriptural definition of sin

a. Transgression of the law

"Sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4). To transgress the law is to break the law. Scripture does not represent sin as an honest accident, but as a willful, criminal breaking of God's law. Notice that sin is never represented by God to be anything but a willful refusal to do what one knows he ought to do.

b. All unrighteousness

"All unrighteousness is sin" (1John 5:17). Again, man must first choose unrighteousness before it would be proper to label him a sinner. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1John 3:7). If you commit sin, you are a sinner. If you commit murder, you are a murderer. Commit one sin, you are a sinner. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1John 3:8).

c. Whatsoever is not of faith

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). God gives us simple choices. Choose faith or sin. If you choose faith, you reject sin. If you choose sin, you reject faith. You must be a saint or a sinner, **but not both**. To say a Christian **was** a sinner who is now a saint is correct. A Christian was a sinner who is now saved is also correct. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Either saved or a sinner, but never both.

d. Knoweth to do good, and doeth it not

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Sin means we must first know what good we are to do for us to choose not to do it. When we know what the good is that must be done, then, and only then, can we choose it or refuse it. **You cannot sin without first a knowledge of what you should or should not do**, i.e. Thou shalt, thou shalt not. This knowledge the Scripture calls the Law. Voluntarily transgress that Law and you become a sinner.

2. In Adam's fall, we sinned all?

If a man is properly called a sinner only because of his transgression of God's Law, then what must we make of the old, but popular sentiment: In Adam's fall, we sinned all? This has been a common position in the past, as well as the present, but we have been warned to "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men" (Ephesians 4:14). Instead of accepting the position that we have been born sinners with a sinful nature, we should "prove all things" and only "hold fast that which is good" (1Thessalonians 5:21). Before making the accusation of "heretic" toward those who reject the belief that all men are sinners by birth and not simply by choice, before defending the doctrine of sin nature as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), would you not do well to examine the Scripture? "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

3. Sin is criminal.

If it can be proved that all sin is only a result of personal choice to transgress God's law and not also the result of a sinful nature, then all sin must be a criminal act in the eyes of God. If it can be demonstrated from the Scripture that sin is the result of a sinful nature, then sin would simply be an unavoidable calamity. Free choice versus a constitutionally sinful nature. Criminal act versus an unavoidable calamity. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). Which position most accurately justifies God? Sin must be only a personal choice to transgress God's law or why would God say, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4)?

4. Objections answered

Let us examine a few Scriptural passages that some claim support the concept that the human nature is sinful in itself.

a. Genesis 5:3

"Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness and after his image; and called his name Seth." You must assume what you are trying to prove to use this text to support the sin nature position. You must assume that Adam had a sin nature, to prove that he passed it on to Seth. Illogical. Instead, the text asserts that man's moral nature, i.e., his ability to make choices of right versus wrong, just as the Creator makes, was passed from Adam to Seth concurrently with a physical birth.

b. Job 14:4

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job remarks about the plight of man, that the run down physical condition of man (physical depravity) is passed on to the next generation of man by physical birth. Physical depravity is **not** sin. Physical depravity is the resulting run down physical condition due to the actual commission of the first sin.

(1) Death to the sinner

Spiritual death comes to all who sin. Adam was warned: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Scripture makes plain about sin... commit it and die. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Moral depravity is sin. Moral depravity is sinning.

(2) The flesh is the opportunity.

The flesh is the occasion for sin to take place. The flesh itself is not sinful, but when we attempt to satisfy a proper desire of the flesh (i.e., procreation), when specifically told not to (i.e., "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), that is sin... "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4).

(3) Sin had physical consequences.

Man's first sin ad physical consequences:

- (a) "enmity" between Satan and man, especially concerning his flesh (Genesis 3:15),
- (b) "sorrow" in the flesh for the woman in childbearing (Genesis 3:16),
- (c) because of a "cursed" ground (environment) man would toil with "sweat" to "eat" and finally die... "unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:17-19).

(4) Physical depravity is the physical consequence of sin.

Adam's sin had physical consequences. Physical death must now be the rule for all man. The flesh, once an occasion for good... "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight [the flesh], and good for food" (Genesis 2:9)... now becomes the occasion for much evil.

Man's environment, as well as body, have been beat as a result of sin. This is physical depravity, which is **not** sin. However, when man obeys the normal, proper desire of the flesh, when commanded by the LORD to contain it, then man commits sin. This is moral depravity- the act of sinning. Physical depravity precedes moral depravity, but no man has the right to say that he committed adultery because his body forced him! So it would be proper for Job to assert in Job 14:4 that a **physically** depraved human will only beget another physically depraved human.

c. "No man that sinneth not"

"There is no man that sinneth not" (1Kings 8:46); "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20); "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10): all teach the universality of sin among the unregenerate, but do not prove that man has a sin nature, which he is born with. Sin is universal to all unregenerate man; however, of regenerate man God says; "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him: and

he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1John 3:9). Notice, again, that sin is represented in these passages as **an act**, not a constitutionally sinful nature. Of unregenerate man, it is proper to say that none are righteous (Romans 3:10).

d. Psalm 51:5

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." David uses the strong language of repentance. Repentance is to take sides with God against yourself. So *thoroughly* did David condemn himself that he claimed that he even was conceived in sin in his mother's womb! His repentance and this language are proper; however, we should not forget the faithful Psalmist's claim: "O LORD God: Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee" (Psalm 71:5-6). No wonder the Apostle Paul could speak of his **past** life of sin and claim: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:15)! False piety? Not hardly! This is the same Paul who also wrote to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Timothy 4:7). Remember that the context of Psalm 51 is repentance. King David is taking sides with the LORD against himself. Expect the language to correspond to this act of repentance!

e. Psalm 58:3

"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies". What a marked contrast to the faithful Psalmist who the LORD had "holden up from the womb" (Psalm 71:6)! Certainly the wicked do not have the power of speech at birth. This passage affirms that the LORD, the Alpha and Omega, **views the wicked as utterly against Himself- from their birth to their certain death and judgment**. Because the righteous cannot be labeled as being "estranged from the womb", it would be improper to say that this passage proves that all men are born sinners. Instead, this Psalm paints a bleak but accurate picture of the wicked man's birth and judgment.

f. Romans 5:12

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is common amongst evangelical theologians to say: Romans 5:12 means that all sinned by having a sinful nature. These theologians have taught that the possession of a human nature makes one a sinner without the need of committing one sin.

How to Commit Sin Without Even Trying... Be Born a Human Being by The Doctrine of Sin Nature. This facetious title only serves to dramatize a real position. Let's examine Romans 5:12.

Sin entered into the world by one man. That is the Genesis record of the first transgression in the garden of Eden... "and death by sin". The first man sinned and spiritually died (not to mention physically). "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death passes upon all men because all men have sinned. The "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If you commit sin, you die. Only those who commit sin die. It just so happens that "all [men] have sinned". Because "all [men] have sinned"... "death [has] passed upon all men". Sin is an action, not a nature.

If we were to conclude that all men are sinners because Adam sinned, we would be just as logical in saying that all men are righteous because of Christ's free gift. Certainly we cannot maintain the universal salvation of mankind, but neither can we maintain that a man is a sinner by birth. Read the rest of the Romans 5:12-19 context. The comparison is between Christ and Adam "who is the figure of Him that was to come" (Roman 5:15-19):

Adam		Christ
v.15 offense results in many dead	cp.with	v.15 free gift results in abounded to many
v.16 judgment by one results in condemnation	cp.with	v.16 free gift is of many results in justification

v.17 by one man's offense results in death reigned by one	cp.with	v.17 by the gift of One, Jesus Christ, results in abundance of grace/ gift of righteousness
v.18 offense of one results in judgment upon all men to condemnation	cp.with	v.18 righteousness of One results in free gift upon all men to justification
v.19 one man's disobedience results in many were made sinners	cp.with	v.19 obedience of One results in many be made righteous

Read Romans 5:18: "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Remember, the context is comparing Christ to Adam. Offense by Adam, righteousness by Christ. Judgment upon all men by Adam, free gift upon all men by Christ. Condemnation by Adam, justification by Christ. Look at the chart and think.

If it is proper to say:

- (a) Adam's offense brings condemnation and judgment upon all men, and
- (b) Christ's righteousness brings justification and the free gift upon all men;

then it would also be proper to say:

- (a) If Christ's righteousness is only appropriated by a personal act of faith, i.e., "the righteousness of God which is by faith" (Romans 3:22), then
- (b) Adam's offense (i.e., sin) should only be appropriated by a personal act of transgression ["sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4)].

Sin is not something we do because we have a sin nature and were born sinners, but because of a personal choice... "he that **doeth** righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1John 3:7). Sin is a criminal act, not a calamity of our nature.

g. Ephesians 2:3

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." When we walked after the flesh and fulfilled the desires of the flesh- in direct opposition to the commandments of God's law- we "**were** by nature the children of wrath". To commit sin is to be morally depraved. And to be morally depraved is to be "by nature the children of wrath". Notice, Paul is inspired to say we **were**- not are- the children of wrath, when we walked after the flesh. When we stop walking after the flesh, we no longer are "by nature the children of wrath". Even still, Paul associates sin with personal choices and not with a constitutionally sinful nature. No man can rightly think, after reading Scripture: My sin nature made me do it, or I commit sin because I was born a sinner.

Think about it. What Scripturally justifies God the most? "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). The doctrine of sin nature: that sin is the result of a necessary choice due to a nature over which we had no control? The doctrine of sin nature makes sin a mere calamity. Now what about the opposing position that makes sin **only** a deliberate choice of unbelief to reject the love of God "that we keep His commandments" (1John 5:3)? Sin now becomes a crime and not just a mere calamity. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13).

IV. Complete: Our Salvation from Sin

A. How clean is clean?

The question can be legitimately asked: "To what extent does God cleanse us from sin?" Again, "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

1. 1 John 1:7

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." How much sin? All sin. What kind of sin? All sin. To be cleansed from "all sin" is to be perfectly clean. Who cleanses? Christ cleanses. How does Christ cleanse? With His blood.

2. 1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To whom is the Apostle John writing? "My little children" (2:1). What will the LORD do when His little children confess their transgressions? Forgive and cleanse. How completely will He cleanse? He will cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness. Can we claim a child of God is honestly confessing his sin, if he is still knowingly harboring other unconfessed sin? Never! Only a hypocrite will attempt to persuade someone that he is truly repentant when holding on to known sin. Even so, when one truly confesses his sins, the result is: our faithful and just God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Titus 2:13-14

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us for a purpose: "that He might redeem us from **all** iniquity". What glorifies Our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ more: to reform us from a few bad habits or to "redeem us from all iniquity"? Why do professed Christians insist that they are not redeemed from all iniquity? Or at least, why do professed Christians complain among themselves about "sin areas" that have not been taken care of? As Brother Finney stated: "When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ."

4. 1 John 3:5

"And ye know He was **manifested to take away our sins**; and in Him is no sin." Who was manifested to take away our sins? Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). His purpose was, and is, "to take away our sins". All our sins. Are we to expect our sins (plural) to be completely removed when we get to Heaven- if we should ever get there? Surely, because "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Revelation 21:27). Can we expect our sins (plural) to be completely removed before death? Certainly! Scripture affirms: "as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). How is He? "in Him is no sin" (1John 3:5). If in Him is no sin, then so are we to be "in this world"!

5. John 1:29

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Obviously, no one in the world will have any sin taken away if personal faith in Christ is not exercised. The Lamb of God is effectual to whosoever will.

6. Psalm 51:9

"Blot out all mine iniquities." David asked God to blot out all his iniquities. Would the LORD grant such a request to an Old Testament saint, much less to a New Testament saint? Listen to the Scripture. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Proverbs 10:24). David requested God to blot out all his iniquities with the full assurance that it would be granted. "Purge

me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). How much more a New Testament saint should assure himself from the Scripture that the LORD will treat him so!

7. Matthew 1:21

"Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." The name Jesus is inseparable from the idea of Saviour. Saviour of who? His people. Save His people from what? Their sins. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). Jesus came, not merely to save us from the consequences of our sin, but also to save us from sinning.

8. Romans 6:18

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Christ has made His children free from sin and its consequences... death (spiritual). Freedom from sin means we are now "the servants of righteousness". To not walk righteously means to walk again as a slave of sin. It is plain that Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1Peter 2:24). Christ not only saved us, but continues to sanctify us.

B. What must we do to be free from sin?

Since our salvation from sin is complete, how does God expect man to cooperate with Him in this salvation?

1. 1 Corinthians 15:34

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not." The LORD never demands man to do anything halfway, if it were possible. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). There is no duality to man's moral choice. The choice is either sinful or holy, but never both. There is, in the truest sense, a unity of moral action. [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney]

If we awake to righteousness, we will not be sinning. If we sleep to righteousness, we will be sinning. Notice that 1Corinthians 15:34 does **not** allow the following duality of moral choice:

- (1) Awake to righteousness and sin, or
- (2) Awake to unrighteousness and sin not. Both combinations are absurd!

2. Hebrews 12:1

"Let us **lay aside** every weight, and the **sin** which doth so easily beset us." How are we to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (12:1)? This is the "race" of faith. We cannot run with the weight of sin. To weigh ourselves down with sin is to stop the running of the race of faith. Either we "lay aside... sin" and "run... the race", or we weigh ourselves down with sin and cease to run the race. Do one or the other, but never both. There is, and must be, a unity of moral action.

3. Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which **no man** shall see the LORD." Holiness is a voluntary choice. Sin is a voluntary choice. Choose sin, and you must cease to be holy. Choose holiness, and you must cease to be a sinner. Obviously, a man cannot be sinful against his will any more than he can be holy against his will.

4. Ephesians 1:4

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Christ hath chosen us before the foundation of the world to "be holy and without blame". Christ hath chosen us so that we would choose to "be holy and without blame". "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). His predestination and choosing of us in Him, before the foundation of the world, is based upon His foreknowledge that we would choose to "be holy and without blame". Only God has foreknowledge. Christ's choice of us is praise to His sovereignty, while yielding us the benefit of taking away our sin.

5. 1 Peter 1:16

"Be ye holy; for I am holy." Why are we obliged to be holy? Because God is holy. The foundation of moral obligation is... as He is, so ought we to be. "Because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21).

C. Compare those who commit sin to those who commit righteousness.

What should we understand about those who do, and do not, sin?

1. 1 John 3:6

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." Whoever walks, remains, and continues in Christ is not committing sin. Whoever is sinning has not seen or known Christ. How can these things be? To answer that, we must study the purpose for the writing of 1John.

1John was written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1John 5:13). What is the basis upon which we can know that we know Christ? "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments" (1John 2:3). If we walk in obedience, the Holy Spirit testifies that "we know Him". On the other hand, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is **a liar**, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). If we claim to know Christ, while walking in disobedience, the Holy Spirit testifies that we are a liar and the Truth is not in us. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Assurance of salvation is only given to those who walk in obedience. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27). "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1Peter 4:17-18).

2. 1 John 5:18

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Whoever is born of God is not sinning. No man who is sinning can claim to be born of God. The Holy Spirit does not testify contrary to the Word. The "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father... beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:15-16), if we "are led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14). A backslidden Christian will deprive himself of the testimony of the Spirit of God that he is "born of God". All that a backslidden Christian will have left to testify of his salvation will be his comfortless memories and memorabilia of salvation, that both lost and saved show about. All that the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ will testify to the backslider, is a sense of God's anger and righteous judgment... "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Hebrews 10:27)... "except ye repent" (Luke 13:3).

3. 1 John 3:9

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Strong language. One properly cannot do what he will not do. Take the example of God and His unwillingness to lie. "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19). God wills not to lie. Paul writes to Titus... "God, that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). God cannot lie because He will not lie. In the same way, whoever is born of God cannot sin because he is **unwilling** to commit sin "for His Seed remaineth in him".

4. 1 John 3:7-8

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." True righteousness is committed by those who are righteous. Commit one act of true righteousness, and you are righteous. Commit one act of true sin, and you are of the devil. Is this a hard thing to hear? Our pattern for righteousness is Christ, for "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (3:7).

5. 1 John 3:10

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Just as he that doeth righteousness is righteous, he that doeth not righteousness is not of God. This follows to reason with the Spirit's testimony of His Word, especially John's epistle.

V. Christ: Our Saviour from Sin

A. Who is Christ?

1. Jesus (literally, Saviour)

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Christ's name, Jesus, reminds us how great a God we have. He came to save us from our sins... from sin's penalty, from sin's consequences, **and from sinning itself**.

When we appropriate Christ by faith in all His offices, relations, and capacities to meet every need in our lives, then we truly are "perfect, even as [our]Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). To appropriate Jesus, our Saviour, by faith, meets our need of salvation from sin's consequences, as well as from sinning itself. Jesus came, not simply "for the remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25) and to deliver us "from the wrath to come"(Luke 3:7), but that we would "be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (Romans 6:11). Jesus gives us a present tense salvation.

Salvation from sin is not only Jesus revealing Himself as "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10), but also as our present Saviour. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). To not live longer in sin means to not be sinning. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:15). In response, we shall not sin because we are "His servants... of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16).

2. The Lamb of God

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). What does the Lamb of God do? He takes away the sin of the world. In what sense? Only of those of the world who believe. "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Just as the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament was necessary to take away sin, so the Lamb of God's once-for-all-sacrifice takes away all sin in the New Testament.

3. His Blessed Son Jesus

"God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26). Why did God send and raise up His Blessed Son Jesus? To bless us. How? In turning away every one of us from our iniquities. To be without sin is a blessing. You can see that if man is not shackled with the extra baggage of original sin, a sinful nature, and constitutional sin, then a man who has turned away from his sin- courtesy of the Father's Blessed Son Jesus- is **truly** blessed! That man is perfect in Christ. No metaphysical or theological sleight of hand is needed to say that the Father's Blessed Son Jesus has blessed us in making us as perfect as He is perfect. Hallelujah!

4. The Head of the Church and the Saviour of the Body

"Even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:23-27). What a mouthful! We are the Church... "which is His Body" (Ephesians 1:23). Christ is the Head of the Church... the Head of our Body. "He is the Saviour of the Body" (5:23).

An example of sanctification is the use of the headship of Christ to the Church, to demonstrate how the wife ought to be subject to the husband. In the same way, "as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (5:25), husbands ought to love their wives and give themselves for them. This is practical sanctification or Christian perfection.

The object of Christ in giving Himself to the Church is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (5:26). A pure Church. A clean Church. "A glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (5:27). Divorce the Church from the Word, and you rob the saints of their means to walk as perfect Christians. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word... Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:9,11). Cleansing from sin and preventing sin, come from the Christian's voluntary compliance and conformity to the Word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). Christian perfection means that we are cleansed and set apart to Christ for His service by the instrumentality of the Word of God. The result is a body of Christians who are "holy and without blemish" (5:27) not merely in theological theory, but in actual practice.

Christ, the Saviour of the Body, prayed for our Christian perfection in His exemplary prayer... "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10). In spite of all the limitations of our flesh, the Saviour of the Body prays for our present compliance "in earth, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10) that we "should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). If this does not teach you Christian perfection, what else must the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the Body do?

5. Our Redeemer from All Our Iniquity

"Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from **all** iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13-14). Who is the Blessed Hope? Christ is the Blessed Hope of the Christian. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time" (Hebrews 9:28). Christ inspires hope in His people. Why has our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ given Himself for us? "That He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (2:14). The Word of God says it. We ought to believe it. How much iniquity? "**All** iniquity." If Christ is not Our Redeemer from **All** Our Iniquity, then how can He "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (2:14)? When professed Christians do not walk in purity, then Christ is not their Redeemer from all their iniquity.

6. Mercy Seat for Our Sins

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the world" (1John 2:2). We are the children of God because "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). The Apostle John addressed the first epistle of John to "my little children" (1John 2:1). John told his "little children" that Jesus Christ is the "propitiation", or mercy seat, for our sins. In the Old Testament, the mercy seat was the covering of the ark where the LORD accomplished atonement for His people. When Christ is represented as the Mercy Seat for Our Sins, it is difficult for the Christian to not be overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude to Christ for cleansing **all** our sins and making us one with Himself.

7. In Him Should All Fulness Dwell

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in Heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight: **if** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven" (Colossians 1:19-23). The evidence can be continually accumulated to prove that Christ was manifested to take away our sins, in the plural-- not the singular, in the present-- not simply the past, in the actual-- not simply the theoretical. Who else but Christ can be called In Him Should All Fulness Dwell? This One reconciles, or brings "at-one-ment", to His people who "were sometime alienated and enemies" of His. And what is His purpose? Again, "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight" (1:22). Does this sound like a partial redemption from sin, or a future event that takes place when we finally get to Heaven? Not hardly. His salvation is complete, and His redemption is **now**. Notice the "if" provision attached to the end of this passage... "**If** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (1:23). Our continuing in the faith is the basis of His presentation of us "holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight" (1:22). To not continue is to not be presented "holy and unblameable and unreprouable". "You... hath He reconciled... to present you holy and unblameable... if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" (1:21-23). To not be presented is to not be reconciled. You cannot say you had what you thought you had if you do not continue. This method of evidence is acceptable to Him in Whom All Fulness Should Dwell. It makes sense to me, too.

8. The Hope of Glory

"Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:27-28). The Hope of Glory is a worthy name for Christ. The Hope of Glory is in you, if you know Him. Think of it: We are "perfect in Christ Jesus" Who is "in you, the Hope of Glory". With all of that working for us, should not Christians be embarrassed to continually be talking about sin areas and sin problems that they are still working on? As if sin, especially their sin, was so complex a problem that it could not be immediately dealt with! What is the solution for sin? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repent. That is to take sides with God against yourself, just like David (Psalm 51). How do you prevent sin from returning? "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11). The Word of God hidden in our hearts, ready to be claimed and obeyed-- not just memorized in our minds-- is the Hope of Glory's sin prevention program.

You've got to love the heart of the Apostle Paul, too. Preaching, warning, and teaching "every man in all wisdom" (1:28). Cooperating with the Holy Spirit, Paul strove to secure the sanctification of his readers and listeners. He preached and taught, but he also had to warn. Recall that Paul was warning Christians. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). Christians are reconciled.

Is it proper to warn Christians? Obviously, yes! Warn them of what?

a. Necessity of the Christian to continue

Warn them to continue.

(1) If ye continue... Then you are a true disciple. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Live in God's Word because it is your life. "Man shall not

live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Measure your spirituality, or lack of it, by your relationship to the Word of God. "And His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). Freedom is not measured by what human government allows its people, but by how much Truth has found its place in your heart... "ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

(2) If ye continue... Then you are truly reconciled. "You... hath He reconciled... to present you holy and unblameable... If ye continue in the faith" (Colossians 1:21-23). To be reconciled to God is to be made at one with God. Christ's reconciliation is conditional. Though it is offered to whosoever will and "the world" (John 3:16), reconciliation only effects the one who puts his trust in Christ. "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). Reconciliation is conditioned upon faith. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23).

Faith, by its very nature, requires the believer to continually exercise that faith to receive the promised blessings of that faith. "The other disciples therefore said unto [Thomas] , We have seen the LORD. But [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe [present tense unbelief]. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing [present tense faith]. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed [past tense faith]: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed [potentially, future tense faith]" (John 20:25-29).

b. Scope of what it means to continue

"Continue" is a more important word in the Christian vocabulary, than many have been taught. Notice the scope of what a Christian is enjoined to "continue in"... the love of God, the grace of God, the faith, His goodness, prayer, the doctrine, the things which you have learned, brotherly love, and that which you have heard fro the beginning.

"Continue in":

(1) Continue in the love of God.

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15:9).

(2) Continue in the grace of God.

"Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). Grace is given by God and is necessary for salvation... "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Again, though grace is given by God, we must be persuaded to continue in it... "Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

(3) Continue in the faith.

Paul and Barnabas "returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21-22). Again, faith to be true faith must be a continuing faith. Faith does not rest simply on what it has believed or even upon what it will believe. Faith must **continually** work... "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

(4) Continue in the goodness of God.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22). God's goodness, like His grace, only gives us benefit "if thou continue in His goodness". God's goodness is conditional, even upon those who have already received His goodness. If you do not **continue** in the grace of God, then "thou shalt be cut off", just like unbelieving Israel... for "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

(5) Continue in prayer.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:2-3). "Pray without ceasing" (1Thessalonians 5:17). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Paul was a bold apostle, fearlessly opening his mouth where no man had gone before, but he still asked the help of fellow Christians that he would have the opportunity to utter "the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). Why is it a mystery? Because we have yet to discover all the Truth as it "is in Jesus" (Ephesian 4:21).

(6) Continue in the doctrine.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1Timothy 4:16). What is the result of paying attention to yourself and the doctrine (teachings of the Word of God)? "Thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (4:16). Paul practiced what he preached. "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:18-19). Again, salvation is past, present, and future:

- (1) past: "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50),
- (2) present: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), and
- (3) future: "This shall turn to my salvation" (Philippians 1:19).

(7) Continue in brotherly love.

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). To continue in brotherly love assures our hearts that we are the children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1John 3:14).

9. The Very God of Peace

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). Who is The Very God of Peace? The One who Paul asked to sanctify wholly the Church. Already He has pronounced about this Laodicean Church and final phase of Church history: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold or hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spur thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:15-18). "Lukewarm" means that the pot on the stove was hot at one time (just as Christians were once hot with love to their LORD) but has now cooled off. Cold is pagan and lost. Hot is true Christianity. Because of Laodicean Christianity's lukewarmness, Christ is so sick to His stomach that He threatens to vomit these out of His mouth. Professed Christians who are backslidden from their "First Love" (Revelation 2:40, sense no need of Christ. Speak to them of The Very God of Peace, and they will wonder at you as to who, what, and why you speak thus. They will say, "Oh, I **already** know that. Don't speak to me about that." If you do not realize your need of Christ, you cannot be wholly sanctified. Without that sanctification you can only be described as: "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The Very God of Peace speaks to you: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). That is the warning and the invitation. The LORD Jesus Christ, the LORD in the midst of the seven candlesticks (Revelation 1:13), makes His personal

appeal to His wayward Church to accept Him and His cleansing and His complete sanctifying: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

10. Our Sanctification

"Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30). Christ, Our Sanctification, has already given to us the commanding motivation for Christian perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Certainly the LORD has commanded and we ought to obey, but why should we obey? Simply, because "God is". Because God is, we ought... God is holy (1Peter 1:16), so we ought to be holy. "The Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), so ought we to be perfect. He who is infinite gives His all, while we who are finite give our all. This is perfection. Discover who and what God is and you will know the foundational reason why you are obliged to be like Him. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17).

B. Christian perfection is to appropriate Christ by faith in all of His offices, capacities, and relations to meet our every need in life.

Not only does Christ motivate us to Christian perfection, but He gives us the assistance needed to secure our sanctification. Call it entire sanctification or Christian perfection. Both describe the same thing. Listen to the yearning of Christ, Our Sanctification: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). What better way to sound the call for Christian perfection... "Learn of Me"?

All that any Christian needs to know about Christian perfection is based upon our knowledge of Christ. For this reason "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Peter 1:3-4).

Is it any wonder that the Apostle Peter enjoins us at the end of his epistle... "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18)? Christian perfection demands growth. True growth goes beyond the mere intellectual assent to what the Scripture states about Christ, but rests upon how we have personally appropriated Christ, by faith, to be all and do all that He says.

VI. Christian Perfection: "Almost Thou Persuadest Me"?

A. Romans 7, especially verses 14 through 25

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Opponents of this doctrine of Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, in this life, claim that this seventh chapter of Romans is a sad but accurate portrayal of what a Christian cannot avoid as part of the Christian experience. These, who would label Christian perfection as a false doctrine, claim that Romans chapter seven is proof that Christian perfection is a fantasy and that entire sanctification in this life is something they wish were true, but, alas, only in Heaven will it be true. O wretched creatures they are! Who shall deliver them from their body of death? But, "what saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

Most will probably admit that Romans 7 describes walking in the flesh, which is the legal experience, while Romans 8 depicts walking in the Spirit, which is the gospel experience. The theme of Romans 7 is the legal experience-- either of a backslider or of a convicted person who never has been converted. A brief outline of Romans 7:

(1) the dominion of the law (vv.1-3),

- (2) deliverance from the law (vv.4-6),
- (3) the distress of sin (vv.7-13),
- (4) the Slough of Despond (vv.14-24), and
- (5) the dawn of deliverance.

1. The dominion of the law (vv.1-3)

"The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (7:1). The law dominates a man as long as he has breath. Paul shows how a man is married to the law 'til death do us part. To illustrate, a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If she marries another while her husband is alive, she is an adulteress. But if her husband is dead, "she is free".

2. Deliverance from the law (vv.4-6)

"But now we are delivered from the law" (7:6). How are we delivered? "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (7:4). Death to the law comes by the body of Christ. Paul makes it no mystery about the relation of the Christian to the law:

- (1) "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (7:4) and
- (2) "now we are delivered from the law" (7:6).

3. The distress of sin (vv.7-13)

"But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13). The law is described:

- (1) The law is not sin. "Is the law sin? God forbid" (7:7),
- (2) No sin is possible without the knowledge of the law. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law" (7:7), and
- (3) The law is holy, just, and good. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (7:12).

Sin is also described:

- (1) Knowledge of sin comes by the law. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law" (7:7),
- (2) Sin takes advantage of the law to produce death. "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (7:11), and
- (3) Sin is exceeding sinful because it uses the law, which is good, to produce death. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13).

4. The Slough of Despond (vv.14-24)

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Those who are in the despondency of sin are "carnal [literally, fleshly], sold under sin" (7:14). I do not expect anyone to defend this as victorious Christianity. Look

at this wretched creature caught in the Slough of Despond:

(1) He is a slave of sin. "I am carnal, sold under sin" (7:14). "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (7:23).

(2) He is frustrated. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good" (7:15-16). "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:19-20).

(3) He has lost control. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:17). "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:20).

(4) He loathes himself. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (7:18).

(5) He is in despair. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24).

5. The dawn of deliverance (v.25)

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (7:25). What does the wretched man of verse 24 now exclaim? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD." What has caused this change of heart, change of mind? Listen to him reason.

Now, I think I understand... Either I will serve the law of God with my mind (i.e., what I know is right, via the law), or I will serve the law of sin with my flesh. But not both! The law of God tells me what is right, while the law of sin wants to control me through my flesh. But, wait... I remember... "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (Romans 6:11). What a breath of fresh air to the soul!

6. Victory! (Romans 8)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). No condemnation to them who walk after the Spirit! This is the gospel experience. Until the LORD Jesus Christ is revealed to the heart by faith, our sanctification will not be secured. Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, will continue to be only such stuff as dreams are made of. But... "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4). Reveal **Him Who Came in the Likeness of Sinful Flesh** to the heart, by faith, and you will secure the sanctification of the believer... who walks "after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

B. 1 John 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." This verse has often been appropriated by opponents of the doctrine of Christian perfection to prove that no man can say he has no sin. Taken out of context, that is just what it seems to say. But "what saith the Scripture?"

Does this teach us that we have a sinful nature and that only the deceived will say that they are entirely sanctified? If that is the teaching of 1:8, then **why** does 1:7 say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin", and why does

1:9 say that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? We now have the dilemma of reconciling verses 7 and 9 with verse 8. Remember, one part of Scripture will never contradict another part of Scripture. "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5) is a basic revelation of the nature of God. He is the One "Who coverest [Himself] with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2). Of this same One the Psalmist declares: "in Thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). Why teach "little children" (2:1) that God is light? Because this reveals to the children of God, the exclusive nature of God. As light opposes darkness, so must sin oppose holiness. **Darkness cannot be found in light, and light cannot be found in darkness. In the same way, sin cannot be found in the children of God.**

Consider the following as an explanation of verses 5 through 10. The prior revelation is "that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5). The present problem is with one of us when we "walk in darkness" (1:6). What follows in verses 6 through 10 is a progressive argument as the backslider proclaims his innocence. The claim of the backslider is followed by a conclusion of authority as to the real nature of the backslider. Each claim and conclusion is met with a counter argument designed to disarm the backslider and secure his repentance.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1:6). The claim is, *I have fellowship with God*. The present problem is that "we" are walking in darkness while claiming to be in fellowship with God. This is an obvious lie. God authoritatively concludes that "we lie, and do not the Truth".

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:7). If each child of God is walking in the light that dwells with God (Daniel 2:22), then a condition of fellowship exists with all concerned. If the child of God has returned to obedience, he has repented of his sin. Now it is proper to say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". This is a return to normal Christianity, which is Christian perfection.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (1:8). Continuing to assert **our** innocence inspite of **our** ongoing walk in darkness, **our** claim is: *I have no sin*. Just like a backslider... after being accused of being a liar, we dig in our heels and defiantly claim to have no sin. God concludes: "we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." When we engage in sin, we deceive ourselves. Obviously, this verse does **not** teach us that Christian perfection is self deception.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9). God faithfully counters the backslider's continuing obstinance with His continued demand of unconditional surrender. It is just for God to forgive us our sins, but only if we repent. When a backslider repents, he becomes just as pure as the lost sinner who repents. God cleanses from all unrighteousness. All means any and every sin that would prevent the child of God from being as perfect as the "Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). God gives 100% of His infinite, while we give 100% of our finite. This is Christian perfection.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us" (1:10). Still impenitent, we dislike being called deceived, and adamantly maintains our innocence. Emphatically, we say: *I have not sinned!* The LORD persistently reminds us that we are calling Him a liar, "and His Word is not in us". Warning to all of you who profess Christ to be your Saviour, while living in known sin:

(1) you "do not the Truth" (1:6),

(2) "the Truth is not in " you (1:8), and

(3) "His Word is not in " you (1:10)! If that gives you no comfort, then you are getting the message! Repent, and quit claiming your innocence. Agree with God about your sin, and receive 100% cleansing. Return to Christian perfection.

C. Philippians 3:12

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This is another passage that may be appropriated by casual readers of the Bible and mistaken to mean that the Apostle Paul claimed to not know Christian perfection. Again, upon closer examination of the passage, verses 7 through 16, it can be seen that Paul plainly claimed to be perfect! Notice verse 15. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Look at verse 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Our Christianity demands that we reconcile verse 12 with verses 15 and 16; otherwise, we can cite verses to prove anything, while ignoring the context.

Paul uses the language of Olympic-like games as a means to illustrate two kinds of perfection, one which he claims to have obtained (verses 15 and 16), and the other which he claims to have not obtained (verse 12). We see the Olympic games in his use of words:

- (1) "what things were gain to me" (3:7),
- (2) "I counted loss for Christ" (3:7),
- (3) "That I may win Christ" (3:8),
- (4) "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (3:11),
- (5) "reaching forth unto those things which are before" (3:13),
- (6) "I press toward the mark" (3:14), and
- (7) "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

In what sense had Paul not attained perfection? Paul had not attained unto the resurrection of the dead (3:11). "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (3:11,2). Paul admits to a kind of Christian perfection that he had not achieved. Christian perfection is not static, that is, it does not stand still. It must "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18). Growth implies that we are not dead. Until we are dead, we will not have attained unto the resurrection of the dead, nor will we have achieved the final level of growth as well as the final stage of Christian perfection.

In what sense had Paul attained perfection? Paul considered himself to be perfect in that he conducted himself according to rule. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2Timothy 2:5). To strive lawfully is to play by the rules. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (3:16). Paul understood that his race is not over until he receives his crown of righteousness. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the Righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but **unto all them also that love His appearing**" (2Timothy 3:6-8).

In the meantime, Paul understood that our perfection resides in that we, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [we] press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14). Again, though Christian perfection is to be as wholeheartedly complete as one can be at any moment in time, we must grow. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (3:15). "Otherwise minded" does **not** mean sin. It implies new offices, relations, and capacities of Christ, **yet to be discovered**, that need to be appropriated by faith to meet our every need in life. This is

Christian perfection.

D.1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Paul counted himself as the chief of sinners. Was that false humility? No. Paul, like David, admitted his sin. David said, "I acknowledge my transgressions" (Psalm 51:3). Paul claimed he "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1:13). Paul, like David, was penitent, and as such, he could not see anyone as being a worse sinner than himself. David declared, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1:15).

Was the Apostle Paul only employing poetic license to wax eloquent about his sin? No. To describe this only as strong poetry is to display a want of knowledge of the inner workings of repentance. Repentance means you must see yourself the way God saw you when you were sinning. "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Repentance does not seek to cast blame upon anyone else, except where it belongs-- squarely upon yourself! Who then should be at the top of the list of sinners, as far as the penitent are concerned? Certainly a mirror will give an accurate picture! If we put anyone else at the top of our list, then we begin to hypocritically share blame and to minimize just how bad we really are. Paul demonstrated true repentance. Paul demonstrated Christian perfection.

VII. Christ: The Example of Christian Perfection

Christ not only commanded Christian perfection-- "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)-- but He, better than anyone else, exemplified that a man in human flesh, on this earth, **can** walk perfectly without sin-- "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Is it really necessary to prove that any man, living or dead, has attained Christian perfection, when we have Christ's example?

To understand properly the humanity of Christ is to appreciate that Christ's perfect life in the flesh was **not due to His divinity**, but "**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). **Study the humanity of Christ, and you must see how appropriate Christ is as the example of Christian perfection!** "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1Peter 2:21-22).

A. That God became man is astounding!

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Timothy 3:16). The plot is so astounding that you can picture the angels in Heaven sitting at the edge of their seats, craning their necks to see what the Son of Man would do next... "which things the angels desire to look into" (1Peter 1:12).

1. Prophecy

The LORD pronounced the prophecy of a coming Messiah by the prophet Isaiah. "Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [literally, God with us]" (Isaiah 7:14). The LORD planned to send His Son, Who when He is come, is "God with us". "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This Child is "The Mighty God"!

2. Fulfillment

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,14). No longer does Scripture prophesy that God becomes flesh. He has already come. Christ has come with His name, "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13), and still those who profess Christ in this late stage of Church history complain, "*I just can't understand the Bible!*"! If Christ is the Word of God and you do not know the Word of God, then you do not know Christ!

3. In the likeness of sinful flesh

"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). God forbid that anyone should ever accuse Christ of sin, but how did Christ take on human flesh without sinning? This is a difficulty for the doctrine of sin nature. Some who hold this faulty doctrine claim that Christ extinguished the sin in His flesh the moment He came into it. If this were true, Christ's perfect life, while on this planet, could not be credited to grace or faith. If this faulty doctrine were true, why should anyone be impressed that He did not commit sin? Perhaps... Christ came into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh" to demonstrate the power and victory that the weakest saint could enjoy through appropriating Christ by faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). But, what about this phrase, "sinful flesh"? If sin is an act of the will, a transgressing of the law (1John 3:4), then something is only holy or sinful in relation to how one chooses. For one's flesh to be sinful, one's choice must first have been sinful. "Sinful" is appropriate to describe man's flesh... "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). If this is not correct, then how could Brother Paul beseech us to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Romans 12:1)? No longer "sinful flesh", but now holy flesh!

4. Made under the law

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). God's time is always appropriate. Should any heresy arise to claim that Jesus Christ did not come in human flesh and that He was not as truly man as you or I, this phrase should stop that lie-- "made of a woman". But, if we "are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), what does this mean, "made under the law"? A few points should be made about the law of God.

a. The law is holy.

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1Timothy 1:8).

b. Justification is by faith.

"No man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11). No saint has ever been justified by the law. The just have **always- and- only** been justified by faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17. Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 are all the same quotation of Habakkuk 2:4).

c. The law is still necessary.

The law is just as important now as it has ever been. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). Christ presently promotes the law. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

d. The law is not ceremonial, but moral.

What is the law of which we speak? The law is **not** the ceremonial law of the old covenant. "For the [ceremonial] law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect... For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:1,4,14). Christ is the once for all sacrifice for those who walk sanctified.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). God's moral law is unchanging. The Decalogue (the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20), as well as "all the law and the prophets", have been boiled down to one simple requirement... **PERFECT LOVE**. This is moral law, necessitating moral choice. This is not simply advice. This is law. Refuse obedience and... "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "And death and hell [will be] cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

James describes the law as the royal law ["If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8)] and as the law of liberty ["So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12)]. Brother John would probably call the law the *law of love* because he wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3).

e. The purpose of the law is to define sin.

What is the purpose of the law? The law was given to define what is a transgression of the law. It tells us what is sin. How else can we know how to avoid sin unless the law shows us intelligently what we are avoiding? Remember, "sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4). The law "was added because of transgression" (Galatians 3:19) for "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). Without law, there can be no sin, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

Some may say that the best way to eliminate sin is to eliminate the law. God forbid! But, isn't that what we promote when we insist that those who require obedience to God's law are *legalists*? "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7).

Because the purpose of the law is not to justify anyone-- never has and never will-- for "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11)-- it must merely state that the one who practices the law must live by the law. "And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:12). In this regard, the law is very cause- and-effect, matter- of- fact mechanical. How like the preaching of dead churches! **Enough knowledge to condemn the hearers, but not enough to secure their loving obedience in an entirely sanctified walk!**

For the law to be law, it must be more than advice. The law must have a penalty to be law. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) tells us that those who sin have earned, and do deserve, the payment of death. Sin's penalty is death. Knowing that a righteous man is "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1), we understand "that the law is not made for a righteous man [to reward or justify him], but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane [to penalize or punish them]..." (1Timothy 1:9, as well as v.10).

f. Christ upholds the law perfectly.

What is the relation of Christ to the law? Because of Christ's unity with the Father-- "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:11)-- it is plain to see that Christ gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Christ supports the law. Again: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-20). Christ advocates the law. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:7-8).

The LORD Jesus Christ said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:7-8). He delighted in obeying the law! Christ testified on His own behalf: "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Christ obeyed the law perfectly. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Obedience to God's law was so important to Christ, He willingly laid down His life on the cross!

g. The law completely points to Christ.

What is the relation of the law to Christ? God is clear about the condition of all unregenerate man... "the Scripture [i.e., the Law] hath concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22) because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23; 5:12). Because all have sinned, all are under sin. Remember, sin, which "is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4), is a voluntary act of the human will entrenching itself against God. Unrighteous actions beget a pathetic condition... "all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). What is the effect of the law that concludes "all under sin" (3:22)? The result is "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (3:22-23). Because all men are under sin, all men need to put their faith in Christ. Man under sin has been graciously offered a wonderful alternative to his certain judgment of death. What is that alternative? Life! "That the promise by faith of [in] Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (3:22).

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). The law points us to Christ, and why shouldn't it? After all, Christ did give the law to Moses! "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). The end result of the law for the unrighteous "is death" (Romans 6:23), while "Christ is the end [result] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (10:4). It makes sense, now that we read Christ's statement: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He has providentially placed Himself where all men can trust Him, where all men can see that their only alternative to death by the law, is faith in Christ.

h. Christ expects perfect obedience to His law.

Are we really expected to obey God's law? Can you honestly ask that question when you think about it? Obviously, Christ expects obedience, or else His commands become merely the advice of a meddling parent to a wayward child. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27). This is more than advice. This is God's moral law. This is the law of love. Our beloved brother, Paul, agrees with the LORD Jesus: "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). This is what Paul further described as "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

Love, for the Christian, is more than emotion or physical arousal. "For **this** is the love of God, that **we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous**" (1John 5:3). Love is obeying God. "**If ye love Me, keep My commandments**" (John 14:15). "**He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest myself to him**" (John 14:21).

On the other hand, disobedience is classed with a lying profession of Christ, that has no other hope than the lake of fire. "**He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him**" (1John 2:4). "And **all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**" (Revelation 21:8)... "Except ye repent" (Luke 13:3).

Law is the concept of *oughtness*. Why ought men to do what they know they should do? Certainly because God has commanded them to obey. But why *ought* men to do what they know they should do? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Because God is perfect, we should be perfect. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Peter 1:16). Because God is holy, we should be holy. Why, then, should we be what we ought to be? **Because God is.** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6). "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because **as He is, so are we in this world**" (1John 4:17). Find out Who and what Christ is in all of His offices, relations, and capacities; then appropriate them by faith... This sounds familiar!

Now, let us conclude a prior question... what does this mean, "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4)? How can it be said that Christ was "made under the law" (4:4)? Because Christ actually became a man. He can completely sympathize with man and understand what it is like to be required to obey the law of God. "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).

B. That Christ became our servant is humbling!

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion [literally, habit] as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). We are enjoined to have the mind of Christ. If Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, it was only because He is God. If you have created the universe and you do providentially superintend it, you must have a large reputation! What happened to Christ-- He did to Himself. He "made Himself of no reputation". He went from somebody, to nobody. He "took upon Him the form of a servant". God's choice is wisdom. He will pick a servant's form, if it will best accomplish His purpose. He humbled Himself as only a man needs to humble himself. He became obedient in the same way we must obey to please those who rule over us. He actually died a physical death. **He was just like one of us!**

"The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16). This was true with the Father and the Son, and it is also true of ourselves and Christ. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Why would Christ do this? Because He was the most preeminent man. He was the most humble servant. "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all" (Mark 10:44). Christ sets the pattern for the rest of us.

C. That Christ suffered for us is sanctifying!

If Christ was not truly man, of what value are His sufferings? If His flesh was not our flesh, then His pain was not our pain. If His suffering was not our suffering, then how could we read Isaiah 53, about Our Suffering Saviour and feel pity, grief, admiration, and love for Christ? But, Our Suffering Saviour was truly man! "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He [Christ] shall grow up before Him [the Father] as a tender plant [Christ's human growth], and as a root out of a dry ground [unregenerate, sinful humanity]: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him [might miss Him easily on a crowded street]. He is despised and rejected of men [unpopular]; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [grieving about rebellious man]; and we hid as it were our faces from Him [humanly speaking, not the face sought after]; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows [Christ "healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). This is a promise of physical healing, if we can receive it.]; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God [Christ's humanity allowed His own hand to be turned on Himself!], and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him [Christ offers atonement for sins to whosoever will.]; and with His stripes we are healed [literally, made whole-- because our sinning has damaged us in every which way, except in our ability to repent.]. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way [Yes, pathetic like a sheep, but selfish, stupid, and wicked as a brute beast!]; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:1-6).

"But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 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**. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:9-16).

Conclusion

I believe that when the Apostle John wrote to his "little children", he desired that they understand more perfectly those things that they had already heard. The doctrine of Christian perfection was no stranger to John, because he taught it. "But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1John 2:5).

Let me share with you the yearnings of a great and good man, who like the Apostle Paul, travailed in birth until Christ was formed in his hearers (Galatians 4:19). Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) was an American lawyer who was converted to Christ at the age of 29. He preached in revivals throughout his life and spent many years as a teacher at Oberlin College. His early evangelistic messages can still be read from his book *Revival Lectures*. An account of his life is recorded in *Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography*; however, it lacks the last element, i.e., *Finney's Systematic Theology*, of how this man has been used of God to touch other generations with benefits without their "knowing the source whence they have sprung" (*Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography*, p.477).

The following have been excerpted from *Finney's Systematic Theology* (originally published in 1846).

That this state [entire sanctification or Christian perfection] may be attained in this life, I argue from the fact, that provision is made against all the occasions of sin. Men sin only when they are tempted, either by the world, the flesh, or the devil. And it is expressly asserted, that, in every temptation, provision is made for our escape. Certainly, if it is possible for us to escape without sin, under every temptation, then a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable.

"Full provision is made for overcoming the three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

(1.) The world-- 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith' [1John 5:4]. 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ' [1John 5:5].

(2.) The flesh-- 'If ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh' [Galatians 5:16].

(3.) Satan-- 'The shield of faith shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked' [Ephesians 6:16]. And, 'God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' [Romans 16:20]." [p. 352]

"A denial of this doctrine has the natural tendency to beget the very apathy witnessed in the Church. Professors of religion [i.e., professing Christians] go on in sin, without much conviction of its wickedness. Sin unblushingly stalks abroad even in the church of God, and does not fill Christians with horror, because they expect its existence as a thing of course. Tell a young convert that he must expect to backslide, and he will do so of course, and with comparatively little remorse, because he looks upon it as a kind of necessity. And being led to expect it, you find him, in a few months after his conversion, away from God, and not at all horrified with his state. Just so, inculcate the idea among Christians, that they are not expected to abandon all sin, and they will of course go on in sin with comparative indifference. Reprove them for their sin, and they will say, '*O, we are imperfect creatures; we do not pretend to be perfect, nor do we expect we ever shall be in this world.*' Many such answers as these will show you the God-dishonoring, soul-ruining tendency of a denial of this doctrine.

"A denial of this doctrine prepares the minds of ministers to temporize, and wink at great iniquity in their churches. Feeling as they certainly must, if they disbelieve this doctrine, that a great amount of sin in all believers is to be expected as a thing of course their whole preaching, and spirit, and demeanor, will be such as to beget a great degree of apathy among Christians, in regard to their abominable sins." [p.354]

"Total abstinence from sin must be every man's motto, or sin will certainly sweep him away as with a flood." [p.358]

"The great and fundamental sin, which is at the foundation of all other sin, is unbelief. The first thing is, to give up that-- to believe the Word of God. There is no breaking off from one sin without this. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' [Romans 14:23]. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' [Hebrews 11:6]. Thus we see, that the backslider and convicted sinner, when agonizing to overcome sin, will almost always betake themselves to works of law to obtain faith. They will fast, and pray, and read, and struggle, and outwardly reform, and thus endeavor to obtain grace. Now all this is vain and wrong. Do you ask, *'Shall we not fast, and pray, and read, and struggle? Shall we do nothing but sit down in antinomian security and inaction?'* I answer, you must do all that God commands you to do; but begin where He tells you to begin, and do it in the manner in which He commands you to do it; that is, in the exercise of that faith that works by love [Galatians 5:6]. Purify your hearts by faith [James 4:8]. Believe on the Son of God [1John 3:23]. And say not in your heart, 'Who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the Word of faith which we preach' [Romans 10:6-8]. Now these facts show, that even under the Gospel, almost all professors of religion [professing Christians], while they reject the Jewish notion of justification by works of law, have after all adopted a ruinous substitute for it, and suppose, that in some way they are to obtain grace by their works." [p.373]

"It is Christ, in the exercise of His different offices, and appropriated in His different relations to the wants of the soul, by faith, Who secures our sanctification. This He does by Divine discoveries to the soul of His Divine perfections and fulness. The condition of these discoveries is faith and obedience. He says, John xiv. 21-23: 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas saith unto Him, (not Iscariot,) LORD, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.'" [p.376]

"I have often feared, that many professed Christians knew Christ only after the flesh; that is, they have no other knowledge of Christ than what they obtain by reading and hearing about Him, without any special revelation of Him to the inward being by the Holy Spirit. I do not wonder, that such professors [professing Christians] and ministers should be totally in the dark, upon the subject of entire sanctification [or, Christian perfection] in this life. They regard sanctification as brought about by the formation of holy habits, instead of from the revelation of Christ to the soul in all His fulness and relations, and the soul's renunciation of self and appropriation of Christ in these relations." [pp.380-381]

"When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ. That is, whenever temptation overcomes us, it is because we do not know and avail ourselves of the relation of Christ that would meet our necessities." [p.382]

"It has been to my mind a painful and serious question, what I ought to think of the spiritual state of those who know so little of the blessed Jesus. That none of them have been converted, I dare not say. And yet, that they have been converted, I am afraid to say. I would not for the world 'quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed', [Matthew 12:20] or say anything to stumble, or weaken the feeblest lamb of Christ; and yet my heart is sore pained, my soul is sick; my bowels of compassion yearn over the church of the blessed God. O, the dear church of Christ! What does she in her present state know of the Gospel- rest, of that 'great and perfect peace' [Isaiah 26:3] which they have whose minds are stayed on God?" [p.413]

Christ's Roll Call of Christian Perfection

Paul

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Because Christ is the Son of God Who Loved Me and Gave Himself for Me... I will live the life of Christ by faith.

Peter

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth... that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1Peter 2:21-22,24).

Because Christ is Our Suffering Example... I will follow Him as dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

John

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the say of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17).

Because Christ is Perfect Love... I will exercise perfect love until He rewards me at the day of judgment.

David

"LORD, who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy Holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his heart... He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (Psalm 15:1-2,5).

Because Christ is LORD of the Tabernacle... I will continue steadfast in faith in Him.

Jude

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).

Because Christ is the Only Wise God Our Saviour... I will not fall but will continue faultless into His presence.

For additional reading on this topic,
please see our article,

Charles G. Finney's "[Systematic Theology](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"
<http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html>
is available to develop the subject at length.