



## The Powerful Pull Of Perfection

**Matthew 5:48 KJV** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

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

### I. INTRODUCTION -- PERFECTION

-In the heart and soul of every man there is an internal Everest that he should long climb to its heights. There will always be a cost involved in these sorts of efforts but the payoff at the end of the sacrifice, devotion, and discipline is one of great joy.

-The quest for perfection is what often drives men to their greatest discoveries. Look to the world of medicine, business, and the arts. . . Then go to the great writers, inventors, presidents, and explorers and there will be a discovery that their soul pounded with a constant steady effort of hunger for perfection that was the encouragement to their achievements.

- So wearying but so rewarding.
- So taxing but so crowning.
- So desperate but ever so fulfilling.
- So frustrating but so exhilarating.

-Instead of being troubled by the losses, you have to look toward the joy of the destination. To a man, we could all decide to slump down in mediocrity and meaninglessness but there would still be a frustration ever present with us that we never reached that perfection we were called to.

#### A. General Quotes on Perfection

**Chesterfield**—Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable.—However, who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable.

**Baxter**—We reach perfection not by copying, much less by aiming at originality, but by constantly and steadily working out the life which is common to all, according to the character which God has given us.

**R.B. Nichol**—The acorn does not become the oak in a day; the ripened scholar is not made by a single lesson; the well-trained soldier was not the raw recruit of yesterday; there are always months between the seed-time and harvest. So the path of the just is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

**James Russell Lowell**—Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

**Elizabeth Dole**—Life is not just a few years to spend in self-indulgence and career advancement. It is a privilege, a responsibility, a stewardship to be lived according to a much higher calling.

#### B. Various Thoughts on Perfection

-To have a low aim in life and especially in the spiritual life is a tragedy that far too many live out on this earth. To offset the low aims, there is a wary restlessness that accompanies the grace of God and it makes us cry out in prayer and in desperation, "I am better than this!"

-Rudy Kipling wrote a poem (The Explorer) that seemed to give sense of direction to this calling toward perfection.

*The Explorer -- Rudyard Kipling* (Only a small portion of the actual poem.)

There's no sense in going further -- it's the edge of cultivation,"

So they said, and I believed it -- broke my land and sowed my crop --

Built my barns and strung my fences in the little border station

Tucked away below the foothills where the trails run out and stop:

Till a voice, as bad as Conscience, rang interminable changes

On one everlasting Whisper day and night repeated -- so:

"Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges --

"Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!"

-It is an unquenchable desire on the inside, almost as if a caged tiger is fighting to get out of the soul, a lure perhaps that presses us to reach higher and grasp for the things that God longs for us to do.

-If you have never known it, I pray that you will at some point find it or rather that it will find you, this powerful pull of perfection. Yet the desire for perfection also has some ominous undercurrents because the demands it has are only embraced by a hearty few. It has collapsed more than a few who could not withstand the gnawing, relentless passion that hunger for perfection created.

-Its presses and pushes can cause great calamities of defeat and disappointment but it is in those moments of calamity and disappointments that the great souls are born. Those great souls just keep on stretching toward that shining beyond what Kipling called "the Ranges" and what Jesus called "perfection."

-This is the mystery that urges men to pursue great progress.

- It is the Holy Grail the Crusaders sought for.
- It was the Fountain of Youth that Ponce de Leon thirsted for.
- It was the New Deal that Franklin D. Roosevelt placed so much confidence in.
- It is literally a change that seeks us out of the comfortable nests of comfort that we have built.

-Insistent, urgent, and pressing is this thing that ought to cause every one of us to reach a little higher in our walk in this world and in our walk with God.

## **II. THE TEXT OF MATTHEW 5:48**

**Matthew 5:48 KJV** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

-This is a text that far too many have left alone. Perhaps it is because that so many understand that when the template of perfection is set before them that so many flaws are suddenly evident in our little lives.

-One of the greatest mistakes that we make is to leave the concepts of the Sermon on the Mount to nothing more than a lofty goal that we ought to strive for but never believe that we can attain to it.

An American Indian tells about a brave who found an eagle's egg and put it into the nest of a prairie chicken. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them.

All his life, the changeling eagle, thinking he was a prairie chicken, did what the prairie chickens did. He scratched in the dirt for seeds and insects to eat. He clucked and he cackled. And he flew in a brief thrashing of wings and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off of the ground. After all, that's how prairie chickens were supposed to fly.

Years passed. And the changeling eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. Hanging with graceful majesty on the powerful wind currents, it soared with a beat of its strong golden

wings.

“What a beautiful bird!” said the changeling eagle to his neighbor. “What is it?”

“That’s an eagle—the chief of the birds,” the neighbor clucked. “But don’t give it a second thought. You could never be like him.”

So the changeling eagle never gave it another thought. And it died thinking it was a prairie chicken.

-How many times has the devil whispered in your ear, “You’re just a prairie chicken!” and you believed it?

-Yet the fact of the matter is that when we received the Holy Ghost there was a power that was invested into our frail bodies that did something to bolster the faith in the soul.

-Jesus never demanded anything that was impossible for a man to accomplish. If the encouragement from Him was to seek after perfection, then it was within the grasp of the saint’s hands, his heart, and his head.

-Anytime that spiritual transformation takes place in a life the path toward perfection is opened up to that man. Conversion is always going to deepen and enrich our lives.

### **A. The Price-tag on Perfection**

-Look to what Jesus said to a man one day about being perfect.

**Matthew 19:21-22 KJV** Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. [22] But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

-Perfection has its price-tags. In the grand scheme of things, the command to sell all that he had really was not the issue at all. The issue was great surrender, absolute surrender and a willingness to give up absolutely everything for the Kingdom of God.

-Perfection boils down to character issues that are present within a man. This is why there must be a Spirit-filled life because only the Spirit can change the character of a man.

**William Gurnall**—Take heed that thy morality be not thy snare. The young man in the gospel might have been a better man if he had not been so good.

-Far too many accept and settle for far less than what they really could be for God and for their world. Proud of what they have and unwilling to give up to go up so therefore confined to a prison of average.

-There are many things that keeps a man locked into his place and he may never be able to pursue perfection because of these road-blocks:

- Complacency.
- Apathy.
- Too much favor with the world.
- Attached to the meager rations of riches.
- An unwillingness to deny self.

-Barriers to perfection but when they would be given up, they literally could be bridges to perfection.

I heard a story that a preacher told about a man that he pastored in Kentucky. The preacher was a younger man when he worked at this church in Kentucky and after being there for a lengthy period of service, he received a call from another church in New York. Years flew by with amazing swiftness and one day, more than 30 years after his tenure in Kentucky he received a letter from the now elderly man who confessed with great dismay in this letter about how he wished he would have heeded the pastor’s encouragements during his time there. But now it was too late because the old man lamented, “I dreamed my dreams too late!” What a tragedy to think that messages went unheeded and the work of a pastor meant little to this man. The old man probably had been a good man but he could have been

a much better man if only he would have chosen to seek for perfection.

## **B. Perfection Is Within Reach**

-But I am trying to summon something within your soul that they mystery of perfection is something that we all can reach to!

- It was the force behind Columbus and his discovery of America.
- It fueled the passion of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in their expedition west that started in St. Louis.
- It was the drive behind Richard Byrd that led him to explore Antarctica.
- It was the push behind the quest for space exploration.

-The desire for perfection causes the adventurer and the explorer to rise within all of us. A secret, a mystery is an exasperating thing because it teases, tantalizes, and taunts but it pulls men from their comfortable perches and causes them to reach out toward true greatness.

-It is within the reach of every saint of God. The guise of “waiting,” procrastination, and sometimes even caution can be a cover up for laziness. Don’t let any of these things preempt you from doing your best for God.

-Perfection has its vision, and its drive that will capture us if we will allow it to do so.

Raymond Damadian is a name that few will recognize and yet his story and his achievements changed the world. In the early 1970’s politicians started looking toward a problem that faced not just the American nation but the world at large. It was an ominous thing called cancer. The money started flowing in the direction of companies involved in research that was searching for a cure. Raymond Damadian was one such man who had no funding, no support, but had an indomitable will to do something worthy of his calling in the field of medicine.

He gave himself to the task of finding a way to detect cancer in its earliest stages. He believed that someone could see into the human body in a cross-sectional way (as one would cut up a ham) with very fine detail. The real clincher was that it would be done without harmful X-Rays. People laughed him out of town. It can’t be done. You are a dreamer they told him but he worked on deep into the nights and back up early in the mornings. Working on a shoe-string budget, he pushed himself and his students relentlessly to come up with a system that could do this.

He tinkered with magnetic fields because in his mind he thought that if a strong enough magnetic field was created it would make all the atoms in the body to line up like toy soldiers with a positive on one end and a negative on the other end. This is exactly what he did. He built a machine that created a magnetic force that would create data that could be fed into a computer to form an exact replica of what was inside the human body.

Because he was working basically as a solo inventor, he did not nearly have the resources that the huge corporations had in their coffers. So he took his invention to county and state fairs and would charge people to see the machine that would change the whole world of medicine. While you probably do not know Raymond Damadian, you do know about his machine called Magnetic Resonance Imaging or MRI. The MRI is one of the savviest tools that a physician has at his hands to make a diagnosis.

-This is the pursuit of perfection. You press on despite the challenges, the hindrances, the ridicule, the weariness, and the set-backs. You do not become perfect simply because you want it but rather because you pursue it and never back away from the heights of the mountains.

It was said of Chopin, the famous composer, that he would walk the floor chewing up his quill pen and ripping pages of half-finished scores. Why would he do such a thing? The music was more than enough to please the people, so why not just settle for that. But Chopin was not trying to please the people, the music had to please him and make a turn toward perfection.

-It is this kind of relationship and pressure that creates excellence in what you do in life! What if this kind of attitude would play over into every one of our lives in this house?

-There are “whispers” that pull us beyond where we are and although they may be tinged with adversity, those “whispers” call us to go beyond the Ranges of the average and the normal and the mediocre.

### **C. Perfection Is A Biblical Concept**

-The hunger for perfection fills the pages of the Bible both in example and in word pictures.

-The physical examples become evident to us as we come to them:

- It is men like Elisha burning their plows and sacrificing their oxen to follow a prophet.
- It is men like Moses choosing to suffer reproach rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.
- It is the Paul's who toss their standing in society and their academic pedigrees to become something great for God.
- It is men like Samson who carry off the gates of the city.
- It is the Gideon's who rise up when God calls them to confront overwhelming odds.
- The breaking of an alabaster box of perfume.
- The tax collectors leaving their tables and fishermen leaving their nets.
- It is mothers like Jochebed and Hannah giving their boys to their God.
- It is David slaying Goliath but sparing Saul.
- It is first century saints not flinching in the Coliseum when they faced the lions that ripped the life from them.
- It is doctors leaving their practices to follow the Apostle Paul so that a record of history could be taken.

-The word pictures arrive in short small bursts:

- Work.
- Labor.
- Fight.
- Finish.
- Keep.
- Humility.
- Contentment.
- Hunger for.
- Seek after.
- Flee from.
- Follow after.
- Joy.
- Thankfulness.
- Holiness.
- Kindness.
- Mastery.
- Holiness.
- Pray.
- Give.

- Fast.
- Unity.
- Strive.
- The prize of the high calling.

-All of these things to reach for comes from the command from Matthew 5:48.

### **III. CONCLUSION -- PERFECTION IS A MUST!**

-I am certain that every one of us want to live our lives in such a way that we pursue and seek after perfection. I also must tell you that there will be misgivings to even think about having a life of perfection because there will always loose ends that remind us of our own shortcomings.

The story is told of a soldier in World War I who was so distraught with the war that he deserted. He tried to find his way back to the coast so he could catch a boat and make his way undetected to his homeland in England.

In the darkness of night he stumbled on a road sign. It was so pitch black and he was so lost. He had no idea where he was or what the sign said. He decided to climb the pole. When he got to the crossbeam, he held on to read the sign. Taking out a match, he lit it, and looked directly in the face of Jesus Christ. He had climbed an outdoor crucifix!

Stunned by what he saw, he realized the shame of his life. He was looking into the face of the One who had endured it all and had never turned back. The next morning the soldier was back in the trenches.

-The same thing can happen to every single one of us when we go back to Calvary and look Jesus Christ in the face. Our excuses, our reasons, and our rationalizations all shrink back when we really realize what the Lord has done for us.

-The Cardboard Testimonies dramas have been done by various churches around the nation. It tells of what used to be and what God has accomplished in the lives of people after they came to Him. The reality is that God loves us far too much to leave us where we are. There must be that driving desire to become perfect as God longs for us to be like Him.