

## Daily Devotional, June 29, 2021 Seeking God's Will for Perfection

***Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48 (NIV)***

What does perfection look like to us? We honestly, could say that depends. It depends on what our perception of what perfection is. Perfection in school might be an "A+" or a 4.0 grade, however, with advanced courses offered now in many schools, the grading scale has pushed beyond the 4.0 scale. If we were talking about Olympic sports, we would consider "10" to be the perfect score. And there are many other rankings that we use to put on various things; the perfect cookie, the perfect meal, the perfect afternoon, and so on.

Yet, as we come to the close of chapter 5 in the Gospel of Matthew, the opening chapter of the sermon on the mount, we hear Jesus use this word "perfect," and says we must be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We have to be perfectly like God. Us, perfect? But how is that in any way possible?

In the Jewish culture, and especially among the pharisees, they would have known exactly what Jesus was referring to. In the Old Testament books of the Law, especially in what we know as the book of Leviticus, we see something similar to this phrase used over and over again. Except, the translation we see tells us that we are to "be holy, as God is holy." In the context of what Jesus is teaching, perfection is all about holiness, the holiness that restores in us the image of our creator.

Jesus takes a bunch of laws that are part of the society in which the Jews are living, and takes them a little further, pushing them to realize that actions and intent; faith and deed, both matter in the way we interact with one another, and with God. This point ends with the above verse, reminding the people that God's intent was that we would know and live the perfect love of God in the grace we have received, and the grace that we offer others.

Our holiness, our perfection, is not perfect in the sense of getting everything right, or in any worldly idea we may have of perfection. Our true perfection is in recognizing the face of God in one another, and drawing closer to God, closer to our neighbor, and uniting in the love of Christ for all creation. In doing so, we begin to understand what it truly is to be holy, and to see holiness in all that God has made.

***Prayer: Oh Lord, I come to You in the midst of temptation. I am weak and so willing to give in to the temptations, even though I know they are wrong and against Your will. Give me strength to resist. Help me stand firm and choose You over my selfish desires. I am struggling, God, and so close to giving in. Please help me not to, God. I cannot do it in my own strength. In Your gracious name. Amen.***