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What is Perfection?

What does perfection mean?

According to Webster, perfection means "the highest possible degree of excellence." That which is perfect lacks nothing it should have and has nothing it should not have.

Perfection is fullness and completeness. Something that is perfect is not lacking in anything and doesn't have anything it shouldn't have. This word "perfection" or "perfect" is a relative word. It's found in the Bible quite a little, because it is the English translation of a number of Hebrew and Greek words. It means, "that which is excellent, which is the highest possible degree of excellence." Of course it's a relative word and we use it in various ways. We talk about this or that earthly thing being perfect; the Bible does the same thing.

Perfection is to be complete in your nature. That is, it is to be

perfect as it touches you. If something else of another nature were to be like you, it would be imperfect. Let me illustrate this. When a new baby is born, one of the first things the doctor does and one of the first things the anxious mother does is to look him over and see if he's all right. We look for two legs, two arms, two eyes, two ears, and one nose. And when we find that everything is the right number and in the right place we smile and say, "Well, thank God for a healthy little baby." That's perfection to a human child.

But suppose that on the farm a little colt is born and is looked over by the anxious farmer. He doesn't look for two legs, he looks for four. And if the thing had only two it would be deformed. If the baby had four legs, it would be deformed. Perfection is having just what it should have, being what it is. Perfection in that relative way would mean completeness and fullness of what you are. But we can't think of God like this.

If perfection means the highest possible degree of excellence, then we cannot apply this thought to God at all. How can we apply "the highest possible" to God? Is there anything that isn't possible with God? As though God had been created and had done the highest thing possible, that He was as perfect as it was possible for Him to be? No, you can't apply that to God; that's only applied to creatures.

No Degrees in God

When I was explaining the infinitude of God I pointed out that there are no degrees in God. God is not at the top of the heap in an ever-ascending perfection of being, from the worm on up until finally we reach God. On the contrary, God is completely different and separate, so that there are no degrees in God. God is simply God, an infinite perfection of fullness, and we

cannot say God is a little more or a little less. “More” and “less” are creature-words. We can say that a man has a little more strength today than yesterday. We can say the child is a little taller this year; he’s growing. But you can’t apply more or less to God, for God is the perfect One; He’s just God.

Sometimes when we speak of perfection we use the word *excellence*. Did you ever stop to think what that word means? It means “being in a state of excelling,” which implies a *comparison* to something or somebody. Excellence in a musician means that he is a better musician than the other musicians. If he has a high degree of excellence, we could say he has perfection in his field. He doesn’t, but we could use the word.

But when you come to God, He says, “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?”

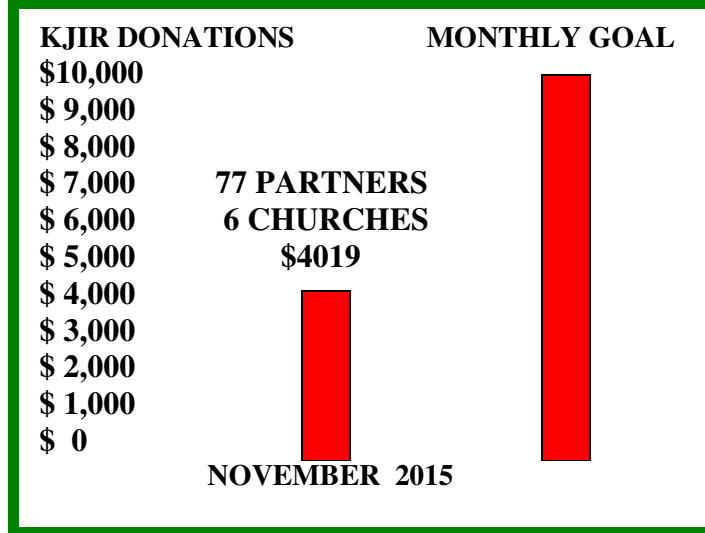
(Isaiah 40:25). You don’t compare God. We say that God is *incomparable*, and by that we mean that God stands alone as God, that nothing can be compared with Him. Isaiah was very strong here, and he wrote some very beautiful and eloquent language, telling us that we must not compare God with anything or anybody – anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath.

Moses’ law said, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:4). People thought that meant that you should never make any works of art. But the fact is there were works of art in the temple commanded by God. So God was not against works of art; He was against substituting them for God or thinking they were like God.

“To whom then will ye liken me?” said God. And yet the Bible uses this word *perfect* all the way through, and applies it to God and to things that aren’t God. For instance, there is the Lord’s command, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In the original Greek, exactly the same word that applies to God applies to people, too. Do you know why God uses the same word? Because there isn’t any other word. You cannot find the language that will tell what God is. So God does the best He can, considering who and what we are, to make Himself known to us. God is not limited in Himself. He is limited in us. Paul said, “ye are straitened in your own (hearts)” (2 Corinthians 6:12), which means, “It’s yourself – you’re narrowed in your own hearts.” The inability of God to get through to us is not due to the imperfection of the Great God, but the imperfection of the man to whom He is trying to give the truth. When we apply perfection to God, we mean that He has unqualified fullness and completeness of whatever He has. He has unqualified plenitude of power. He has unqualified fullness of wisdom. He has unqualified knowledge. He has unqualified holiness.

When I say that a man is a perfect singer, I qualify that in my mind. I think, *Well, he does the best a person can.* But when I say that God is holy, I do not qualify it. I mean it fully and completely. God is what He is and that’s it. God’s power and being, His wisdom and knowledge, His holiness and goodness, His justice and mercy, His love and grace – all of these and more of the attributes of God – are in shining, full, uncreated perfection. They are called the beauty of the Lord our God.

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,” Moses said in Psalm 90:17, and David said, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the



Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple” (27:4). “The beauty of the Lord” means that God has all He should have of everything, a fullness of everything. If it is love, then there is no limit to the love of God. If it is mercy, then there is no limit to the mercy of God. If it is grace, there are no bounds to the grace of God. If it is goodness, there is no limit to the goodness of God. And this is called the beauty of the Lord our God.

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined” (Psalm 50:2). Why was Zion the earthly perfection of beauty? Because her beauty came from the shining God who dwelt between the wings of the cherubim. She was not only architecturally beautiful but all the concepts of her were beautiful. Her hymnody was beautiful. Her ideas of worship were beautiful, shining there in the sun, knowing that God was there between the wings of the cherubim dwelling in the *shekinah*. She was beautiful above all the earth. All things as they move toward God are beautiful. And they are ugly as they move away from Him.

A.W. TOZER

*I bring you glad tidings
Luke 2:10*

A Christmas spirit should be a spirit of humility. Beside that beautiful object lesson of the manger, the cradle and the lowly little baby, what Christian heart can ever wish to be proud? It is a spirit of joy. It is right that these should be *glad tidings* for the angel announced, *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* It is a spirit of love. It should be the joy that comes from giving joy to others. The central fact of Christmas is the Christ who loved us and came to live among us and die for us. He or she has no right to share its joys who is living for himself or herself alone. Love is always sacrificial, and so the Christmas spirit will call us to a glad and full surrender, first to God and then to the joyful sacrifice of what we call our own for His glory and the good of others.

The Christmas spirit is a spirit of worship. It finds the Magi at His feet with their gold and frankincense and myrrh. Let it find us there, too.

The Christmas spirit is the spirit of missions. Its glad tidings are for all people.