

Character Perfection

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I. What was the condition of eternal life at the creation of man?

Genesis 2:16,17: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Leviticus 18:5: Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I [am] the LORD.

SC 62: The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,--just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,--perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

II. Has the plan of salvation altered this condition?

Deuteronomy 6:17,18: Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do [that which is] right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers,

Ecclesiastes 12:13: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man.

Matthew 5:17-19: 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 one 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.

Matthew 19:16,17: And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Luke 10:25-28: And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, 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 neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Romans 8:3,4: 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.

Hebrews 8:10,11: For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Revelation 22:14: Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

5 MR 260: The young man came to Christ and asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The answer was, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" [Matthew 19:16, 17]. The same answer was given to the lawyer, and the lawyer told Him that the law told him to "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 neighbour as thyself." And Christ said unto him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" [Luke 10:27, 28]. So you have the whole duty laid down, and that is to keep the commandments if you expect to have eternal life. What was lost through Adam by disobedience must be brought back by obedience.

CG 224: He who is the fountain of all knowledge has stated the condition of our fitness to enter the heaven of bliss, in the words, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Obedience to God's commandments is the price of heaven, and obedience to their parents in the Lord is the all-important lesson for children to learn.

AA 505: In the precepts of His holy law, God has given a perfect rule of life; and He has declared that until the close of time this law, unchanged in a single jot or tittle, is to maintain its claim upon human beings. Christ came to magnify the law and make it honorable. He showed that it is based upon the broad foundation of love to God and love to man, and that obedience to its precepts comprises the whole duty of man. In His own life He gave an example of obedience to the law of God. In the Sermon on the Mount He showed how its requirements extend beyond the outward acts and take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

BE 6/11/94: An important question was addressed to Christ by this lawyer: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The answer is direct and positive: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus presented the whole law of God, and said, "This do, and thou shalt live." The first four commandments of the law grow out of our relation to God, and demand the loving loyalty of our whole hearts. The last six grow out of our relations to our fellow-man, and require us to regard his interests as our own. The keeping of these commandments comprises the whole duty of man, and presents the conditions of eternal life. Now the question is, Will man comply with the requirements? Will he love God supremely and his neighbour as himself? There is no possible way for man to do this in his own strength. The divine power of Christ must be added to the effort of humanity; "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."

Is it really possible for fallen man, through divine power, to attain to and maintain perfect obedience to the law of God in this lifetime? Is character perfection truly attainable prior to the return of Christ?

Genesis 18:14: Is any thing too hard for the LORD?...

Matthew 19:26: But Jesus beheld [them], and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Ephesians 3:19,20: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,...

Ephesians 4:10-13: He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 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 5:25-27: 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.

Philippians 2:14,15: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;...

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

James 1:4: But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

2 Thessalonians 5:23,24: 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. Faithful [is] he that calleth you, who also will do [it].

2 Peter 1:10: Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:...

Jude 24: 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,...

3SM 360: This experience every one who is saved must have. In the day of judgment, the course of the man who has retained the frailty and imperfection of humanity will not be vindicated. For him there will be no place in heaven. He could not enjoy the perfection of the saints in light. He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.

CH 44 : We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our character, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, un sanctified, and filthy, will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects, and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us.

2 T 355,356: We embrace the truth of God with our different faculties, and as we come under the influence of that truth, it will accomplish the work for us which is necessary to give us a moral fitness for the kingdom of glory and for the society of the heavenly angels. We are now in God's workshop. Many of us are rough stones from the quarry. But as we lay hold upon the truth of God, its influence affects us. It elevates us and removes from us every imperfection and sin, of what ever nature. Thus we are prepared to see the King in His beauty and finally to unite with the pure and heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. It is here that this work is to be accomplished for us, here that our bodies and spirits are to be fitted for immortality.

3SM 427: When our earthly labors are ended, and Christ shall come for His faithful children, we shall then shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father. But before that time shall come, everything that is imperfect in us will have been seen and put away. All envy and jealousy and evil surmising and every selfish plan will have been banished from the life.

3 SM 427: Are we striving with all our God-given powers to reach the measure of the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever reaching higher and higher, trying to attain to the perfection of His character? When God's servants reach this point, they will be sealed in their foreheads. The recording angel will declare, "It is done." They will be complete in Him whose they are by creation and by redemption.

GC 623: Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits.

GC 490: There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in

judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

EW 71: I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of "refreshing" and the "latter rain" to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. Before this time the awfully solemn declaration has gone forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." I saw that none could share the "refreshing" unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.

1T 187: God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to this straight work, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, if they would not be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel: "God will bring His work closer and closer to test and prove every one of His people." Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: "They are joined to their idols, let them alone," and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.

5 T 214: Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

5 T 216: What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for

eternity.

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God--candidates for heaven. Go forward, my brethren and sisters.

4SG 29: Those only who zealously repent will have favor with God. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." We can overcome. Yes, fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we may overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with him.

I saw that it was our privilege to have faith, and salvation. The power of God has not decreased. His power, I saw, would be just as freely bestowed now as formerly.

2SAT 192: "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" [Hebrews 2:14, 15]. Only by bearing the penalty of our disobedience could He deliver us from eternal death. He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Thus He placed us on vantage ground, where we could live pure, sinless lives. The guilty who come to Him for pardon, confessing their sins, stand before the Father as innocent, because the Innocent One has borne their guilt. The undeserving are made deserving, while in their behalf the deserving became the undeserving.

AU Gleaner 1/17/06: Christ has made every provision for the sanctification of his church. He has made abundant provision for every soul to have such grace and strength that he will be more than a conqueror in the warfare against sin. The Saviour is wounded afresh and put to open shame when his people pay no heed to his word. He came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in his power his people might also lead lives of sinlessness. He desires them by practicing the principles of truth to show to the world that God's grace has power to sanctify the heart.

ST 7/23/02: Every one who believes on Christ, every one who relies on the keeping power of a risen Saviour that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, every one who resists temptation and in the midst of evil copies the pattern given in the Christ-life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Every one who by faith obeys God's commandments, will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression.

8MR 99: Unless by faith we accept the infinite plan of salvation, we are without divine wisdom. But every one who believes in Christ, every one who relies on the keeping power of a risen Saviour that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, every one who resists temptations and in the midst of evil strives to copy the pattern given in the Christ-life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts, including the one relating to the observance of the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, the day that He blessed and sanctified, "because that in it He had rested from all His work."

(Genesis 2:3.)

RH 9/27/06: To every one who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin, in obedience to the law of heaven.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

God requires of us perfect obedience. We are to purify ourselves, even as he is pure. By keeping his commandments, we are to reveal our love for the Supreme Ruler of the universe.

16 MR 181,182: Our Lord's trial and test and proving shows that He could yield to these temptations, else the battle was all a farce. But He did not yield to the solicitude of the enemy, thus evidencing that the human nature of man, united with the divine nature by faith, may be strong and withstand Satan's temptations. Christ's perfect humanity is the same that man may have through connection with Christ. As God, Christ could not be tempted any more than He was not tempted from His allegiance in heaven. But as Christ humbled Himself to the nature of man, He could be tempted. He had not taken on Him even the nature of the angels, but humanity, perfectly identical with our own nature, except without the taint of sin. A human body, a human mind, with all the peculiar properties, He was bone, brain, and muscle. A man of our flesh, He was compassed with the weakness of humanity. The circumstances of His life were of that character that He was exposed to all the inconveniences that belong to men, not in wealth, not in ease, but in poverty and want and humiliation. He breathed the very air man must breathe. He trod our earth as man. He had reason, conscience, memory, will, and affections of the human soul which was united with His divine nature.

Our Lord was tempted as man is tempted. He was capable of yielding to temptations, as are human beings.