

In Search of
GOD'S
PERFECTION

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ANDREW MURRAY



WHITAKER
HOUSE

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. Scripture quotations marked (ASV) are taken from the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version of the Holy Bible.

Publisher's Note: This book has been edited for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been updated for clarity and readability.

Boldface type in the Scripture quotations indicates the author's emphasis.

IN SEARCH OF GOD'S PERFECTION

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PREFACE

If anyone picks up this volume with the intention of finding a theory of perfection expounded or vindicated, he will be disappointed. My objective has been a very different one. What I have wished to do is to go with my reader through the Word of God, noting the principal passages in which the word *perfect* occurs, and seeking in each case to find what impression the word was meant to convey from its context. It is only when we have yielded ourselves—simply and prayerfully—to allow the words of Scripture to have their full force that we are on the right track for combining the different aspects of truth into one harmonious whole.

Among the thoughts which have especially been brought home to me in these meditations, and with which I trust my readers will agree, the following are the most important:

1. *There is a perfection which Scripture speaks of as possible and attainable.* There may be, rather, there is, great diversity of opinion as to how the term is to be defined. But there can be only one opinion as to the fact that God asks and expects His children to be perfect with

Him. There is only one opinion in relation to the fact that He promises perfection as His own work and that Scripture speaks of some as having been perfect before Him—having served Him with a perfect heart. Scripture speaks of a perfection that is at once our duty and our hope.

2. *To know what this perfection is, we must begin by accepting the command and obeying it with our whole heart.* Our natural tendency is to do the very opposite. We want to discuss and define what perfection is to understand how the command can be reconciled with our assured conviction that no man is perfect and to provide for all the dangers we are sure to find in the path of perfection.

This is not God's way. Jesus said, "*If any man will do his will, he shall know*" (John 7:17). The same principle holds true in all human attainment. It is only he who has accepted the command "*Be ye therefore perfect*" (Matthew 5:48) in adoring submission and obedience who can hope to know what that perfection is. Until the church is seen prostrate before God, seeking this blessing as the highest good, it will be no wonder if the very word *perfection*—instead of being an attraction and a joy—is a cause of apprehension and anxiety, of division and offense. May God increase the number of those who, in childlike humility, take the Word from His own lips as a living seed, in the assurance that it will bring forth much fruit.

3. *Perfection is no arbitrary demand; in the very nature of things, God can ask nothing less. And this is true, whether we think of Him or of ourselves.* If we think of God, who has created the universe for Himself and His glory, who

alone is able to fill it with His happiness and love, then we can see how impossible it is for Him to share man's heart with anything other than Himself. God must be all and have all. As Lawgiver and Judge, He dare not be content with anything less than absolute, legal perfection. As Redeemer and Father, it equally becomes Him to claim nothing less than a real, childlike perfection. God must have all.

If we think of ourselves, the call to perfection is no less absolutely necessary. God is an infinite, spiritual good, and the soul is incapable of receiving or knowing or enjoying Him unless it gives itself wholly to Him. For our own sakes, God's love can demand of us nothing less than a perfect heart.

4. *Perfection, as the highest aim of what God in His great power would do for us, is something so divine, spiritual, and heavenly that it is only the soul that yields itself very tenderly to the leading of the Holy Spirit that can know its blessedness.* God has given every human heart a deep desire for perfection. That desire is manifested in the admiration that all men have for excellence in the different objects or pursuits to which they attach value. In the believer who yields himself wholly to God, this desire fastens itself upon God's wonderful promises and inspires a prayer like that of M'Cheyne: "Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made." The more we learn to long for this full conformity to God's will—for the consciousness that we are always pleasing to Him—the more we will see that all this must come as a gift directly from heaven, as the full birth in us of the life of God. This happens we those who are wholly yielded to God

inbreathe the Holy Spirit of Jesus. Trusting ever less to men's thoughts and teachings, we will often retire into the secret of God's presence, with the assurance that the more we see God's face and hear the secret voice that comes directly from Him—"Be ye therefore perfect"—the more the Holy Spirit dwelling within us will unfold the heavenly fullness and power of the words. He will make them, as God's Word says, bring and give and work the very thing He speaks.

In the hope that these simple meditations may help some of God's children to go on to perfection, I commit them and myself to the blessed Father's teaching and keeping.

—Andrew Murray

PRAYER

Ever blessed Father! You have sent me a message by your beloved Son that I am to be perfect as You are perfect. Coming from You, incomprehensible and most glorious God, it means more than man can grasp. Coming to You, I ask that You would teach me what it means, work in me what it claims, and give me what it promises.

My Father, I accept the Word in the obedience of faith. I yield my life to its rule. I hide it in my heart as a living seed, in the assurance that there, deeper than thought or feeling, Your Holy Spirit can make it take root and grow up.

And as I go through Your Word, to meditate on what it says about the path of the perfect, teach me, O my Father, to bring every thought of mine captive to the obedience of Christ and to wait for that teaching of Your Holy Spirit which is so sure to the upright in heart. Through Him You have sent me this message, give me the answer to this prayer, too. Amen.

1

A PERFECT HEART

*Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and
Noah walked with God.*

—Genesis 6:9

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my
servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth,
a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God,
and escheweth evil?*

—Job 1:8

*[Solomon's] heart was not perfect with the LORD his God,
as was the heart of David his father.*

—1 Kings 11:4

Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.

—1 Kings 15:14

Concerning the above four men, Holy Scripture testifies that they were perfect, or that their hearts were perfect with God.

Scripture also testifies that each of them were not perfect in the sense of absolute sinlessness. We know how Noah fell. We know how Job had to humble himself before God. We know how sadly David sinned. And of Asa, we read that there came a time when he acted foolishly and relied on the Syrians and not on the Lord his God. In his disease, he did not seek the Lord but the physicians. And yet the hearts of these men were perfect with the Lord their God.

To understand this, there is one thing we must remember. The meaning of the word *perfect* must be decided, in each case, by that particular stage in God's education of His people in which it is used. What a father or a teacher regards as perfection in a child of ten years is very different from what he would call perfection in one of twenty years. As to the attitude or spirit, the perfection would be the same. In its content, however, by which it was to be judged, there would be a great difference.

We will see later on how, in the Old Testament, nothing was really made perfect. We will see how Christ has come to reveal and work out and impart true perfection in His people. We will also see how perfection, as revealed in the New Testament, is something infinitely higher, more spiritual and effective, than that which was under the old system. And yet, at the root, they are one. God looks at the heart. A heart that is perfect with Him is an object of complacency and approval. A wholehearted consecration to His will and fellowship, a life that takes as its motto Wholly for God, has been in all ages—even where the Spirit had not yet been given entrance into the heart—accepted by God as the mark of the perfect man.

The lesson these Scriptures suggest to us is a very simple, yet very searching, one. In God's record of the lives of His servants,

there are some of whom it is written: his heart was perfect with the Lord his God. Let each reader ask, is this what God sees and says of me? Does my life, in the sight of God, bear the mark of intense, wholehearted consecration to God's will and service? Does my life burn with the desire to be as perfect as it is possible for grace to make me? Let us yield ourselves to the searching light of this question. Let us believe that with this word *perfect*, God means something very real and true. Let us not evade its force or hide ourselves from its condemning power by the vain excuse that we do not fully know what it means. Before we can understand it, we must first accept it and give up our lives to it. I cannot stress too strongly that, whether in the church at large and its teaching or in the life of the individual believer, there can be no hope of comprehending what perfection is except as we count all things loss to be apprehended by it, to live for it, to accept it, and to possess it.

But there is only so much we can understand. What I do with a perfect heart I do with love and delight, with a willing mind and all my strength. It implies a definite purpose and a concentrated effort, which makes everything subordinate to the one object of my choice. This is what God asks, what His saints have given, and what we must give.

Again I say to everyone who wishes to join me in seeking perfection, through the Word of God, the revelation of His will concerning perfection: Yield yourself to the searching question, "Can God say of me as He did of Noah and Job, of David and Asa—that my heart is perfect with the Lord my God? Have I given myself up to say that there must be nothing, nothing whatever, to share my heart with God and His will? Is a heart perfect with the Lord my God the object of my desire, my prayer, my faith, my hope?"

Whether it has been so or not, let it be so today. Make this promise of God's Word your own: "*The very God of peace sanctify you wholly*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). God, who has the power to do more than we ask or think, will open up to you the blessed hope of a life, of which He says, "His heart was perfect with the Lord his God."