

CHRIST'S PERFECTION IN THE BELIEVER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. Follow this procedure to make your lesson useful for your students.

Lesson Aim: Challenge each believer to strive to be perfect in Christ Jesus.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson. Insert questions that fit your lesson aim for class discussion. Use the ones below where appropriate.

Introduction: The key thought of this chapter is Christ's perfection in the believer. The "mark" (or goal) of the believer is the perfection of Jesus Christ in his own life. This goal cannot be fully reached until the rapture which is "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," (3:14). This perfection is only possible by personally knowing Jesus Christ in His resurrection, in His sufferings, and in His death (3:10). "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

What must a person do to be perfect before God? 3:1-9

A true believer will renounce any religion that tells him that he must keep God's laws to be perfect (3:1-3). He knows that no person can do this because God's law demands absolute obedience (Rom 3:20; Jam 2:10). So then he rejects all of his good works to be perfect (3:4-6), because he knows the best works that he can do are like filthy rags to God (Isa 64:6). Finally, he received Christ's death and resurrection to save him and make him perfect (Phil 3:7-9).

How is a Christian perfected to be more like Christ in this life? 3:10-11

No Christian will be perfect until he sees Christ (1 Jn 3:2-3), but those that follow Paul's example will experience the process of perfection (3:10). What should he do? First, he needs to know Jesus Christ intimately. Second, he needs to experience the power of His resurrection in His life. This will happen when he draws close to Christ. The power of God that raised Christ from the dead overwhelmed the power of Satan and his demons who tried to keep Him in the grave. Paul prayed that believers would experience this power in their lives (Eph 1:19-20). Third, he needs to suffer shame and persecution for Christ to know what Christ felt when He was hated by His own people. Most Christians come to Christ to enjoy His blessings, but flee from Him when asked to share His sufferings. Fourth, he needs to be willing to die for Christ just as He was willing to die for him. Paul wanted to experience all of these things so he could be like Christ when he was resurrected and brought before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of his life as a believer. To be like Christ is a serious challenge for believers.

What should be in the mind of a believer in order to be perfect in Christ? 3:12-16

First, he must recognize that he has not yet grasped all the changes that Christ wants to do in his life (3:12-13). He must not be satisfied with the progress he has already made. There is much more work that needs to be done to be perfect like Christ. Second, he must reach for more growth in his life and strive to be perfect like Christ (3:13-14). The decisions he makes and the actions he takes need to reflect Christ more and more. Third, he must respect the thoughts of other believers and seek to have one mind with them (3:15-16). When believers are perfect in Christ as the Scriptures teach them, they will have one mind.

What changes should occur in a believer when Christ is perfected in him? 3:17-21

First, he will revere faithful men and follow their example (3:17). Second, he will repudiate foolish men who serve themselves (3:18-19). Third, he will regard his citizenship in Christ's Kingdom that is now in Heaven, as a special privilege (3:20). Fourth, he will rejoice in the promise that Christ will change his vile body into the likeness of his glorious body (3:21). This is when Christ's perfection will be complete in him.